

Economic Empowerment of Women in Theni Through Self Help Groups

*Mrs. G. MAHALAKSHMI, #M. DIVYA DEVI

*Head & Assistant professor, #M.Phil Scholar, Department of commerce, Nadar Saraswathi College of arts & science, Theni, India.

ABSTRACT - The empowerment of women is crucial for the development of the country. Women empowerment is a process in which women challenge the existing norms and culture, to effectively promote their well being. The Indian Constitution grants equality to women in all aspects. In this regard, the year 2001 was celebrated as the year of Women Empowerment. The concept of self help groups (SHGs) introduced by the Ministry of Rural Development has taken its roots in nook and corner of the rural areas and in the semi-urban and urban areas, which help improve the living standards. The present paper examines the economic empowerment of the SHG members through the SHGs. The study proves that the SHGs enabled the women to have a significant improvement in the economic empowerment. This paper “Economic Empowerment of women in Theni through self help group” Deals about the self help groups and its activities for the empowerment of women in Theni.

Keywords – Empowerment of Women, Self Help Groups, culture.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Empowerment” is a buzz word most commonly used in India today by journalists, Social activists, Academics, Politicians and people from all walks of life. Basically it expresses the desire of people who feel powerless to have more control over their life. In practical terms it requires decentralization of power and authority. In short it aims at the participation of deprived sections of people, including women, in the decision making process. Women, Particularly in Asia, Africa and Latin America, View women’s empowerment as a means to achieve an alternative future society. This view is best expressed by DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a new Era) born in 1985 as a result of the collective endeavour of individual Women and Women’s groups from different parts of the world. Empowerment as a concept was introduced at the international conference in 1985 at Nairobi. The conference defined empowerment as a redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of Women.

POSITION OF WOMEN IN ANCIENT TAMIL SOCIETY

The Designing development and introduction of different programmes by the self Help Groups for their uplift will help Women’s Economic Empowerment. From time immemorial the Indian Women especially Tamilnadu Women have not enjoyed the decision making power through they were engaged in various kinds of economic activities. Women, the passive receptacles, were invisible in

the economic history of early Tamilnadu that is during the Sangam age which lasted between 300 B.C and 300 A.D. There are evidences in the Sangam Classics about the employment of women in Agricultural pursuits. They had neither little nor any control over either production or distribution activities. Obviously they were engaged in different activities associated with smaller and mean pursuits of agriculture. Planting, Wedding, harvesting, husking, winnowing and protecting the ripened crops from the damages caused by birds, locusts, etc. are some of the activities carried out only by women. Besides, they also were involved in such activities like processing milk, weaving, basket making, etc.

Generally the Sangam classics portray women as those known for their Chastity Cilappatikaram by the Jain work Ilango Adigal and Manimegalai, a Buddhist work by Seethalai Sattanar attest to the above traits as their charactersits qualities. Some of the best Examples were Kannagi, Madhavi and her daughter Manimegalai. In the same way, Ahananuru and purananuru, depict the various traits of Aham and Puram elements. But they had their own Personal and individualistic economic involvements.

II. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The word empowerment is defined as the process by which women take control and ownership of their choices. Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision making power and control and transformative action. Empowerment of women signifies harnessing women

power by conscientising their tremendous potential and encouraging them to work towards attaining a dignified and satisfying way of life through confidence and competence as person with self-respect, rights and responsibilities. The core elements of empowerment have been defined as agency (the ability to define one's goals and act upon them), awareness of gendered power structures, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International Women's Conference at Nairobi in 1985.

The conference defined empowerment as "A redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women. It is "the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power". Empowerment is a multi-faceted process which encompasses many aspects i.e. enhancing awareness, increasing access to resources of economic, social and political etc." In recent years women empowerment has become a subject of great concern for the nations all over the world especially in poor and developing countries. The impact of globalization is seen eventually on position of women in some form or other in most of the developing countries with the variation of degree.

The United Nations has also strived hard in an incredible way to draw the due attention of the World Community on this issue in the past years. Women Empowerment refers to an increase in the strength of women such as spiritual, political, social or economic. The most common explanation of "Women's Empowerment" is the ability to exercise full control over one's actions. Thus, women empowerment occurs in real sense when women achieve increased control and participation in decision making that leads to their better access to resources it often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities.

III. SELF-HELP GROUPS

Women and SHGs in many parts of the country have achieved success in bringing the women to the main stream of decision making. The SHG in our country has become a source of inspiration for women's welfare formation of SHG is a viable alternative to achieve the objectives of rural development and to get community participation in all rural development programmes. SHG is also a viable organized set up to disburse micro credit to the rural women and encouraging them together into entrepreneurial activities. (Abdul, 2007).

