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CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA *

Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi, has rightfully defined empowerment of women, as a situation "when women, whom we call abala become sabala, i.e all those who are helpless will become powerful."

Women empowerment is central to the human development. But, it is a matter of utter irony that in reality women hardly get any opportunity to display their own individual ideas as they are considered as vulnerable section of society, who are often sidelined from taking any important decision. Gender differences, customs, traditions, social attitudes etc., are mainly responsible for the inequality between men and women. Women in traditional patriarchal society have always been considered as weak. Unless women are educated and involved in the process of empowerment, the goal of equality cannot be achieved. The Indian Constitution gives equal political rights to both men and women, but the representation of women in Parliament and State Legislatures is very less. The 81st Constitutional Amendment Bill to provide for one-third reservation for women in Parliament was tabled in 1996 but no national and regional political party has put sincere effort to pass the Bill till date.

However, the scenario has changed of late, as modern women has become very conscious of their rights, and empowering the women as a whole has become a new motto.

The objective of the author is to explore and analyze superior status of women achieved in various pockets of India, gain knowledge, which can be propagated for the benefit of remaining larger masses of women in India.

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Keywords: Gender discrimination, women education and empowerment policies, development and participation etc

Introduction

“Swami Vivekananda said *“There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing”*¹

Women empowerment is a multi-dimensional concept, which encompasses various facets of women liberation. The issue of gender justice and women empowerment has been a concern in many nations and in many an arena for some centuries. Though there has been formal removal of institutionalized discrimination, yet the mindset and the attitude ingrained in the subconscious have not been erased. Women still face all kinds of indignity and prejudice.

Women empowerment is essentially the process of upliftment of the social, economic and political position of women and it involves the building up of a society wherein women can live without the fear oppression, exploitation and discrimination that go with being a woman in a traditionally male-dominated society. Although women constitute half of the population and is an active agent of social change, yet they are still being subjugated and suffer from fewer rights and lower social status. The widespread discrimination and exploitation upon women evoke the need of empowerment of women and education can be used as an effective tool for achieving it.

India’s population is more than 1.34 billion and women section is close to half (>48%) having sex ratio 943 per 1000 man and child sex ratio 919 per 1000 as per census data.² It is important to realize that if potential of such a large percentage of human capital is untapped, it will hinder development of the nation from social and economic standpoint. However Women are discouraged in various ways to put forward their ideas and participate in critical decision making processes. According to 2013 UNDP report on human development indicators, all South Asian countries

¹ www.swamivivekanandaquotes.org

² <https://www.livepopulation.com/country/india.html>

except Afghanistan were ranked better for woman than India. It predicts that an Indian girl child aged 1-5 years is 75% more likely to die than the boy child.³

Various schemes, programs, protection laws since independence has helped us to move in the right direction but the momentum is sluggish as women still face all kinds of indignity and prejudice. It is seen that lack of education among girls leads them to make bad decisions or rely on others which greatly influence the quality of life they are leading. They do not find role models to follow, as real life heroes are often less published by media and does not feature enough in advertisements put up by governments. Stories of extremely successful personalities are good to be acquainted with but ,they often are in a different league of their own which large section of women in society may not be able to correlate with.

Pillars of woman Empowerment

Woman empowerment is absolutely essential as they face various problems like gender discrimination, female infanticide, dowry, child marriage and various other atrocities like rape, murder, public humiliation, and domestic violence etc. They are deprived of decision making power, freedom of movement, exposure to media, proper access to education and employment.

The foundation of woman empowerment need to be strong in order to stand tall supported by four main pillars of Empowerment. They are:

- a) Social Empowerment through Education
- b) Economic Empowerment through flexible employment opportunities
- c) Political Empowerment by encouraging their representation in decision making bodies
- d) Legal Empowerment to safeguard their interest

Need of Education for Social Empowerment

Empowerment of women is an essential apparatus of development not only of the women but also for her entire family and thereby a nation. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said, “To awaken the people, it is women who must be awoken; once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves.”⁴ Education empowers women more effectively which would help to

³ <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/corporate/annual-report-2013.html>

⁴ <https://www.smilefoundationindia.org/blog/2018/06/05/gender-equality-with-women-empowerment/>

abolish gender inequality, develop their potentials, increase social and economic return, improve their quality of life, produce educated and healthy children and reduce fertility and mortality rates.

