INTRODUCTION

NGOs in India have played a pioneering role and rendered individual and community services in times of distress and natural calamities (1,2,3). The emergence of NGOs have resulted in voluntary services by the like minded individual forming groups for promoting human welfare (1,4,5). The formulation of this voluntary action led to the formation of voluntary agencies for promoting welfare activity while being registered officially. In fact the voluntary agencies or groups working at the macro levels, in a localised setting for the welfare of marginalised and oppressed section of society, either rural or Urban (6,7). In the context of international parlance, voluntary agencies are called Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

In India since the Independence, it is estimated around 10,000 such agencies have been established spread all over the country. In India 1953 to 1954, around 4000 Non Governmental Agencies were involved in welfare and development activities. Later, the number increased to 6000 during 1961 – 1962. By the end of 1999 – 2000, more than 20,000 NGO’s i.e. Voluntary Organisations were in operation (9). In 2001, the total number of registered NGOs are 22,924 as per the statistics (9,3).

The state of Karnataka has a relatively better net work of NGOs as compared to other states in India. Though very few NGOs started to function during early 1960’s, their number increased during 1993. Ten decades back there were around 500 NGOs in action in Karnataka and most of these NGOs had their head office in Bangalore. At present there are 650 to 800 NGOs that
are rendering their services to the lower segment population groups and marginalised members of the society in particular women and child welfare.

Despite the increase in number of NGOs strategies for implementing the activities have almost remained unchanged since the goal of all these organisation is aimed at improving the quality of life. It is believed, addressing the problem of unequal distribution of powers in social system, along with women's empowerment is basic to bring improvement in the situation of the oppressed (10, 11). Hence, NGOs have mainly used four major strategies – providing charity and welfare services, developmental model for all-round development, conscious rising, to encourage peoples participation in welfare programmes for vulnerable groups particularly women and children (1, 8).

Accordingly the development thrust of the NGOs is in four areas, viz education (non formal education, formal education, occasional education, alternative education), awareness generation, health programmes and income generating activities. In tune with the organisations developmental perspective, the thrust areas are centered on women and children (12).

A large number of NGOs in collaboration with the government are engaged in women empowerment in Urban and rural areas promoting capacity building, gender sensitization, advocacy and lobbying on women related issues, campaigns against dowry murders, domestic violents, female foeticides and sexual harassment at work place and girl child rights (13, 14).

Though women in India as a whole, share certain features, problems, there are sharp inter state and intra-state differences in their conditions (7, 15). Wide disparities exist in per capita incomes and other economic
indicators, educational health and social situation across the states and in areas with in the state (3). The majority of world poor are women and the gap between women and men have widened in the past decade. Two thirds of the world illiterate are women. Off the millions of children kept out of school two thirds are girls. (16)

The first report of the committee on the status of women in 1975, highlighted for the first time, the fact that women, were a group adversely affected by the rapid social and economic changes taking place in Indian society (17).

The social conditions which deny women their basic rights are kept in place by violence and its ever present threat. There is growing recognition that subjugation, marginalisation and disempowerment of women are causes of persistent poverty. These condition of women has implications in terms of current levels of health and nutrition and cultural economic factor (18).

To raise the condition of women, NGOs have come forward with many developmental programmes with the collaboration of government and other funding agencies. With the aim to create awareness, foster solidarity and encourage women’s participation in the community welfare activities (19).

In the Mysore district since 1968, a total of 43 non governmental organisations were reported to be involved in developmental activities, for empowering the life of the backward class. Out of these 21 oranisations were involved in woman and child welfare programmes spread, over 7 taluks of Mysore. The strategy adopted for the program in the areas of women development involved empowerment of women through education, awareness
generation and greater emphasis on vocational training and employment to enable them to enter the main stream of economic development as equal partners of development.

It is a fact that NGOs are prominently involved in developmental activities among the poor and marginalised persons especially women and children. However, specific data with regard to the effectiveness of the activities and out comes is limited. Hence, the present study was under taken to find out the role played by the NGOs in the welfare activities and to analyse the impact of the programme on the target groups.

Objectives of the Research:-

The present study focused on NGO activities and its effects on the beneficiaries and their living conditions. The main objectives of the present investigation was to evaluate the functional output of Non Governmental Organisations in Mysore district and to analyse its impact in promoting the welfare of the target group- women and children. Therefore, specific objectives of the study were to determine:-

- The role of NGOs currently operating in Mysore district.
- The operational strategies used for promoting welfare activities in the target areas.
- The impact of programme output on the living conditions of the target groups and their families.
- Effectiveness of the programme inputs as perceived by the women beneficiaries.
- The extent of participation of women in the welfare activities.
Hypothesis:

It has been pointed out that the Non Government organisations in India have an important role to improve the condition of women and children especially those in rural areas and Urban slums. There is also the assumption that the status of women in the family and in society have improved after the initiatives taken by the NGO groups. There initiatives and activities have also contributed to bring women to the main stream of society. Women have also acquired self reliance through the activists of NGOs which in turn improved the over all standard of their living conditions. It is also assumed that there is a rise in the literacy level of children and reduction in school drop out rate and child labour.

The changing factors due to the NGOs intervention among women and children are hypothesised as follows:-

1. NGOs activities among women have helped to improve participation in decision making in family and personnel matters.
2. NGOs programmes have created better employment facilities making them economic self reliance.
3. Through the intervention of NGOs women's social and political participation increased.
4. Have promoted better awareness regarding health and nutrition, law concerning women's rights and the need for education.
5. Promoted better awareness regarding health but have not promoted better nutrition.