The co-operative societies play a phenomenal role in uniting people and marching them towards the realm of development. The cooperative movement of India is the largest in the world. It has given birth to different kinds of co-operatives societies in different spheres like producer's co-operatives, consumer's co-operatives, tribal co-operatives etc. Co-operative societies are service enterprises aiming at rendering service to its members. In one sentence the philosophy of co-operation can be summed up as “each for all and all for each”. Co-operatives are defined by International Cooperative alliance as an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and culture needs and aspiration through jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprises.

Women co-operative societies are the unique co-operatives which are established in for targeting specific goals. Nearly 62% of the people in India are living in rural areas and the movements like co-operatives are very less concentrated in these areas. The women in rural areas have been most disadvantaged because of male dominated society. They have all the potentials but lack the support and a movement of their own. The women co-operative societies are promising strategy to empower women in all the spheres of life. The role of women in co-operative is not apparent that of men. But there is a robust need to include all of them in the ambience of co-operatives. Today there are many women co-operatives being formed to deal particularly with women’s need. Majority of the co-operatives are registered under co-operative society’s act 1959. These societies not only deals with accepting and depositing the money from the members but focus much on self-employment development, creating awareness programme on dowry, family planning etc. These societies also thrusts in encouraging women to save money regularly and form SHG’s and include them as members.

The review of the past literature have focused much on agricultural co-operatives, producers co-operatives and other multipurpose co-operative societies but no study have been done on women co-operative societies. There are many women co-operatives have been functioning in Karnataka but do they really serve the disadvantaged community of the civil society? Do their activities empower the women in all spheres of life? What is the ultimate impact of these co-operatives on rural women? All these questions need to be answered through an empirical study. In this back ground the present study is focused on assessing the role of co-operative society in empowering the rural women.

This study is an empirical work designed using both analytical and descriptive methodology. The primary data is collected through interviews using schedules. The secondary data will be collected to form the theoretical base for the study from the published sources. For the purpose of the study 30 women cooperatives from 10 districts and a total of 900 women are selected using multi stage stratified random sampling method. All the respondents are the members of the women co-operative societies. The data collected through interview is further analyzed through using statistical techniques and Packages.

The results of the study will be very helpful for the international community. The study will disseminate the necessary inputs for the success of the women co-operatives in developing countries. The findings will communicate the gap for the development of the potentials hidden in women. The study will help the participants in knowing how the co-operative movement can make a positive impact in empowering the rural women socially, economically, personally, psychologically and financially. The study will communicate the feasible suggestions which will serve the international community in taking effective measures in improving the functions of women co-operative and the new strategies to diversify the existing activities of the society so that it can effectively benefit to the large weaker sections of the society.

Key words: Women Co-operative Society, empowerment, rural women, Karnataka, disadvantaged, social and economic empowerment.

References:


