

Study of Status and Empowerment of Women in India

(Special Reference to Bihar)

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Abstract:

Women in India continue to face numerous challenges, despite recent strides made by the Indian government. India is one of the few countries in the world where women face legal and social discrimination. Female infanticide is still a problem in India, with as many as 1 million girls killed each year due to dowry-related violence or parental pressure to abort female fetuses. In addition, women are often treated as second-class citizens in India. Despite these challenges, there has been a significant amount of progress made by the Indian government over the past few years in terms of improving the status of women. Microfinance institutions such as Self Help Groups (SHGs) allow for personal interest and the collective betterment of the village. This type of organization has helped to create a culture of self worth outside of domestic roles. SHGs have contributed positively to Indian feminism and women empowerment by helping to break down discriminatory practices towards female entrepreneurs. Self-help groups show promising results and are an effective way to reduce poverty and empower women in India. This article discusses some of the key issues facing women in Bihar and how they are being tackled by various stakeholders.

Keywords: - *Women empowerment, microfinance, self-help group (SHGs) approach:*

1. INTRODUCTION

In India, girls are often given lower status than boys and face many challenges in terms of education and employment. This report looks at the status and empowerment of women in Bihar, one of India's most populous states. The status of women in India continues to be a matter of concern. India ranks 135 out of 188 countries in the 2017 World Press Freedom Index,

indicating a worrying level of media censorship and suppression of freedom of expression. The country also ranks poorly in terms of economic opportunities and gender parity. Despite these setbacks, there has been some progress made towards improving the status of women in India over the past few years. In a country where the role of women is often defined by tradition and culture, their rights are not recognized. There are many cultural and social barriers that prevent women from being equally represented in the workforce or gaining equal recognition. One step forward has been the adoption of a law called the "Women's Reservation Act" which mandated that in order to be able to hold parliamentary office, women must make up at least one-third of all candidates.

The law was adopted in 1993 after four decades of fighting for women's representation in government.

Status and empowerment of women in India (Bihar) is a complex issue with several dimensions. This article discusses the most important aspects of the status and empowerment of women in Bihar. The report "Status of Women in India", prepared by the National Commission for Women (NCW), points out that there is a long way to go before women are granted equal rights and opportunities. In Bihar, as in other parts of India, the status and empowerment of women is far from satisfactory. The following are some key findings of the NCW report on the status and empowerment of women in Bihar:

- ✚ Women in Bihar are highly disadvantaged vis-à-vis men with regard to their economic, social and political rights. They are also more vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation.
- ✚ A large proportion of women – almost two-thirds – are illiterate; this is especially true of rural women. As a result, they are largely dependent on men for economic support and face discrimination in all walks of life.
- ✚ Women have little or no voice in decision making bodies at all levels, including parliament and state legislatures. In addition, traditional barriers such as Dowry System perpetuate inequality between men and women.

In 2013, India passed the Women's Reservation Bill, which mandates that 33 percent of all seats in parliament and state legislatures be reserved for women. This is one of the most important steps that the Indian government has taken to improve the status of women. The bill was passed

After a long campaign by women's rights activists and it has led to increased opportunities for women across India. In addition, the Indian government has enacted a number of other measures that have benefited women. For example, it has introduced legislation that makes rape punishable by death, provided free education and maternity leave rights to working mothers.

According to a report by the World Bank, Bihar has experienced the worst form of gender inequality, with women earning only 54% as much as men. The report also found that female literacy rates are only 58%. These dismal statistics reflect the very low status of women in Bihar.

One reason for the poor status of women in Bihar is the traditional patriarchal system. Under this system, women are treated as second-class citizens and are not given the same opportunities and rights as men. This system has led to discrimination and violence against women.

In recent years, there have been some efforts made to change the status of women in Bihar. For example, in 2013, the state government launched a program called "**Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**" (Save daughters, educate daughters). This program aims to improve the education and health of girls, and to end gender discrimination. Despite these efforts, much work still needs to be done to improve the status of women in Bihar.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Status and empowerment of women in India (Bihar) is a complex issue with many dimensions. There is no uniform or consensual view on the matter, and opinions vary widely. In this literature review, we will discuss three prominent perspectives on the status and empowerment of women in India (Bihar).

Minimol (2012) conducted the study to critically evaluate the nature and extent of influence of working in SHGs on rural women. Analysis was based on the extent of different levels of empowerment achieved by the members through their participation in SHGs. Personal, social, economic and financial empowerment were evaluated.

Battase (2013) studied the factors which are becoming obstacles in the way of women empowerment; he actually studied the crime against women and concluded that if women are employed then she got confidence to act against crime also. If women is empowered the she tried to be more and do more so it will also lead to economic growth. In this study he concluded that

Empowerment is a tool for building confidence, increase understanding, enhancing personal skills, and being able to do something for their own self and for others.

Ahmed (2014) examined the impact of micro-credit on the empowerment of rural women in Bangladesh. A total of 120 respondents were selected as sample using stratified random sampling technique on Tukur bazar Union Parishad under Sylhet Sadar Upazilla in Sylhet district, Bangladesh and data was collected through face to face interview by using survey method. The women empowerment was measured by five dimensions .These dimension were (1) economic decision making, (2) household decision making,(3) freedom of physical movement, (4) ownership of property,(5) political and social awareness. OLS (Ordinary Least Squares) regression was applied to understand the effects of microcredit program on each dimension of women empowerment and aggregate women empowerment. The results showed that microcredit program was positively associated with each dimension of women empowerment as well as aggregate measure of Empowerment.

Kingsuk Maity et.al (2018) has been discuss to measure the empowerment of women in terms of sustained increase in income earning capacity accompanied by a freedom of choice in families which have come across out-migration of male members. This measure of empowerment of women is mainly based on three indicators, viz. restrictions placed on them, their decision-making powers, and their mobility. This study shows that out-migration of male members has not generated any significant impact on the empowerment of women members of those families. The most general factors which increase mobility of women, the decision-making power, and relatively less social restrictions placed on them are age, their education, marital duration, residential status, and occupation.

Eyben (2008) studied empowerment is when an individual group and organizations are now able to do what they didn't have courage to do earlier. Social empowerment is when people start to use their power to improve quality of their relationship in society, freedom from violence and on the other hand economic empowerment when people leads to think beyond their survival needs and political empowerment when people start to participate in political institutions.

Ahmed (2011) studied the level of empowerment of rural women through participating in microcredit program in Bangladesh. The study is actually based on data collected through questionnaire from the two groups of rural women. Women who are "with credit" and women

who are “without credit.” The study found that majority (84%) of the „with credit“ respondents are actually empowered in terms of family decision making matters compared (76%) to the „without credit“ respondent. It is concluded that „with credit“ rural women have enhanced their empowerment by participating microcredit programs of Grameen Bank Bangladesh.

Sarumathi (2011) studied in this paper role of microfinance in women empowerment by dividing it into three main dimensions, psychological empowerment, social empowerment, economic empowerment so as to fulfill the objectives as 1) to analyze the status of SHG“s in district 2) to study about the freedom of women members in SHGs 3) problems faced by women workers 4) to check the level of empowerment of women workers 5) to suggest the views for high level of empowerment. Primary data for this purpose was collected through field survey. To analyze the results descriptive analysis was used. The results showed that there is gradual increment in all the three sectors and far more increment can be done if NGOs provide more training programs for income generating activity.

Lalnunmawia (2008) studied impact of microfinance on women empowerment. He studied by putting cash into the hands of women is not called empowerment; rather empowerment is when women are experienced improved status and gender relations. Women are also participating in community level programs and their political participation has also increased. He found some negative impacts like women got workload leading to ill health effects; their purchasing power is limited to small purchases. Microfinance would be cost effective in bringing empowerment if business training would be provided, if investment would be done on women general education, seminars would be organized to motivate women.

3. Concept of women empowerment

In India, the concept of women empowerment has been evolving over the years. It has come to be seen as an important aspect of gender justice and a path to socioeconomic empowerment for women. In Bihar, the status and empowerment of women have been largely influenced by socio-cultural norms and traditional values. However, there have been some positive developments over the past few years, which are indicative of the changing trend in society.

The Status of Women report released by the National Commission for Women (NCW) in 2015 shows that although many factors continue to impede women’s progress, there have been some encouraging developments in recent years. While there is still a long way to go, it is heartening

To see that there has been a perceptible increase in cases of violence against women being registered with the police, as well as an increase in female participation in electoral processes. The NCW report also notes that while progress has been made towards achieving gender parity at all levels of governance, more needs to be done to improve female access to education and employment opportunities.

4. Current status of women empowerment in India:

In India, women continue to face many challenges in achieving their full potential. Despite having made great strides in recent years, women remain at a disadvantage in terms of social, economic and political empowerment. According to a report by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, only 36% of women in India are economically active, compared to 54% of men. Furthermore, only 27% of women are decision-makers at the local level, compared to 44% of men. In addition, only 19% of parliamentarians are female, illustrating the severe lack of female representation in government bodies.

Indian society has slowly been adapting the manner it depicts women with a trend toward more freedom, satisfaction and fair treatment. This comes after decades of years of challenges to women's rights in India including female infanticide, especially in rural areas, and the neglect of girls in schools. These issues are visible as women remain so few in Indian movie industry as well as prominent fields such as law. The many instances of injustices that have occurred for women for centuries is fading out to be replaced with a more optimistic message about female empowerment.

There is a widespread belief that a woman is born from a man. According to this Brahminism, women are men's property; they are the fuel which fuels their masculine nature both physical and psychological for their enlightenment- "Woman is man's means of self-realization". This ideology or perspective on women has been forcefully communicated through poems, religious rhetorical and in many other forms by eminent thinkers like Swami Vivekananda in his speech, "Glimpses of Life in America" delivered in Boston during 1893. Adherence to this view has led to tackling woman not as an adult with thinking capacity but rather an undeveloped girl who needs protection from men as well as from herself. Many mothers request her daughter to be married at sixteen so she can be protected from eve teasing by society and sexually enticing looks of men. There is also continuous poverty born out of practices such as dowry system that leaves thousands dead every year because parents think it would guarantee safety but instead

Puts the wife in debt. However, the past sixty years have witnessed numerous protests against brahmistic understanding sweeping the Sri Lankan society including more women seeking education and profession than ever before raising question on focus on marriages alone these days.

The problems between the importance of boy's education and girl's education are an only isolated kind of conflict. It has been a continuing argument for centuries about what is most beneficial for our society- youth mindlessly blinded by gender based rhetoric and division. Undoubtedly, the lack of female education leads to poor economic outlooks across the world and contributes to domestic instability. Girls are often pit against the idea that they should not attend school because early marriage will help "improve" their lives (4). One must consider both boys, who often grow up in impoverished conditions and girls as part of one fighting force in order to realize that equalism can be an enormous success story rather than mutually destructive.

In India, the status of women has improved over the years. After decades of neglect, they are now better educated than ever before and in many cases are found to be more economically self-sufficient. In 2007, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh issued a statement that condemned gender discrimination against women even in remote parts of rural India. The following year, laws were updated with family abuse being included in categories of crimes for which sterilization is no longer compulsory for victims. To date, more than 5 million tubal ligations have been performed without consent since 2006.

The lives of women in Bihar have evolved from being virtually buried in the farthest margins of society, barely surviving on scraps and leftovers, to becoming the driving force behind their families' gains in social and economic status. Women have become more educated than men, and they play more equal public roles even if, across a spectrum of institutions, implicit sexism persists. Despite these challenges, there have been some notable successes for women in recent years. For example, India has seen a significant increase in the number of women going into higher education levels. This is likely due to various initiatives aimed at empowering women, such as affirmative action programs that provide scholarships and financial assistance to girls and young women who wish to attend university. Additionally, there has been a rise in the number of female entrepreneurs in India, who are driving innovation and growth within the country's economy. The overall status of women in India has improved since the last Census was taken in 2001, when only 48% of women were literate. Now, 66% of Indian women are literate,

An impressive increase of 20 percentage points. However, there are still large disparities between men and women in terms of education, with only 27% of women holding a college degree or higher compared to 54% of men. Additionally, only about a third (34%) of all working women is in professional or technical occupations, while 67% of working men are in such jobs.

