

## Empowering Tribal Women through Entrepreneurship: A Study of Self Help Groups in Gajapati District of Odisha

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*Paper Received on February 03, 2018, Accepted on March 01, 2018 and Published Online on April 01, 2018*

### ABSTRACT

Self-Help Group is considered as an important means of bringing women to the forefront of the society. It is also argued that SHG can empower women since it instills a perception of strength and confidence through augmentation of income. Entrepreneurship enhances financial independence and self esteem of women. Case of 150 SHG members of tribal farming community from three tribal blocks i.e. Nuagada, Rayagada, R.Udayagiri of Gajapati District of Odisha were selected for the study. The information required for the study has been collected from both the primary and secondary sources. A multistage random sampling method has been followed. This study shows, the empowerment process through SHG movement in Gajapati is yet to achieve remarkable impact on tribal women by adopting entrepreneurial activities. The respondents have substantial income which clearly indicates the positive impact of SHGs on annual income of family. Most of the low income group family enhances their family income to semi medium category which shows that if they are provided with financial and technical support from the different Government and non-government departments. However, the main entrepreneurial activities performed by the respondents of all the three blocks of Gajapati District were goat rearing, marketing of fruits & vegetables, maize cultivation, Backyard poultry rearing, Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP) collection etc. Out of three blocks in R. Udayagiri block 29(58%) respondents are in poor economic condition and 19 (38%) of them have no other sources. So the respondent family is very much interested to avail new schemes of Government and the technologies with less investment. Unless women contribute significantly to the family income, empowerment of rural women in Gajapati District is not possible.

**Key words:** Tribal women; Empowerment; Entrepreneurial activities; Annual income;

**G**ajapati District is located in the southern part of Odisha. The District is located in the North Eastern Ghat Agro Climatic Zone with undulating topography where the temperature varies from 10°C to 39°C. The District experiences frequent drought like situations. The District consists of one subdivision, three tahasils, seven blocks, 129 Gram Panchayats, one Notified Area Council and one Municipality with 1619 villages. Gajapati has a sex ratio of 1042 females for every 1000 males, and a literacy rate of 54.29 per cent. The tribal constitute 47 per cent of the population in Gajapati District.

On the basis of occupational pattern, it is found that about 86.99 per cent of its population is earning their livelihood from agriculture. About 70 per cent of the total farm work is performed by women. Mostly women's participation is regarded as crucial factor for

the survival of the tribal households in terms of providing food, income, earning and management of financial resources in the District. Food gathering is another vital economic activity for women among agricultural tribal families. They are the major earners from the sale of NTFPs especially in forest dependent livelihood systems. These scheduled tribe women have a major role in growing a number of horticultural crops (pineapple, oranges, jack fruit, mangos, cashew and lemon. Micro enterprises contribute to an increased diversification of household economic activities, increased relevance on productive activities, and improved economic security. *Choudhary (2011)* in his study emphasized on the role of women entrepreneurs, as they have been making a significant impact in all segments of the economy in India, However, it is

potentially empowering and liberating only if it provides women an opportunity to improve their well-being and enhance their capabilities. Another level of analysis of the state and central government in the promotion of such an organization of the women that promotes entrepreneurship development is studied by *Verma (2007)* also emphasizes the need of overhaul of existing structure and processes of empowerment and direct involvement of feminists in the programs and policies of development. The Self-Help Groups in Gajapati district are promoted by NGOs as well as Government agencies. *Ganesh murthy (2007)* in his study stated that majority of the women continues to be confined to micro, small-scale enterprises in spite of efforts made toward economic empowerment of women. *Behera (2015)* emphasized in his study that members of SHGs had more interest and aspiration towards training aspect like value added products, procurement and marketing of the produce and toy making etc. Special attention need to be given to increasing employment opportunities and productive resources of women through special financial intermediaries, building women's competitiveness and increasing economic exchanges among women entrepreneurs. *Sharma & Ansari (2014)* mentioned that the SHGs were not only benefited by bank finance but also benefited by grass root participation in SHGs activities. The objective of the study was to find out the relationship between SHGs & women economic empowerment through entrepreneurship. *Kadu (2013)* also said that they need orientation about new technology. Some method and result demonstrations should be conducted by different extension agencies, for increasing participation of tribal women through SHGs.

