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Empowering Rural Women Through Self-Help Groups In Salem District

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ABSTRACT

A planned economic system has been adopted by the Indian economy for its growth and development. So far, India has completed 11 Five Year Plans with some annual plans. The 12th Five Year Plan is now. No doubt, tremendous developments have been made in all sectors of the Indian economy. However, India still remains a developing economy with low per capita income, chronic unemployment, low capital formation, increasing trade deficit, considerable population below the poverty line, etc. Economic progress of a country in general and family in particular, depends on the working ability of all members of the family. Since, women constitute 48.60% of the total population as per census 2011, it is very essential to make them productive by involving them in productive activities instead of confining them within the four walls of the kitchen. of late, the role of women has changed considerably due to changing socio-cultural environment. The Self-Help Group (SHG) movement in India has been working in the right direction in empowering women and eradicating poverty in the rural and urban areas. However, women are still not empowered as per the expectation.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, SHG, Rural and Economic Development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Planned economic system has been introduced in India since April 1, 1951 with the Five Year Plans, which has now completed its 11^{th}. The 12^{th} Five Year Plan has begun. No doubt, there was development in various sectors of the Indian economy during these plan periods. The production from agriculture has increased from 105 million tons in the year 1949-50 to approximately 500 million tons in the year 2016-17 through green, yellow, white and blue revolutions. There has been 7-8% annual growth in the industrial sector. Further, service sector has been contributing to the growth of Indian economy.

The main reason for considerable percentage of population below the poverty line and India still remaining a developing country with lot of problems is due to the human resources not being used at the optimum level. The first Prime Minister of Independent India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, has rightly said that, "the women of India should play a vital role in building strong nation" (Sankaran, 2009). Further, the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi has said, "the development of every village is nothing but the development of nation" (Bhatia et al., 1994). It is a well-known fact that the growth of women in turn develops her family, village and the nation in general. Since women constitute 48.60% of total population of India as per census 2011, it is very essential to employ this resource optimally in the interest of the nation in general and her family in particular. In the past, women were not ready to undertake any work, job and business due to shyness, fear and male dominance in the society. However, of late, Indian women have come out of the four walls of the kitchen and are more willing to take up entrepreneurial activities. Women of today want more economic independence, their own identity, achievements, equal status in the society and greater freedom. Further, many women

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have proved that they are more productive than men in contributing to the growth of the economy. Just as we need two hands for the smooth functioning of human work, similarly, both men and women should involve in productive activities to build a strong nation. Besides, India has been facing the problem of unemployment and underemployment. To mitigate this problem, women are needed not only to generate employment, but also to provide employment to others. They have to undertake entrepreneurial activities to create additional wealth for the nation and to solve the problem of unemployment and poverty. Entrepreneurship development among women, particularly among rural women, will strengthen the rural and national economy.

SELF-HELP GROUPS

Self-Help Group (SHG) is a homogenous group formed by 10-20 members of poor households having similar objectives, aims and aspirations. The SHGs are formed under the principle of self-help to promote individuals through collective actions in areas of augmenting income, gaining easier access to credit and other resources and increasing their bargaining power. The SHGs may be formed either by male members or by female members or both. The SHG is a voluntary association of the poor who come together to improve their socioeconomic conditions.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is an active multidimensional process to enable women to realize their identity and power in all spheres of life. Empowerment provides a greater access to knowledge and resources, more autonomy in decision making, greater ability to plan lives, more control over the circumstances which influence lives, and freedom from customs, beliefs and practices. Empowerment demands a drastic and basic change in the system of marriage and family, husband and wife relationship and attitude towards socialization and remarriage. Empowerment is a process that gives a person freedom in decision making.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Economic development of a country means a process by which per capita income of that country moves upward over a period of time. Like many other countries of the world, India has been endowed with rich natural and human resources who need proper utilization by adopting modern technology for growth and development of the economy. Therefore, entrepreneurship is essential for proper use of renewable and non-renewable natural resources and to provide employment to the unemployed youth. Many women entrepreneurs are playing a vital role in this direction through creation of utilities and generation of employment. Further, there has been a lot of progress in the growth and development of SHGs in India in general and study area in particular, and it is very essential to know the growth of entrepreneurial activities of women in rural, its impact on women entrepreneurs and problems faced by them during entrepreneurial activities.

3. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Women participation in entrepreneurial activities abroad is growing rapidly. According to Suriyamurthi et al. (2009), "[Twenty-five] percent of businesses in China, 40 percent of all business in Hungary, 38 percent of business in Poland, 32 percent of business in Mexico, 25 percent of business in France are established by women entrepreneurs. 38 percent of businesses in USA are established by women and employed 27.5 million. They generate annual sales of

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$3.6 trillion. In addition, 23 percent of private firms in Japan, 1/3 of new business since 1990 in Germany and 1/3 of new business in Europe and 25 percent of self-employed sector in UK were established by women entrepreneurs".