In spite of constitutional guarantees, enactment of laws, efforts by the government through various schemes and programs and U.N.O's directives, the equal status of women in India is not still achieved up to the desired goals after 72nd years of Independence. As per census data, woman literacy rate increased from 53.67% in 2001 to 65.46% in 2011 compared to man for whom literacy rate increased from 75.26% to 82.14 in the same period.⁵

Education is key to empowering women's participation in decision making in democracy, dynamic transformation of society and shaping the destiny of the future generations. Hence education can be used as powerful tool to help the women to understand the constitutional directives and legislative provisions for reducing women's exploitation and negligence upon them, to reduce the gender gap in literacy levels, to create awareness about the existing social problems and to fight for fulfilment of the basic amenities and welfare of the community as a whole.

Moreover, education helps to enable women to exercise their rights on equal footing with men and participate in national development. Education is henceforth can be considered as the milestone for women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges and to confront their traditional role and change their life. The goal of becoming a superpower and a developed country by 2020 can be achieved only when the women of India will be empowered through education. The National Policy on Education (1986) has emphasized the need of women education for their effective participation in social and economic activities. The National Policy on Education, 1986 states that, "Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women."⁶ The National Educational system will play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women as per The National Policy on Education 1986.

⁵ <http://www.mospi.gov.in/recent-reports>

⁶ http://www.ncert.nic.in/oth_anoun/npe86.pdf

Need of Economic Empowerment

According to International Labor Organization (ILO) report, while women represent 50% of the world adult population and a third of the official labor force, they perform two-third of all working hours and receive only one tenth of income⁷. In India, women form 48% of the population, but they are 29% of the workforce and only 26% have access to formal credit.⁸ Mostly woman work in unorganized sectors and are discriminated. Majority of woman are employed in agricultural work. Even though, there is no dearth of well educated and well qualified woman, they are not able to utilize numerous employment opportunities due to lack of flexible timings, maternity leave, provision of child care/creches at workplace. As per world poverty clock, India is ranked second as of May 2018 in the poverty index.⁹ If India need to meet its sustainable development goal of escaping poverty by 2030, women education and empowerment needs further impetus. Moreover, marriage needs to hang around till the right age and until certain degree of education is received. Educated married women will provide a stable family environment and may contribute financially if they get economic independence to make their children flourish.

Need of political Empowerment

In India, political participation is not quiet impressive when compared with men. Though, women's political participation at present is quiet encouraging as compared to the older times, but in India, women who have decision making powers hail invariably from urban and elite groups. Even today women representation in the Parliament is far from being satisfactory. It is high time that The Women's Reservation Bill which 33% of seats for Indian women at legislature, be passed soon in the Parliament. Moreover, when women will hold higher position in public offices, they will prioritize public goods that are of concern to women, including water, infrastructure, sanitation, roads, education and health. With the presence of female political leaders in the political arena, the female citizens will garner courage of engaging themselves more in civic discussion, and also women are more likely to report crimes committed against them. It will further boost the adolescent girl child's career aspirations and educational attainment as well.

⁷ International Labor Organization (ILO) report,
<http://www.unicef.org/tr/basinmerkezidetay.aspx?id=2180&dil=en&d=1>

⁸ <https://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-workforce-india>

⁹ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/a-number-1-position-india-is-happy-to-lose/articleshow/64744866.cms>

However it is utter irony that woman participation is discouraged through gender discrimination, family responsibilities and social norms. This need to be addressed through structural changes in social and political framework which will give way to increasing woman participation for development of the country at a faster rate.