**METHODOLOGY**

Based on the number of effective groups framed by District Social Welfare Office (DSWO) in tribal area of Gajapati District, top three blocks were selected

for the study viz., Rayagada, Nuagada, R. Udayagiri .Again from the three blocks a total number of 15 villages were selected for the study. From these villages 30 effective groups were chosen from which 150 respondents were selected. After discussing and collecting the data, entrepreneurial activities were numbered up to 20. The extent of participation was seen on a 3 point continuum as regularly, occasionally and never and the scores were given as 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The aggregate participation score of each respondent was obtained by adding the respective score for each item. Based on the responses of the respondents the frequencies and percentages were calculated. Maximum score obtained by respondents indicated higher participation in different entrepreneurial activities. Annual income of the family refers to the income earned by all the members of the family of the respondents from agriculture, subsidiary and other source in one year and expressed in terms of rupees. To know the significant impact on annual income after joining the SHG the quantification of variable is grouped as low (Up to Rs.17, 000), semi-medium (Rs.17, 001-34,000), medium (Rs.34, 001-51,000) and high (Above 51,000). Statistical tools employed to analyze the data included frequency distribution, percentage, mean, standard deviation, mean score and Pearson's chi-squared test.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The economic condition of Gajapati is as old as the primitive tribals who make their mark in the inaccessible hill ranges for their sustenance. However, the District lags behind from the point of view of industrial growth and per capita income. Income of a person directly influences in decision making process. It facilitates for the development of infrastructure, inputs and fulfils the aspiration and goal of the individual as well as family. At the same time, it is equally difficult to assess the annual income as the farming communities not keeping records. The researcher has made sufficient probing during data collection, analyzed from

**Table 1. Distribution of the respondents according to annual income (Before Joining)**

Income Group	Score	Nuagada		Rayagada		R.Udayagiri		$\chi^2$
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Low	1	35	70	13	26	36	72	
Semi-Medium	2	11	22	24	48	10	20	
Medium	3	3	6	12	24	1	2	
High	4	1	2	1	2	3	6	
Total		50	100	50	100	50	100	10.39**

**Table 2. Distribution of the respondents according to annual income (After 3 years joining)**

Income Group	Score	Nuagada		Rayagada		R.Udayagiri		$\chi^2$
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Low	1	9	18	4	8	15	30	
Semi-Medium	2	30	60	23	46	27	54	
Medium	3	8	16	16	32	3	6	
High	4	3	6	7	14	5	10	
Total		50	100	50	100	50	100	15.08**

different angles and assessed the annual income of the respondents. The annual income was grouped into low, semi medium, medium and high income group before and after joining in the SHG with mean data.

The analyzed data has been presented in Table 1 & 2. As observed from the above tables and figure, 70 per cent respondents belonged to low income group followed by 22 per cent for semi medium, 6 per cent for medium and 2 per cent for high income group of Nuagada block before joining and the corresponding data for after joining was 18 per cent, 60 per cent, 16 per cent, 6 per cent for low, semi medium, medium and high respectively. Likewise for Rayagada block 26 per cent respondents belonged to low income group followed by 48 per cent for semi medium, 24 per cent for medium and 2 per cent for high income group before joining and the corresponding data for after joining was 8 per cent, 46 per cent, 32 per cent, 14 per cent for low, semi medium, medium and high respectively. However, 72 per cent respondents belonged to low income group followed by 20 per cent for semi medium, 2 per cent for medium and 6 per cent for high income group of R. Udayagiri block before joining and the corresponding data for after joining was 30 per cent, 54 per cent, 6 per cent, 10 per cent for low, semi medium, medium and high respectively.

Then it can be concluded from the above findings that, the respondents had substantial income. Most of the low income group family enhances their family income to semi medium category which shows that if they are provided by financial and technical support from the different Government and non-government departments. Extension functionaries of different department also have to monitor regularly and facilitate them for marketing of their products to earn actual net profit from their enterprise.

Data pertaining to the entrepreneurial activities performed by the respondents has been presented in the Table 3. It is evident from the Table 3, that the mean

values with their standard error, standard deviation and variance for the Nuagada block according to 3 different scores i.e. never, occasional and regular were found to be  $39.35 \pm 2.35$ , 10.49, 110.13;  $6.25 \pm 1.72$ , 7.68, 58.93 and  $4.40 \pm 1.01$ , 4.51, 20.36 respectively. Likewise for Rayagada block they were found to be  $37.85 \pm 2.29$ , 10.24, 104.77; 6.40, 1.51, 6.76, 45.73 and for R. Udayagiri block the respective values were found to be  $35.65 \pm 2.90$ , 12.96, 167.92;  $10.20 \pm 2.14$ , 9.56, 91.33 and  $4.15 \pm 1.26$ , 5.61, 31.50 respectively.