The growth and development of SHGs in India in general and study area in particular has been tremendous. "The number of SHGs financed by banks in India has increased from 32,995 in 1992-93 to 2,476,492 in 2016-17. The loan sanctioned and disbursed to these SHGs went up from Rs. 571 million in 1992-93 to Rs. 135,119 million in 2016-17" (Annual Reports NABARD 1992-93, 2016-17). The number of households benefited under SHG program is more than 32.98 million. Lot of progress in SHG movement took place in Salem district in terms of their numbers and members. However, the poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, low industrialization, male dominance, etc., still exist in the study area. Besides, it is also clear from the review of earlier literature that there has been no study on this area. Hence, the need of the study.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are:

- To study the need and significance of self-help groups.
- To study the importance of rural women empowerment in Salem district.
- To analyze the status of rural women empowerment through SHGs.

5. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on both primary as well as secondary data. To collect the primary data, interview schedule are prepared and presented personally to 150 women members of SHGs. The sample members are selected from 25 SHGs from 10 villages of Salem District. The collected data are analyzed by classifying and tabulating. The percentage tool is used to examine women empowerment through SHGs. The secondary data were collected from newspapers, books and journals, etc.

6. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There are numerous studies made both by Indians and foreigners to examine the empowerment of women and their related issues. Some of the important studies in this regard are as follows:

Anitha and Revenkar (2007) made an attempt to study rural development through micro credit, the growth of SHGs from 1992-93 to 2003-04, and agency-wise SHGs linked on March 31, 2004. They concluded that the success of SHGs not only improved the economic status of women, but also brought lot of changes in their social status.
Gudaganavar Nagaraj and Gudaganavar Rajashri (2008) made an attempt to examine the empowerment of rural women through SHG. They highlighted the progress of SHGs in India from 1992-93 to 2006-07. They also highlighted the region-wise progress of SHGs and employment of women through SHGs. They concluded that no development was possible without empowerment of women.
Lalitha and Prasad (2009) made an attempt to analyze the empowerment of women through Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) program in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. The study revealed that income of individual after joining DWCRA

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program has increased comparatively. The study concluded that the potential of women is not fully tapped and utilized for the community.

Saraswathy et al. (2009) made an attempt to analyze the role of micro finance in Krishnagiri district. They highlighted the role of Government of India, NABARD, NGO and Banks. The questionnaire was prepared and presented to 75 members of 16 SHGs of 9 NGOs. The study revealed that majority of members have agreed that their income has increased after joining SHG. It concluded that SHGs have become the development ambassador of villages.

Vinayamoorthy and Pithoda (2014) made an attempt to examine women empowerment through SHGs in three villages of Tamil Nadu. They selected a sample of 398 members of 20 SHGs from Vellore, Thiruvannamalai and Dharmapuri districts of the state. The main objectives of the study were to examine the income, expenditure and the savings of the members after joining SHGs and the role of SHGs in providing credit. They concluded that the economic activities of SHGs were quite successful.

ANALYSIS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Analysis of women empowerment through SHGs in this study is based on two dimensions: analysis of demographic information and analysis of women empowerment. The age, family system and number of dependents in the family, etc., are analyzed in demographic information. The reasons for joining SHGs, purpose of loan, repayment of loan, income, savings, expenditure and powers in important decisions are analyzed in women empowerment.

Table 1 shows that 51.33% of sample respondents have joined SHGs for getting loan, 26% to promote savings, 18% for social status and the rest for other reasons. This signifies that majority of respondents have joined SHGs mainly to get loan as compared to other reasons.

REASONS FOR JOINING SHGS

REASONS	PERCENTAGE
Getting Loan	51.33
Promoting Savings	26.00
Social Status	18.00
Others	04.67
Total	100

Source: primary data

TABLE 1

It is evident from Table 2 that 14% of sample respondents have taken loan for personal use, 24.67% for agricultural development, 35.33% for business reasons, 14% for medical purpose and 12% for housing improvement. This indicates that loan has been primarily taken for productive purposes by respondents.

PURPOSE OF LOAN UTILISATION

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PURPOSE OF LOAN	% OF THE RESPONDENTS
Personal	14.00
Agriculture	24.67
Business	35.33
Medical	14.00
House Improvement	12.00
Total	**100**

Source: primary data

TABLE NO 2

Table 3 reveals that 79.34% of sample respondents have repaid the loan on time, 11.33% in advance, while 9.33% have repaid loan late. This signifies that women respondents are more prompt in repayment of loan they borrowed from SHGs.

REPAYMENT OF LOAN

REPAYMENT SCHEDULE	% OF THE RESPONDENTS
In Advance	11.33
On Time	79.34
Late	09.33
Total	**100**

Source: primary data

TABLE NO 3

It is evident from Table 4 that income level of sample respondents has increased after joining SHGs. The monthly income of majority of sample respondents was below Rs. 3,000 before joining SHGs, but it increased after joining SHGs. This signifies that the SHGs helped the members in increasing their income by taking up productive activities.