However, much work remains to be done in order to achieve true gender equality in India. The government should continue to implement policies

5. Current status of women empowerment in Bihar

There has been a recent upsurge in activism and advocacy on the behalf of women in India, with many now believing that their status has improved markedly in recent years. This is especially true when compared to neighboring states such as Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand, where violence against women remains rife and systemic discrimination against women is still commonplace. This article will explore the current state of women empowerment in Bihar, one of India's most populous states.

Despite being one of India's poorest states, Bihar has made significant progress in terms of women's empowerment over the past few decades. In 1991, for example, only 6% of female residents had access to education beyond primary school level; by 2011 this figure had increased to almost 30%. Similarly, while only 1% of households were headed by women in 1991, this figure had increased to nearly 10% by 2011. Such impressive progress has been made possible through concerted efforts by government officials, NGOs, and civil society organizations.

The status and empowerment of women in India is a complex issue. Despite significant progress made in women's rights and education over the last few decades, gender-based discrimination and violence continue to be widespread. In Bihar, the situation is particularly challenging.

Despite making significant gains in terms of literacy and numeracy rates, women remain largely marginalized in Indian society. In Bihar, for example, only 47% of women are literate and just over a third have access to an education beyond primary level. This low level of education and employment opportunities often leads to pervasive poverty and social exclusion for women.

Despite these challenges, there are a number of initiatives embarked upon by both government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) aimed at improving the status and empowerment of women in Bihar. Some of these initiatives focus on increasing access to safe reproductive health

Care, fighting gender-based violence, and improving economic opportunities for women.

While much progress has been made, there are still areas where Bihar falls short when it comes to empowering women. For example, although the state has introduced a number of schemes aimed at improving women's health.

6. Why does Bihar rank low on female empowerment?

Bihar ranks low on female empowerment due to a number of factors. One of the most significant is the low status of women in society. In Bihar, only 23% of women are literate and just 8% of women have access to an education beyond secondary level. This leaves many women without any opportunities or means to improve their lives. Additionally, there is a lack of legal and institutional support for women, which leaves them vulnerable to abuse and violence. As a result, many women find it difficult to gain access to health services and employment, leading to further poverty and inequality.

Despite these challenges, there are a number of initiatives underway in Bihar to empower women. For example, the government has launched a number of programs aimed at improving the quality of life for women, such as the Mahila Samakhya scheme which provides financial assistance to women entrepreneurs. Additionally, various NGOs are working hard to provide support and resources to female victims of abuse. These initiatives are making a real difference in the lives of Bihar's female population, and hopefully they will lead to even more progress in the future.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The article discusses the Status and Empowerment of Women in India. In a country as populous as India, it is not surprising to find stark contrasts in the status and empowerment of women. The article uses statistical data from the government's latest Census report to illustrate these disparities. The article concludes with discussion of what needs to be done to redress the disparities and empower women throughout India.

7.1 The scope of the study:

This study was majorly planned to observe the status and women's empowerment in India with Special reference to Bihar.

7.2 Sample Size:

100 samples from the area of study have been considered to conduct the present study.

7.3 Tools of data collection:

Information gathered through from various sources such as books, articles, and other related resources from microfinance and women empowerment.

7.4 Limitation of study:

The study is limited to theoretical and conceptual data collected from various source Text Books, Websites, research article.

8. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- ✚ To discuss the status and empowerment of women in Bihar, a state in eastern India.
- ✚ How improve the status of women in Bihar.

9. ROLE OF MICROFINANCE PROGRAMME IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

Women in developing countries are often prevented from accessing economic opportunities because of their lack of access to the financial market. Microfinance programmes allow women to break into the financial market and become more economically empowered. The Budgets of Women Empowerment and Micro Finance Programme are very important to the rural women. This programme is in place to help women who live in poverty in rural areas of Ghana to enhance their livelihoods by building their small businesses, as well as increasing their incomes. The government invests a lot more time, money and effort into strengthening the programs for female entrepreneurs than into other sectors. The Budgets of Women Empowerment and Micro Finance Programme are the biggest source of income for most rural women who live below poverty line.