However, the main entrepreneurial activities performed by the respondents of all the three blocks of Gajapati District were goat rearing, marketing of fruits & vegetables, maize cultivation, backyard poultry rearing, Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP) collection etc. So it is concluded here that the entrepreneurial activities performed by the respondents of all the three blocks of Gajapati District have significant contribution in women empowerment. But there is a very good scope and resources available for the tribal women to earn additional income in the study area and lack of awareness to avail schemes of Government department and technical knowhow discourage them to adopt other entrepreneurial activities.

*Cause of Participation in entrepreneurship activities of the respondents:* Participation in entrepreneurship activities of the respondents have been presented in Table 4. However, 16 respondents of Nuagada block are under poor economic condition (32%) are adopting the enterprise for economical benefit and 12(24%) respondents traditionally doing the enterprise as there is no other option to strengthen the economics of their family. As regards to Rayagada block the number of respondents to buy assets is 22(44%) as they are able to meet the family requirement and the saving money is utilized accordingly. Likewise for R. Udayagiri block it is stated here that, 29 (58%) respondents are in poor economic condition and 19 (38%) of them have no other

**Table 3. Entrepreneurial activities performed by the respondents**

Activities	Nuagada			Rayagada			R.Udayagiri		
	Never	Occasional	Regular	Never	Occasional	Regular	Never	Occasional	Regular
Dairy	44	5	1	35	5	10	42	7	1
Tailoring	44	1	5	43	2	5	45	5	0
Goat rearing	31	4	15	30	6	14	23	18	9
Marketing of fruits and vegetable	37	11	2	35	10	5	23	22	5
Marketing of tamarind	50	0	0	50	0	0	45	5	0
Maize cultivation	35	5	10	32	7	11	12	18	20
Brick making	50	0	0	45	0	5	40	0	10
Broom binding, Khali Stitching	25	14	11	20	05	25	31	15	4
Value added products from Mango, Pineapple, Lemon, Jackfruit	50	0	0	20	05	25	31	15	4
Vegetable cultivation	28	17	5	29	16	5	22	21	7
Honey bee cultivation	43	2	5	40	4	6	50	0	0
NTFP Collection	20	23	7	19	22	9	22	26	2
Seasonal Business	50	0	0	34	16	0	45	0	5
Grocery Shop	50	0	0	50	0	0	49	0	1
Mat making	34	11	5	30	10	10	50	0	0
Backyard Poultry Rearing	20	23	7	22	19	9	16	19	15
Mid day meal preparing	50	0	0	50	0	0	42	8	0
Mushroom cultivation	34	6	10	33	7	10	33	17	0
Sunflower cultivation	42	3	5	38	8	4	50	0	0
Tractor Hiring	50	0	0	45	0	5	50	0	0
Mean	39.35	6.25	4.40	35.00	7.10	7.90	36.05	9.80	4.15
±SE	2.35	1.72	1.01	2.26	1.49	1.59	2.83	2.05	1.26
SD	10.49	7.68	4.51	10.13	6.66	7.10	12.67	9.15	5.61
Variance	110.13	58.93	20.36	102.53	44.31	50.41	160.47	83.75	31.50

**Table 4. Cause of Participation in entrepreneurship activities of the respondents**

Cause of the activity	Score	Nuagada		Rayagada		R.Udayagiri		Chi-square
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
To buy assets	1	9	18	22	44	2	4	
Traditionally participated	2	12	24	14	28	0	0	
To pass time	3	2	4	7	14	0	0	
Poor economic condition	4	16	32	1	2	29	58	
No other source	5	11	22	6	12	19	38	
Total		50	100	50	100	50	100	12.21**

sources. So the respondent family is very much interested to avail new schemes of Government and the technologies with less investment. However, the different entrepreneurship activities are statistically significant ( $P < 0.01$ ).

**CONCLUSION**

Generally, the impact of SHGs on rural women has been very minimal; or otherwise, it has had a superficial effectiveness, guising itself to be pervasive,

but without depth. Low education, derisory employment, scanty income, deficient savings, and meager assets are all illustrative of this. So the income generating activities must be selected after careful feasibility survey based on market studies and local resources. There should be provision of value addition marketing channels for the Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP) and other goods and services, which are produced by the SHGs in all three blocks. Technologies which are labour saving, drudgery reducing, income generating and productivity

increasing should be given wide publicity and their use should be encouraged through pragmatic extension. Media should play a vital role in projecting success stories of tribal women entrepreneur to motivate women farmers.

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