

ABSTRACT

Microfinance, Democracy and Hierarchy

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Given the rapid development of the microfinance sector and the involvement of a number of stakeholders (NGOs, banks and public institutions), it becomes urgent to analyse the gap between the multiple expectations raised by microfinance and the effective impacts on the field. Collective lending (through the concept of Self-help-groups) is thought as a way to promote equality and solidarity values and practices. How such values articulate themselves with hierarchic values, still prevalent in the Indian context? Keeping this broad objective in mind, the sub-objectives of the present research are primarily to:

- ❑ Define the concept of empowerment ; analyse its hold and relevance vis-à-vis the Indian social system, study the various aspects involved and understand the *process* of empowerment.
- ❑ Evaluate the microfinance impact with a focus on the following aspects: risk management, the influence of group dynamics and the influence of the microfinance methodology (Self-Help Groups, Grameen Bank, Cooperatives, Individual lending)