INCOME LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS

INCOME LEVEL	% OF THE RESPONDENTS	
	BEFORE JOINING SHG	AFTER JOINING SHG
Up to Rs. 1,000	22.00	08.00
Rs. 1,001 – Rs. 3,000	35.33	28.00
Rs. 3,001 – Rs. 4,000	14.00	19.33
Rs. 4,001 – Rs. 5,000	16.67	24.67
Above Rs. 5,000	12.00	20.00
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: primary data

TABLE NO 4

Table 5 shows that the monthly expenditure of sample respondents has gone up after joining SHGs. The table also shows the fact that the number of sample respondents whose average monthly expenditure is up to Rs. 2,000 before joining SHGs has declined and the number of respondents whose average monthly expenditure is Rs. 2,001 and above has increased after joining the SHGs. This indicates that the members spending power increases after they become members of SHGs.

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EXPENDITURE LEVEL (MONTHLY) OF THE RESPONDENTS

EXPENDITURE LEVEL	% OF THE RESPONDENTS	
	BEFORE JOINING SHG	AFTER JOINING SHG
Up to Rs. 1,000	28.00	20.67
Rs. 1,001 – Rs. 2,000	31.33	24.67
Rs. 2,001 – Rs. 3,000	22.00	27.33
Rs. 3,001 – Rs. 4,000	14.00	20.00
Above Rs. 4,000	04.67	07.33
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Primary data

TABLE NO 5

It is evident from Table 6 that savings of sample respondents have gone up after they became members of SHGs as compared to their earlier savings. This signifies that the savings of the members of the SHGs have risen with an increase in their income. This shows that the SHG movement is in the right direction towards eradicating the poverty of the people.

SAVINGS LEVEL (MONTHLY) OF THE RESPONDENTS

SAVINGS LEVEL	% OF THE RESPONDENTS	
	BEFORE JOINING SHG	AFTER JOINING SHG
Up to Rs. 100	38.00	22.67
Rs. 101 – Rs. 200	27.34	26.00
Rs. 201 – Rs. 300	17.33	23.33
Rs. 301 – Rs. 500	10.00	18.00
Above Rs. 500	07.33	10.00
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: primary data

TABLE NO 6

It is evident from Table 7 that out of all types of decisions taken for the study to know the opinion of the SHG members regarding the increase in their power in decision making in their family and outside, majority of them have opined that their opinion was considered and they were allowed to take the decisions. The majority of sample respondents opined that their power has increased in purchase and sale of current assets, domestic animals and ornaments, purchase of home appliances, purchase of clothes, performance of functions, participation in social and political activities, etc. Further, the majority of the SHG members have opined that their opinion is not taken into consideration in other decisions like purchase and sale of fixed assets, construction and improvement in housing facility, raising and repayment of loans of the family and children education, etc. These indicate that the members were given much more freedom in taking many important decisions of their family.

INCREASING POWER OF DECISION MAKING OF THE RESPONDENTS AFTER JOINING SHGS

TYPES OF DECISIONS	OPINION OF THE RESPONDENTS (%)

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	YES	NO
Purchase and Sale of Assets	48.67	51.33
Purchase and Sale of Domestic Animals	54.67	45.33
Purchase and Sale of Ornaments	62.00	38.00
Purchase of Home Appliances	63.33	36.67
Purchase of Clothes (Dress)	70.00	30.00
Construction & Improvement of Housing Facility	48.00	52.00
Raising of Loan	46.00	54.00
Repayment of Loan	42.00	58.00
Savings & Investments	43.33	56.67
Education of Children	49.33	50.67
Participation in Political Activities	50.00	50.00
Participation in Social Activities	62.67	37.33

Source: primary data

TABLE NO 7

7. FINDINGS

The main findings of the study are:

- 35.34% of sample respondents are in the age group between 30-40 years while 05.33% are less than 20 years.
- 61.33% of sample respondents have individual family system and 38.67% joint family system.
- 37.33% sample respondents have 3-4 dependents while 16% have 5-6 dependents.
- 51.33% of sample respondents have joined SHGs for getting loan, 26% to promote savings and 18% for social status.
- More number of sample respondents has taken loan for investment purposes.
- 79.34% of sample respondents have repaid the loan on time.
- Monthly income of majority of sample respondents has increased after joining SHGs.
- Monthly expenditure of the sample respondents has gone up after joining SHGs.
- Savings of sample respondents has gone up after they became members of SHGs.
- Majority of sample respondents opined that their power has increased in taking family decisions after joining SHGs.

8. CONCLUSION

The economic progress of India depends on the productivity of both male and female workforce. However, in India women were confined within the four walls of their house and were dominated by males. Of late, there has been tremendous progress in the social and cultural environment in India. Women are now participating in all productive activities and are at par with men. No doubt, the SHG movement in India has been working in the right direction, but it is necessary to empower more and more women in social, cultural, economic, political and legal matters, for the interest of the family in particular and the nation in general.

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