The role of microfinance programme in women empowerment has now been widely accepted and is found to be effective. However, it is not only about the success of the project but also how much can a woman generate in her lifetime as a result. The fact that some women continue to struggle with living expenses despite being under the purview of a microfinance programme is also noted.

Women empowerment is a topic that has been gaining momentum in recent years. With the advent of microfinance, women have been able to take charge of their own finances and become business owners themselves. However, the system is not without its flaws. Some women find it

Difficult to access loans as they are usually only offered to those with a certain level of education, which many women do not have access to. In order to improve the quality of life for these women, there needs to be more support from different organizations who can help provide loans for those who cannot afford them on their own.

We have all read the headline of the story and probably know who is in charge of this programme, but the question is: what are they doing? Overview: Microfinance has been a significant source of capital for rural women around the world. Strides in technology and internet access have made it easier for rural women to access loan opportunities. This has allowed them to increase their income. Furthermore, these loans also give rural women access to technologies previously unavailable to them such as solar power, smart phones and water pumps. Therefore, microfinance programmes empower women by helping them gain more control over their lives.

Status and empowerment of women in India (Bihar): The microfinance programme has been critically important for the empowerment of women. This is because it provides access to financial resources that can be used to improve their lives. In addition, this programme has helped women to build their own businesses. This has led to a significant increase in their income and status. The microfinance programme has also helped to improve the livelihoods of their families.

9.1 Self- help group (SHGs) and women empowerment

In India, women face many challenges in terms of their status and empowerment. One significant issue is that women are not well represented in leadership positions in both the private and public sector. Additionally, there are disparities in wages and opportunities between men and women.

One way to address these issues is through the creation of self-help groups (SHGs). SHGs can provide a space for women to share their experiences and resources, and help them to build collective power. They can also promote female entrepreneurship and education, thereby increasing women's economic opportunities.

SHGs are designed to provide support to women, children and small household units in developing countries. These groups have also been proven to increase the women's participation in decision making processes and health. SHGs also have the potential of being a great tool for women empowerment.

In India, Women empowerment is a topic that has been around for many years. A self-help group (SHG) is an organization or informal gathering of women for the purposes of providing mutual support and help to each other to improve their quality of life. The Women Empowerment Act which was passed in 2006 and brought about many changes in Indian legislation, such as increasing the autonomy of women through their fundamental rights to property ownership, protection from domestic violence and sexual harassment, equal access to education and more financial independence. These changes were not without controversy however; some believe that the act did not go far enough. In terms of property ownership, the act only applies rights to those women who are married or have children. With regards to protection from domestic violence, the act does provide for specific measures if a woman is raped or subjected to sexual harassment by her husband or relative. Financial independence, however, is not provided by this law because it only applies to those with assets under 250,000 rupees (\$60000).

SHGs represent a new wave of feminism. A feminist movement that helps domestic violence survivors by giving them a place to share their stories, providing support and helping to put an end to the cycle of abuse. SHGs help give women a chance to make decisions and take control of their own lives. Some SHGs have also formed into "collectives," which work together for the same goal. Shyness is an emotion in which individuals are reluctant to share themselves, this can create a sense of loneliness that becomes overwhelming at times. As such, these groups offer a safe place where members feel they can share their feelings without judgment and then be supported by one another.

10. DATA ANALYSIS

In 1950, only 26% of women in India had access to education. However, by 2015, this number had increased to 54%. Additionally, there has been a significant increase in women holding elected office throughout India. As of 2016, there are 52 female MPs in the Indian Parliament. India is one of the most populous countries in the world with over 1.3 billion people. According to the 2011 census, women make up 48% of the country's population. This number is lower than the global average of 53%. Despite this, women have made some significant advancement in India over the years.