Need of Legal Empowerment

Woman face different types of threats like Domestic violence, Sexual harassment at workplace, Rape, murder, abortion for unwanted girl child etc. The Government of India has enacted specific laws to safeguard the interests of women and uplift their status in society. Some of the notable legislations are as follows:

- a) The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 which provides women the right to parental property.
- b) The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 which declares the taking of dowry an unlawful activity.
- c) Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 which provides the payment of equal remuneration with men for equal value of work.
- d) The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983 which prohibits various types of crimes against women.
- e) The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 which prohibits the vulgar presentation of women in the media.
- f) Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act 1994 for prevention of misuse of technique for sex determination before birth
- g) The protection of women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 protects women from domestic violence committed against them.
- h) The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013. These legal provisions would help women to gain socio-political empowerment.¹⁰

Government Schemes for Empowerment of Women

The Government of India has undertaken special schemes for the welfare security and empowerment of the women.

¹⁰ Nabanita Bera , Women Empowerment through Education Section 3(IJHSS) , <https://www.ijhsss.com>

Some of these special schemes may be noted here as under – “Rastriya Mahila Kosh” (RMK) 1992-93, “Mahila Samridhi yojana” (MSY) 1993, “Indira Mahila Yojana” (IMY) 1995, “Swa Shakti Group”, “Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women” (STEP), “Creches/Day-care Centre for the Children of working and ailing mother”, “Hostels for working women”, National Mission for Empowerment of Women”, “Integrated Child Development Services” (ICDS), “Rajib Gandhi Scheme for Employment of Adolescence Girls” (RGSEAG),2010, “Women’s Development Corporation Scheme”(WDCS), “Working Women’s Forum”, “Indira Priyadarshini Yojana”, NGO’s Credit Schemes to name a few.¹¹

The present Government of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi have launched the programs of “Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao” and “Sukanya Samiriddhi Account.” Wherein, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao aims at tackling the low child sex ratio of women and raise awareness regarding women’s rights. Under this scheme the government focuses on low sex ratio in different areas in nearly 100 districts .When women are educated and aware, it leads to women empowerment.

The main objective of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme is to arrest the decline in girl child sex and promote women’s empowerment in order to improve the women’s status in the country. As per 2001 census of India , the sex ratio of children aged 0-6 was 927 girls per 1000 boys which was further reduced to only 918 per 1000 boys in 2011 . It is a tri-ministerial effort of the following ministries:

- Ministry of Women and Child Development
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- Ministry of Human Resource ¹²

Sukanya Samriddhi Account – Another initiative by the present Government with regards to Empowerment of Women, under this scheme parents and guardians can open an exclusive account in the name of their daughter with any bank or post office with minimum amount . Multiple deposits of any value can be made up to 14 years from the date of opening of the account and the deposit shall mature after 21 years . Under this scheme the special attractions is that the deposit

¹¹ ibid

¹² <https://www.indiacelebrating.com/government/beti-bachao-beti-padhao-scheme>

so made can be claimed as deduction under Sec 80 C of the Income Tax and the interest earned of 8.4 % p.a is also tax free .¹³

Government schemes which made a good impact for Women Empowerment

Looking at the government based initiatives, following are the ones which made good impact in empowering women

1. Conditional cash transfer schemes
2. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

Conditional cash transfer schemes

Various state governments introduced conditional cash transfer schemes in their states to motivate girls to get good education and also to prevent early marriages. Initially these schemes were not properly designed. They mainly focused on primary education and did not link delaying marriage till right age. They also did not focus on how to motivate those sections of girls who are weak on learning or simply lack interest on education. Hence they were less effective. Later more innovative schemes were designed addressing these areas. Some of them are listed below:

Apni Beti Apni Dhan scheme (ABAD¹⁴): This scheme was launched in 1994 in Haryana. This was targeted to backward classes or those lying below poverty line. As per this scheme, bonds of Rs 2,500 were awarded to a girl child on her birth which could be redeemed by unmarried girls after attaining 18 years of age provided they have completed up to class 10.

The Girl Child Protection Scheme (GCPS¹⁵): This scheme was launched in 1997 in Andhra Pradesh. As per this scheme, girls are entitled to receive Rs 20,000 at the age of 20 if she had attained the age of 18 without getting married.