To alleviate the poverty and to empower the women, the micro-finance, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and credit management groups have also started in India. Self Help Group (SHG) is a small voluntary association to form a group. It is informal and homogenous group of not more than twenty members. SHGs consist of maximum 20 members because any group having more than 20 members has to be registered under Indian legal system. That is why,

it is recommended to be informal to keep them away from bureaucracy, corruption, unnecessary administrative expenditure and profit motive. In fact, it is a home grown model for poverty reduction which simultaneously works to empower and shape the lives of its members in a better way. Groups are expected to be homogenous so that the members do not have conflicting interest and all the members can participate freely without any fear.

Self-help groups (SHGs) movement has triggered off a silent revolution in the rural credit delivery system in India. SHGs have proved as an effective medium for delivering credit to rural poor for their socioeconomic empowerment.

IV. SELF HELP GROUP ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Economic and social development of a country can only be meaningful when women are in the main stream of progress. It is possible through the existence self help groups. The main objective of self help groups is to empower women economically and to create large scale awareness with the active participation of women themselves. Then try to achieve it through entrepreneurship.

Women entrepreneurship of SHG has been gaining significance for various reasons. By developing entrepreneurship among women, it is expected that nearly half of the population become productive and creative. The introduction of entrepreneurship will also be easier to the family and ultimately to the whole community. This is needed so urgently particularly in a developing country like India the participation of women as a owner of small industry shows a very happy trend. Women's participation in self employment. Mahalirhittam is a Tamilnadu development project launched by the Tamil Nadu corporation for development of women during 1991-1992 with support of NGO'S (non governmental organisations) which are functioning through a network of women self help group. Mahalirhittam has increased importance to entrepreneur development programme (EDP) vocational training programmes are trained in skills such as making of Agarbathis (scented sticks), bakery, book binding, goat / turkey rearing, beautician, fish farming, candle making, jute/palm, sanitary napkins, greeting cards, dairy farm products, computer training, cookery, photo/video, screen printing, tailoring, toy making, Xerox, vermiculture, paper plate making, furtoys, terracotta product making, etc

V. ENTREPRENEURS OF THENI

Theni District is a district of Tamil Nadu state in India. Theni district is Located beside Madurai. There are 2500 mahalirhittam in Theni city and 1590 Self Help Groups in Corporation. The town of Theni is the district headquarters. The district is divided into two natural divisions: The hilly areas are constituted by parts of the Five taluk's Theni, Periyakulam, Uthamapalayam, Usilampatti a

nd Andipatti with thick vegetation and perennial streams from the hills on the western side and Cumbum valley which lies in Uthamapalayam taluk. When women entrepreneurs of self help groups applied for the training in Entrepreneur Development programmes (EDP), Majority of them get the idea of starting their own business. Some of the prominent entrepreneurs in Theni city as follows:

1. Seethalakshmi, Amman SHG of P C. PATTI, Theni Soap oil Manufacturing.
2. Ambika Sivanesh SHG N R T NAGAR. Theni, Snacks products making.
3. T.Saroja Bharathi Women group, running the tea stall inside the collector office campus.
4. Sasikala, Athiparasakthi SHG, ALLINAGARAM, Theni Preparing Snacks.
5. Sorna, Vetri SHG, RATHNAM NAGAR Theni, Designer of Chungadi sarees.
6. Rajeswari, Shivan SHG, SAMATHARMAPURAM, Theni, Xerox Shop Maintaining.
7. Harsha, Jai SHG, N R T NAGAR Theni, Tailor shop.
8. Sree, SHG, OLG GH ROAD, Theni. Maintaining parlour.
9. Deeps, SHG, FOREST ROAD, Theni. Milk shop.
10. Papa, SHG, ALLINAGARAM, Theni. Vegetable shop

VI. CONCLUSION

The scheme introduced by the Government with an intention to enhance the quality of poor people is serving a meaningful purpose. The major aim of the Self Help groups is the achievement of economic empowerment through their multidimensional approaches. Their services in promoting the activities of the self help groups have infused sustainability among women in Tamilnadu especially in Theni. The self help groups, by engaging themselves in varieties of projects and programmes, in a positive environment with self-confidence, achieve economic stability through non traditional enterprises in the society.

END NOTES

- [1] Empowerment of women and environmentalism sustainable development, Dr.G.Chandrika, reader in history, Pondicherry University, unpublished thesis, 2010.
- [2] N.subrahmaniam, Sangam polity, Ennes publications, theni 1989, p.7
- [3] Kumkum roy (ed), women in early Indian societies, manohar publications, New Delhi, 1999, p. 17
- [4] R.C.A. Dutt, history of civilization in ancient India, Bharathiya vidhya Bhavan, Bombay, 1970, p.189
- [5] A.S.Alterkar, the positive of women in Hindu civilization, motilalla banarsidar, New Delhi, 1987, p. 387

- [6] Kumkum Roy, women in early Indian societies p. 17
- [7] Alterkar, A.S. The position of women in Hindu civilization, p. 95