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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOCIAL STATUS OF SHGs INVOLVED TRIBAL WOMEN

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Abstract

Self help groups (SHGs) are small groups of women consisting of ten to twenty members and start saving by various activities and help the member in terms of finance and social activities. Present investigation was conducted at Dharampur taluka of Valsad District, Gujarat related to social status of SHGs involved tribal women. The study evaluated the before and after status of SHGs programme on tribal women's social status.

INTRODUCTION

The Self-Help Groups concept (SHGs) is generally used in India to refer to unregistered voluntary association of poor people of 10 to 20, from the same socio-economic group, involving primarily in saving and credit activities. Social empowerment signifies increased participation in decision-making and it is the process through which people feel themselves to be capable of making decisions and the right to do so (Kabeer, 2002). The SHGs are formed and supported usually by the NGOs or (increasingly) by the government agencies. Linked not only to banks but also to wider development programmes. The SHGs are seen to confer many benefits, both economic and social. The SHGs enable women to grow their savings and to access the credit which banks are increasingly willing to lend. The microfinance programmes like the Self-Help Bank Linkage Programme in India have been increasingly hailed for their positive economic impact and the empowerment of women. The self help group programme in Dharampur has become an instrument for the socio political development of people. There are few lacunas in the implementation of programme; however this could be overcome by constant efforts of administrators and people (Reddy and Chiralli: 2009). Various investigations have been done on SHGs by eminent scholars (Kour, 2008; Kokila, 2001; Islam and Sarmah, 2014; Sharma and Ansari, 2014). Present study is an attempt to find out the before and after status of SHGs programme on tribal women's social status in Dharampur Taluka of Valsad District, Gujarat.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out from Dharampur Taluka of Valsad District in Gujarat. In present investigation, 100 SHGs were selected for the study. An exploratory research design has been worked out with reference to social status of tribal women. Data were collected by using interview schedule and personal interview of tribal women before and after joining the SHGs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Results of present work are shown in Tables.

Table 1. Participation against Social Evils:

S. No.	Name of Evils	Frequency	Percentage
01	Alcoholism	02	05.73
02	Dowry	01	02.85
03	Infanticide	04	11.42
04	Not Part	28	80.00
Total		35	100

According to the above data a large majority of village rural women have not received any ideal knowledge about typical social evil of society. Even they never tried to fight against them. 80 percent rural women do not have any knowledge about this matter.

Table 2. Social Empowerment after Joining SHGs:

S. No.	Social Evils	Frequency	Percentage
01	Alcoholism	15	42.85
02	Dowry	10	28.57
03	Female Infanticide	05	14.28
04	Not Aware	05	14.28
Total		35	100

After joined with SHGs, the data indicates that near about 85 per cent were aware about all social evils and they know how to eradicate that they had started approach to fight such social evils in the society. Only 15 per cent of SHGs empowered have little idea about that. That is a good symbol for future development of woman's life. Many women had received solidarity after joining SHGs; they had gained inheritance the right to property. Now they are playing equal social role in society with male counterpart because Indian society is male dominated, but now social conditions have become different owing to effective instrument of SHGs.

Political Empowerment:

Politically women in India have very poor positions. Barring the president of India as a unique exception, a few of them are ministers, members of parliament or assemblies; many are the IAS and IPS officers, and a sizable number do hold different posts in government and private organizations. However, the scenario in the tribal front is gloomy and dismal. Many of the tribal women are illiterate and lacking of skills to access to mainstream and get accommodated. As tribal, they are segregated from others by the constitutional and statutory provisions. As tribal they are segregated from others culture as anthropology depicts their picture. It may be possible that different elements of their social structure and culture become conducive to changing social conditions and therefore get adjusted and accommodated in the organization and functioning of the SHGs.

The tribal women are little aware of their political rights especially the reservation policy. The Government of India and the state government have launched many schemes giving the rural tribal ample opportunity to work. But a few of them have received benefits from Government policies. Such beneficiaries in turn have positive impacts on rural empowerment process.

Awareness of Right, Reservation Policy & Govt. Schemes:

Before joining the SHGs 74.28 per cent village women were not aware about their right to reservation in representation, services, admissions, etc. Only about 26 per cent female of village have the gross idea about their fundamental rights incorporated in the Indian constitution and women rights under different statutes. The Government at different levels has launched different schemes but they were not provided proper guidance that they had needed to receive proper benefits of different schemes especially made for the uplift of tribal community. Therefore, it is possible that tribal women are backward and there are very few possibilities for changes.

Table 3. Awareness after Joining SHGs

S. No.	Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
01	Constitutional Right	10	28.57
02	Women Reservation	18	52.43
03	Don't Know	07	20.00
Total		35	100

The data indicates that near about 80 per cent SHGs rural women had come to know about the fundamental rights and role of Panchayati Raj in favour of women. After joining with the SHGs, the rural women beneficiaries know about rights and demands for equality. They are going to be empowered and they had received considerable status as women in Indian society. They try to construct their social reality accordingly.

CONCLUSION:

In general, it can be said that SHGs have promoted values of equality, solidarity, tolerance and shared responsibility. They have to move further in promoting the values of respect for nature and of good governance; they have the potential to do so if allowed space to grow at their own social ecology and with their own agenda. NGOs and government should let them do so.

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