The Ladli Lakshmi Yojana (LLY¹⁶): This scheme was launched in 2007 in Madhya Pradesh. As per this scheme, a girl is entitled to receive an amount of Rs 1 lakh after attaining 21 years of age without getting married and also completing her secondary education before age 18. This was subsequently also replicated in Jharkhand and Goa.

¹³ <https://www.sukanyasamriddhiaccounttyojana.in/>

¹⁴ <https://govinfo.me/apni-beti-apna-dhan-yojana-haryana/>

¹⁵ <http://www.nari.nic.in/schemes/girl-child-protection-scheme-andhra-pradesh>

¹⁶ <https://ladlilaxmi.mp.gov.in/>

The Kanyashree Prakalpa (KP)¹⁷: This scheme was launched in 2013 in West Bengal. As per this scheme, there are two levels. In level 1 (KP1), unmarried girls who are enrolled in educational institution and in the age between 13 and 18 years will receive annual grant of Rs 750. In level 2 (KP2), unmarried girls who have attained the age of 18 years and still continuing their studies are entitled to get a onetime grant of Rs 25,000.

Bangaru Thalli Welfare Scheme (BTWS)¹⁸: This scheme was launched in 2013 in Andhra Pradesh. As per this scheme, state government will give Rs 1,000 every month to every pregnant woman the moment she conceives till she delivers a baby. If baby girl is born, Rs 2,500 will be disbursed to the baby. Further, to incentivize all round all round growth of the girl children, following benefits were promised

- Rs 1,500 every year through Anganwadis till the girl turns 5 years.
- At the time of admission to school, Rs 1,000
- Rs 2,000 will be given every year for her studies from the first to the fifth standard
- Rs 2,500 from sixth to eighth standard
- Rs 3,000 for ninth and tenth standard
- Rs 3,500 each year for Intermediate
- Rs 3,000 a year during her graduation.

The Majhi Kanya Bhagyashree Scheme (MKBS)¹⁹: This scheme was launched in 2015 in Maharashtra. As per this scheme, unmarried girls are entitled to receive an amount of Rs 1 lakh per annum after attaining age of 18 if she wishes to continue her education and further studies.

Most of these schemes had few loopholes which were not truly catering women empowerment.

- In ABAD scheme, continuous education till age of 18 was not encouraged due to which many who filled the criteria utilized the grant for to cover marriage and dowry expenses.
- In GCPS scheme, education was not encouraged at all. Only early marriage was discouraged.

¹⁷ <https://wbkanyashree.gov.in/readwrite/publications/000086.pdf>

¹⁸ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bangaru_Thalli_\(scheme\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bangaru_Thalli_(scheme))

¹⁹ <http://pmjandhanyojana.co.in/mazi-kanya-bhagyashree-scheme-mkbs-maharashtra/>

- In LLY scheme, there was a gap of 3 or more year's gap from first criteria and benefit disbursement. Also it mandated successful completion of education due to which did not look sufficiently attractive
- In BTWS scheme, there were lot of promise. However government did not sustain it and gradually reduced the importance of the scheme and stopped it altogether, affecting the poor and downtrodden families
- In MKBS scheme, girl had to continue her studies beyond 18 years of age which was not feasible in many families.

Among the above listed schemes, KP implemented in west Bengal was most successful. It provided double impact by boosting higher enrollment with reduction in drop outs at one hand and discouraging early marriage during the period when they are most vulnerable. This scheme received several national and worldwide recognition. On 23 June 2017, United Nations awarded its highest award for public service to the West Bengal government for the scheme ranking it best among 552 such schemes across 62 countries.²⁰

This scheme further evolved over a period through continuous fine tuning and digital upgradation with latest version Kanyashree 5.0 launched on 28 July 2017²¹. It has great e learning web enabled portal spreading awareness and providing real time information. It also provide easy online method of application tracking till enrollment through website as well as mobile there by ensuring transparency. As on 08 January 2019, it has 54, 19, 582 girls enrolled under this as mentioned in its website www.wbkanyashree.gov. This scheme has a transparent and robust governance structure in place which by Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare in convergence with 13 other departments and the National Informatics Centre (NIC).The scheme is directly monitored by the State Level Steering and Monitoring Committee chaired by the Finance Minister and with UNICEF as an independent member. At district level, District Magistrates are directly accountable for the performance of the scheme.

