

**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH KUDUMBASHREE:
A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO SAMAGRA INITIATIVES
TOWARDS AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND
MARKETING IN KERALA**

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**By
AMUTHA R.**

**Under the guidance of
Dr. HEMALATHA A.V.
Research Supervisor and Guide**

**P.G and Research Department of Commerce
Sree Narayana College, Kannur
P.O Thottada, Kerala 670007**

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The present study focuses on the changes in the level of women empowerment, consequent to their membership and involvement in group activities. Samagra group has facilitated a common platform for the poor rural women, for solving their financial issues by pooling their saving and distributing the corpus of fund among the needy.

The Samagra project of the Kudumbashree has been designed as an integrated approach to community development through women empowerment in the state. The project assumes women empowerment as an effective strategy for Local Economic Development. This NHG led development strategy has found its success in mobilizing the whole women community in specific local areas towards development process and gainful employment. Apart from rendering the economic, social, political and psychological empowerment of member women in a locality, the Samagra projects had been instrumental in attaining community development also. The participation in Samagra NHGs has helped the rural women to come out of their family confinements and exhibit their competencies in organizing and managing income bearing entrepreneurial activities. However, in the absence of continued support and intervention from competent authorities, they show symptoms of saturation at very low levels of their capacity. Hence a strong base need to be created so that women could attain higher levels of achievement. It is desired that intervention from the authorities will be a great boon to the NHGs in their continued efforts to establish a gender equal and economically sustainable civil society in the state.

Scope for Further Study

There are areas where further research on the topic will be appreciated. The Samagra enterprises have now been brought under the Kudumbashree scheme of Collectives and Producer Companies. In the changed circumstances, the scope of Area Approach and overall women empowerment needs to be investigated deeply to explore the impacts of these schemes on the intended objectives. Such a study will also help the Kudumbashree Mission by bringing out the need for structural modifications in NHGs, according to the evolving socio-economic environment in the State.