Despite being one of India's poorest states, Bihar has made significant progress in terms of women's empowerment over the past few decades. In 1991, for example, only 6% of female

Residents had access to education beyond primary school level; by 2011 this figure had increased to almost 30%. Similarly, while only 1% of households were headed by women in 1991, this figure had increased to nearly 10% by 2011. Such impressive progress has been made possible through concerted efforts by government officials, NGOs, and civil society organizations.

Despite these advances, there are still many barriers that prevent women from achieving equality in India. For example, female genital mutilation (FGM) is still practiced on a large scale in India. In 2016, FGM was reported to be carried out on nearly 2 million girls aged 5-14 years old.

In Bihar, female literacy rates are high (almost 75 percent) compared to the national average of 59 percent, and there has been a significant increase in the number of female college graduates over the past few years. However, this progress is not reflected in female employment levels. In 2013, only 34 percent of women were employed, which was lower than both the national average (42 percent) and the state average (40 percent). This indicates that there are still many barriers to female empowerment in Bihar. The study is exploratory in nature and is based on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was collected from various journals, articles, working papers, NGO reports etc. Primary data was enumerated from a field survey in the study of (Bihar) region.

Table: 1 Respondents opinion

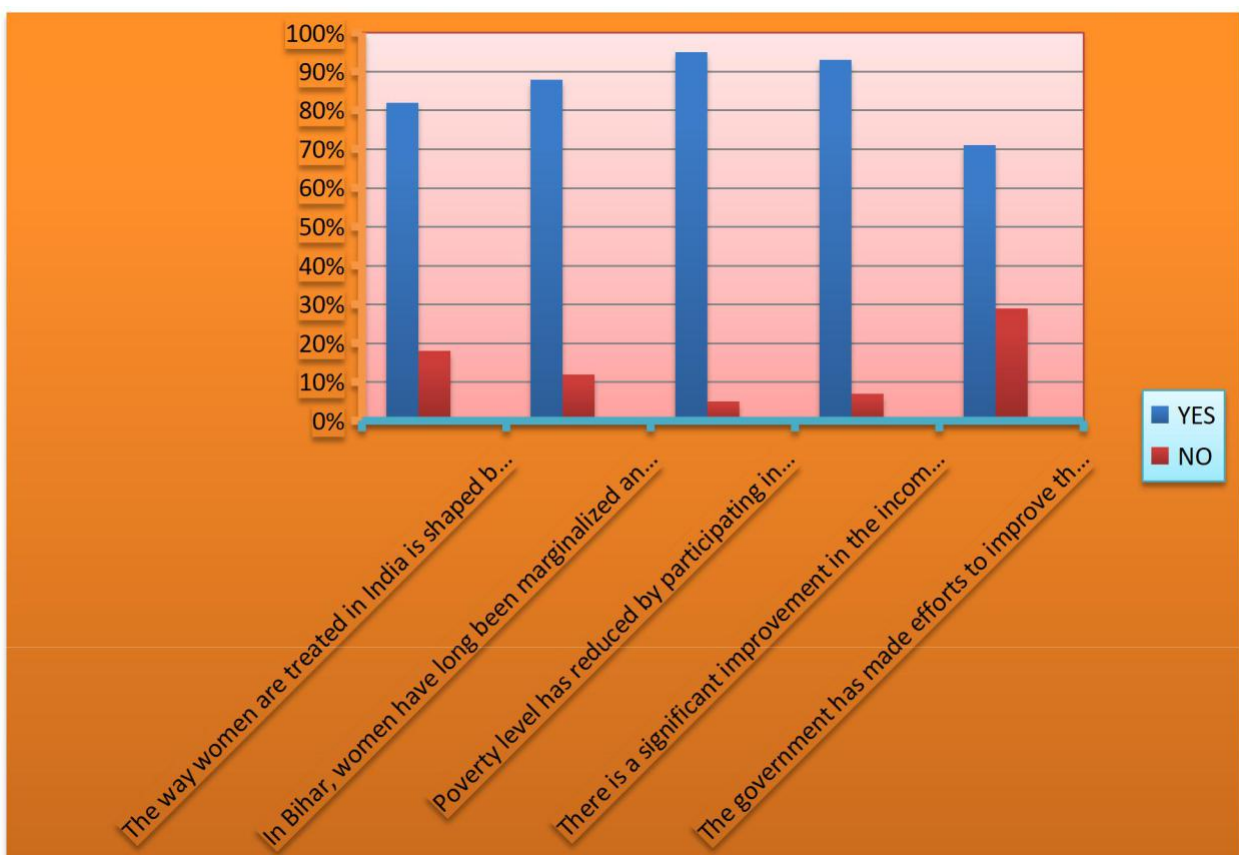
S.NO.	Questions	Respondents opinion	
1.	The way women are treated in India is shaped by economic inequality, political power dynamics, and cultural norms.	YES 82%	NO 18%
2.	In Bihar, women have long been marginalized and subordinated to men in all spheres of life.	88%	12%
3.	Poverty level has reduced by participating in microfinance program.	95%	5%
4.	There is a significant improvement in the income of the respondents after joining SHG.	93%	7%
5.	The government has made efforts to improve the situation for women, but much more needs to be done.	71%	29%