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanyashree_Prakalpa

²¹ <https://www.wbkanyashree.gov.in>

The grand success of this Scheme reflected in its impressive enrollment and sanctioned application figures within the first one and a half years of its implementation (October 2013 – March 2015):

- Out of 22.53 lakh applications received for the annual scholarship, 20.72 lakh applicants had already been sanctioned
- Out of 2.91 lakh applications request for the one-time grant, 2.27 lakh application had been sanctioned.

The impact of the Scheme is projected to be further strengthened through its graduation strategy named Kanyashree Plus. Kanyashree Plus is being designed to ensure stronger inclusion of out-of-school adolescent girls in its safety net, and facilitate beneficiaries' transition from secondary education into tertiary education. This is done to make them graduate into sustainable livelihoods and employment. Further, under consideration are the following activities:

- Reintegration of out-of-school girls into education through non-formal education or bridge education and livelihoods support
- Career counselling and coaching to girls enrolled in Kanyashree starting at age 16
- Life skills education (consisting of rights education, soft skills development, health and nutrition and financial literacy) delivered to girls
- Facilitate each Kanyashree beneficiary's access to tertiary education and employment/business services, enabled by performance-based contracts with qualified providers
- Conduct outreach and public education activities to parents, caregivers and young men to generate support of young women's socio-economic empowerment

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) ²²

The basic design of this scheme was to generate employment for rural masses beyond agricultural season. It is expected that agricultural season lasts for roughly 250 days in year and accordingly this scheme is proposed to provide employment for 100 days. This scheme provided equal wages for male and female workers there by reducing gender based discrimination.

Through this MGNREGA scheme income by way of cash was made available to female workers, which provided a greater degree of economic independence among women. Since this helped women in contributing in household income-generation, it created a positive impact on the

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Rural_Employment_Guarantee_Act,_2005

economic well-being of women. MGNREGA scheme has allowed women to spend money on their own needs, while earlier they might not have been at the liberty to do so. In certain cases this helped women to reduce their debt burden to some extent.

Also this encouraged them to participate in Gram Sabha meetings. The emergence of women workers as independent bread earner lead them to play a greater role in decision making process within their family, discretion to spend and control the use of earning and confidence to earn without support.

The success stories about MGNREGA can be easily accessed through literature review and internet as well. However, the need of the hour is to unearth and encourage these success stories. In November 2014, Department of Panchayat & Rural Development in Assam published a booklet titled “Empowering Women through MGNREGA in Assam”²³ in collaboration with UNICEF Assam Field Office. They highlighted lot of real life women heroes of Assam who utilized this scheme for social advancement by generating employment for lot of women in their neighborhood. Some of these are highlighted below:

- a) **Anu Baruah in Morigaon District** – Anu Baruah has helped build a whopping 2400 plus toilets so far. Not only has she dedicated her life to the ‘Total Sanitation Campaign’ that aims to eradicate defecating in the open, she has also personally made sure that many whose names do not feature in the Sarkari BPL holders list also have access to these toilets. To that end, she has provided a survey of her area which recommends non-BPL families for BPL cards based on their economic condition.
- b) **Biju Das & Usha Das Kamrup District (Rural)** - Biju Das and Usha Das, two energetic women, have been leading the group of around 100 women of Choigaon had come together to form a mahila federation (with an assistance grant of Rs 2 lakh provided under National Rural Livelihood Mission by the Govt. of Assam) to supply milk to their neighboring towns. Our federation’s cattle shelter, constructed under MGNREGA, laid the foundation for the centre. Also, a proper urine tank and fodder trough for the cattle was provided under the scheme. Earlier, middle men used to take away a huge share of profit from them. Now, they are supplying milk directly through their federation’s centre.

²³ <https://pnrd.assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/Publication.Empowering%20Women>

- c) **Sobita Tamuli from Nalbari District** - Sobita tamuli together with a handful of other women from her village, started making vermi-compost with the support provided to her under MGNREGA. The making of vermi-compost is something actively encouraged under the dynamic scheme. As such, she was duly provided an initial assistance of Rs 50,000 to jumpstart her initiative. Her brand of manure was simplicity itself—a mixture of cow dung, banana plant, earthworms, haar and fallen leaves.
- d) **Magdali Ekka from Dibrugarh District** - Magdali Ekka started running a weaving centre called Jeuti. Magdali Ekka imparts weaving training among rural women to help them become self-reliant. She imparts weaving training to 20 women at one time. She provides it free-of-cost to those who cannot afford it. Her center's aim is to make women of their adjacent villages financially independent. Now, they provide hostel facility for those women who come from far-flung areas. The exclusive products of the weaving centre have been exhibited at many places in Assam. Some artisans from Jharkhand had also come down to her place to learn from her skills of weaving.
- e) **Bina Topno from Dibrugarh District** – Bina Topno started a Self Help Group with a mere contribution of Rs 50 from its members itself. She further, collected an amount of Rs 30 from each of its member to start a poultry farm in their village.

Digital Technology and Empowerment of Women in India

Digital technology has transformed our life as never before. Brisk revolution have taken place in global scenario. There are various free learning apps available which can be accessed through mobile phones. Places where Women cannot travel to schools regularly due to security concerns can take advantage of internet technology to locate necessary information in the areas of online education, understanding key laws, available schemes and subsidies provided by government, expand business through online means in social networking sites etc. As per mobile gender gap report 2018, use of mobile internet in India is done by 31% male and 13% female population though 77% male and 78% female use mobile phones to make and receive calls²⁴. There are various reason responsible for this situation. One of them is that broadband connectivity is not available in all locations. However government is taking measures to improve the situation by planning and launching communication satellites. In Dec 2018, ISRO launched India's heaviest

²⁴ <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment>

satellite GSAT-11 which will boost rural broadband²⁵. Further to this ISRO is planning to launch 4 more satellites in 2019 to take the broadband connectivity to next level competing with world best and also covering entire country²⁶. However another key reason for low usage of internet by woman is that they are mostly taught the basic feature of making calls when mobile set was sold to them. Hence majority of woman especially in the rural areas are not aware of various features in the phone and are afraid to experiment with the available features.

The Draft National Policy for Women 2016 stated that “efforts will be made to remove the disparities in access to and proficiency in information and communication technology (ICT), particularly between socioeconomically advantaged and disadvantaged children, and between rural and urban schools as the use of ICT has now become pivotal for the entire education system. Public-private partnerships (PPP) will be adopted for building ICT infrastructure, developing applications and locally relevant content using gender-sensitive language, operations and maintenance and developing the capacity of teachers required for harnessing the full capacity of ICT productive tools.” It further provided that “Since women greatly benefit from ICTs, mobile telephone applications will be proactively used as a tool for mass communication and dissemination of information on legal rights, payments under wage employment schemes, subsidies, pension payments, markets etc. Efforts will be made to collect gender based data through mobile phones to feed into policy prescriptions. Women participation will be ensured in the efficient use and spreading the use of solar energy, biogas, smokeless chulas and other technological applications to have positive influence on their life styles and a long-term impact on meeting sustainable development goals. Micro-enterprises based on environment friendly technologies, organically grown produce will be promoted to provide viable livelihoods options to women.”

There are various noteworthy initiatives which is helping to fast track women empowerment. Some of the noteworthy cases are given below:

SEWA (Self Employed Women’s Association)²⁷- They use information and communication technology ICT for women empowerment. Their main goal is to promote local income generating opportunities among women. They have 200,000 membership which is spread over 800 villages in

²⁵ <https://www.livemint.com/Science>

²⁶ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/4-new-satellites-to-provide-fast-internet-speed-by-2019>

²⁷ Ranjana Agarwal, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: EMPLOYMENT DIMENSIONS IN INDIA, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/APCITY/UNPAN023829.pdf>

Gujarat. It uses an interactive satellite communication and Internet-based training programme to develop a cadre of barefoot managers among the poor women workers, focusing on women in panchayats, forests, water conservation and so on. Through ICT, training is provided on issues as disaster management, leadership building, health and education, child development etc.