Source: Fild Survey.

More than 95 % respondents said that Poverty level has reduced by participating in micro finance program. 88% respondents said that In Bihar, women have long been marginalized and subordinated to men in all spheres of life.71% respondents fill that government has made efforts to improve the situation for women, but much more needs to be done.

Maximum number of respondents accepted that significant improvement in the income of the respondents after joining SHG.

Figure 1: Respondents opinion



Source: Field survey.

11. FINDINGS

In India, women face many challenges in terms of their status and empowerment. Researchers study has analyzed data from a survey to find out more about these issues.

- ❖ The study found that while women enjoy some legal and social rights, they are still relegated to a submissive role in society. They are also less likely than men to hold leadership positions, earn high incomes, or own property. Various factors - such as poverty, rural poverty, illiteracy and gender-based violence - continue to restrict women's opportunities and limit their access to education, health care, jobs and land.
- ❖ The researchers say that the status of women in India is shaped by complex interactions between economic inequality, political power dynamics and cultural norms. However, they emphasize that change can only be achieved through concerted action from all sections of society - including women themselves.
- ❖ In Bihar, women have long been marginalized and subordinated to men in all spheres of life. This has resulted in a deeply entrenched gender inequality, depriving women of their basic rights and limiting their opportunities for empowerment. Despite this status quo, women are making strides in many areas, including education and employment.
- ❖ More than 95 % respondents said that Poverty level has reduced by participating in micro finance program. 88% respondents said that In Bihar, women have long been marginalized and subordinated to men in all spheres of life. 71% respondents fill that government has made efforts to improve the situation for women, but much more needs to be done.
- ❖ Maximum number of respondents accepted that significant improvement in the income of the respondents after joining SHG.

11. SUGGESTIONS

1. The government has made efforts to improve the situation for women, but much more needs to be done.
2. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of women who are working outside the home. However, their opportunities remain limited.
3. In India, the status and empowerment of women is a complex issue that has been addressed in a number of ways.
4. The Hindu religion places a high value on the role of women, but the situation is far from perfect.

5. In Bihar, for example, only about 30 percent of jobs are available to women, and they earn only half as much as men.

CONCLUSION

Women in India suffer from a number of systematic disadvantages. These disadvantages include, but are not limited to: unequal rights and opportunities, violence, sexual abuse, and lack of education and employment opportunities. In spite of these challenges, women have made strides in recent years, as indicated by the fact that they now make up about half of the Indian population. Status and empowerment of women in India (Bihar) has witnessed considerable progress over the years, albeit with some limitations. While overall female literacy rates have increased from just 27% in 1951 to 64.5% in 2011, there is a significant gender gap in education attainment and rural women are particularly disadvantaged. In terms of economic opportunities, although women have made progress since the early 1990s, they are still largely excluded from prestigious occupations and face discrimination in the labour market. In terms of political representation, there has been some modest progress over time, with women occupying a significant percentage of seats in both the legislative and executive branches of government.

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