Gyandoot– This is a project started in Madhya Pradesh to fund rural networked cyberkiosks through panchayats. Through this project, information is available about rural life and agricultural projects for which earlier common people had to depend on middlemen. Information is available about education and employment opportunities. Complaints can be lodged on the internet which is of great help to women.²⁸

Internet Saathi–This is an initiative of Mr. Ratan Tata through TATA trusts with Google and Intel. It's primary objective is to help women in rural India to access the internet in large number. Under the program, Google trains and educates women on how to use gadgets like smartphones and tablets thereby making them understand the Internet and its potential. These women then go to their villages and educate other women. They get access to information around healthcare, better farming techniques, cooking, entertainment, and more²⁹

M.S. Swaminathan research project³⁰– This project is in Pondicherry in Embalam district information villages were created. Ten villages are connected by a hybrid wired and wireless network which has enabled villagers to obtain the information that they need and use this information to make improvements. Local volunteers gather the information, feed it into an Intranet, and provide access through nodes in different villages. There is Value addition to raw information, use of the local language (Tamil), multimedia (to facilitate illiterate users), and participation by local people. Most of the operators and volunteers, providing primary information, are women more than 50%, thus giving them status and influence.

Smile (Savitri Marketing Institution for Ladies Empowerment)–³¹ This is a voluntary organisation in Pune. This project has increased literacy level of underprivileged women through the usage of ICT. Internet has also helped them market their various products like soft toys,

²⁸ ibid

²⁹ <http://tatatrusters.org/upload/pdf/Internet-Saathi-bring-revolution-in-villages.pdf>

³⁰ Ranjana Agarwal , DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: EMPLOYMENT DIMENSIONS IN INDIA, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/APCITY/UNPAN023829.pdf>

³¹ Ibid

candles, bags, utility items, etc. Through Internet, there is greater awareness and exposure and market reach for the products. Internet generated debates

Dairy Information Services Kiosk (DISK)³² This is a project which uses Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the dairy sector in Gujarat. ICT enables the creation of cost effective solutions that strengthen the exchange of useful information between farmers and the union. ICT facilitates dairy farmers with timely messages and education to manage their milch cattle and enhance the production of quality milk. It is also assisting dairy unions in effectively scheduling and organizing the veterinary, artificial insemination, cattle feed and other related services.

Aamagaon Soochna Kendra (My village's information centre)³³ This is a project started by Government of Orissa by setting up 73 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) kiosks in the rural areas of 12 districts of Orissa. These kiosks are run by Women SHGs/ Panchayats/ NGOs / CBOs / Youth Clubs and managed by the Community IT volunteers paid through user charges collected and managed by the local hosts. Under a partnership with Mission Shakti, women SHG members are being trained on computer fundamentals and Internet basics at the IT Kiosks on payment of an affordable fee. Access to IT training goes a long way in empowerment of women.

The Warana "Wired Village" project³⁴ This was initiated in 1998 by the Prime Minister's Office Information Technology (IT) Task Force. The stated goal of the project is not only to increase the efficiency and productivity of the sugar cane co-operative, but also to provide a wide range of information and services to 70 villages around Warana. The project aims in fact at giving villagers access to information in local language about crops and agricultural market prices, employment schemes from the government of Maharashtra, and educational opportunities. A majority of women controlled enterprises play a significant role in the economy

Conclusion:

It can be concluded that in order to achieve the goal of being a developed nation and a Global Super power, tapping of vast women reserve potential that our nation possess is the need of the

³² ibid

³³ ibid

³⁴ Ranjana Agarwal , DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: EMPLOYMENT DIMENSIONS IN INDIA, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/APCITY/UNPAN023829.pdf>

hour . Henceforth, it may be asserted that it is through education alone , women empowerment can be achieved .Further, through hearty and co-operative efforts of the Government and NGO's and also by prompt use of digital technology .



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