

## EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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### ABSTRACT

Women empowerment is defined as an environment created by the women in which the women can take decisions for their own benefits and the society at large. Women's empowerment is dependent on many variables like geographical location (urban and rural), educational status, social status (caste, class, and religion) and age. Policies related to women's empowerment are there at various levels of the country or its states or local levels comprising of issues related to their health, education, opportunities in economic and political sectors and the violence that are gender-based. But there is quite a lot of difference between what is observed at the local level and what is written in the policies at large. Today, we have different laws and schemes of the Government of India as well as State Governments to empower the women in Indian society. But, the technological advances in electronic and social media in society have to play a significant role in women empowerment.

The gap between female population and technological advances/social media prohibits the fundamental right to information in addition, to keep women population in dark regarding the misuse of the female and the distortion of the truth. It is said that "when women move forward, the family moves, the village/city moves, and the nation moves". It is essential to their thought and their value systems lead the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation. The best way of empowerment is perhaps through inducting women in the mainstream of development by proper technological usages and effective participation of women in social activities. Society must take initiative to create a climate with proper use of modern technology and full participation in social media in which there is no gender discrimination. Also, there are opportunities for the women for taking decisions in various walks of the country for decision and actively participate in various sectors without any discrimination. This paper highlights the role of technological advances through electronic communication in furthering the empowerment of Indian women.

**KEYWORDS:** Women Empowerment, Technological Advances and Social Media, Prohibits Fundamental Rights

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### INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment reflects their development of the ability to take the decision in various activities of their life in sociological, economical and political issues that affect them. Women empowerment is described as the reallocation of resources and social power for the women. Batliwala (2010) also described in his concept of the empowerment of

women as “the process of challenging existing power relation and of gaining greater control over the source of power”. Women’ empowerment is meant for changing the thinking of male domination over women and enabling women to gain equal access to and control over the resources (material, human and intellectual). The attitude, values, and behaviors of empowered women keep also the interest in their lifestyle and development. They have a liberty of choosing of their independence from the male-dominated society of the past and present. Empowered women do not believe in the difference between male and female. Empowered women use their mind and ability for purposeful utilization of their lives. They are the independence of gender discrimination and maintain their ability to face problems related to the pressures from the religion and work and contribute their quota for societal development.

There is a global economic movement of economic integration through technology and technological advancements. India has achieved higher technological advancement during the last decade. Modern electronic technology is supported and directed by powerful Institutions and interests. Majority of the women have interaction with the human beings and technologies. There are a lot of effects of technology related to electronic communication on women’s employment and the working of women in India and other countries as well. The gender implications of the digital divide are predominant in developing countries including India. The use of the Internet has become a very essential element in educational, financial and social benefits for the people and those who do not have this facility of Internet participation are excluded from several benefits. The Government of India’s newly launched ‘Make in India’, ‘Digital India’, ‘Start-up India’ and ‘Skill India’ cannot succeed in true sense without effective participation of women in these programmes. The women from poorer families face challenges as they adjust to new technologies and programmes. However, the Government should enforce women participation in these programmes.

Communication is extremely important for women’s development and social media play a significant role as well. The growth of women’s education and their entry into employment has contributed to the growth of social media. The women have a major role to play in the population control and encouragement of promoting literacy. However, women can be expected to play this role when they become conscious of their strength and are not deliberately marginalized by male domination. On the above tasks, social media has to play a very important role in the Indian society. Today, the social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Whatsapp and Google Plus and Blogs plays a vital role in effectively conveying messages that need to be conveyed. The women participation in these activities is increasing day by day and is also desirable.

### **Women Empowerment**

The global population of women is roughly 50% of the population. Most of the women are without any job, particularly in developing countries. Discrimination between men and women at their places of work affect the economical development of the world. Generally, the women do not lack any competence than their men counterpart. In fact, in many activities, women are ahead of men. Women are capable as men. In the past, the women were prohibited from education at the tertiary level and it was a waste of their ability. But, the time has changed and women are getting the education at the professional level and this is benefiting the whole world at large. As described earlier, improving the socio-economic, political and legal strength of women is related to women empowerment and equal-benefits to men and women with a sense of self-identity and dignity. The women have to have proper control of their lives at home and workplaces.

The overall development of the society cannot accomplish without women empowerment. The benefits of women earnings are not only used for their families but the society at large. Before, many women were confined to their homes

and were not earning like male members of the society.

Today, women are getting success in all walks of life and helping the family from their earnings and also the economic growth of the country. This has resulted in minimizing the domestic violence. The educated women are safer than uneducated women in terms of domestic violence. The women empowerment has helped the society to fight the spreading the level of corruption provided they are aware of their rights and duties. The poverty level of the society is also reducing with women empowerment. In most of the cases in middle and lower levels of families, women income supports in meeting the demand of families. Women are increasingly participating in the national development process. The empowered women accomplishments have done a nation proud in medical sciences, social services, engineering, and technological sciences, etc. Women empowerment has helped the society in strengthening the social, economic and educational powers of women. The empowerment of women will result in the development of the society, both at the regional and local levels. The participation of women in all sectors of social, cultural and economic activities would contribute towards the overall development of the country.

### **Women Empowerment through Technological Advances**

Women empowerment through technology interventions not only appears at a crucial moment to help refocus attention on women issues including women health and representation among health professionals, but women are also a great human resource and the role of women in society is absolutely vital for its progress. Arguably, to empower women is to increase their control over the decisions that affect their lives both within and outside the household. There are many developing countries where women are not even listed in any citizen registration database, which makes it very difficult for them, especially the poorer ones in rural areas and of underprivileged class to assert social security, social protection, legacy, land, etc. as there is practically no proof of their existence. Through their empowerment, women gain the greater share of control over resources—material, human and intellectual such as knowledge, information, ideas – and financial resources involving access to money and control over decision making in the home, community, society, and nation. It leads them to become a critical and vital stakeholder among the human capital and their strategic presence in the society is widely accepted. The great leader and the Father of the Indian Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, who firmly believed in non-violence as the soul means to achieve peace in the world, also had a deep appreciation of the value of educating women. He had said that: “when a man is educated, an individual is educated; when a woman is educated, a family and a country are educated.” Market economy trends in the new era of globalization have widened the gap between education and technological opportunities for men and women. Worldwide the capacity of women to engage in the knowledge society is grossly underutilized. In the knowledgeable society, they need access not only to new technologies but also to education, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities as well as the ability to participate fully in knowledge-based activities. The involvement and engagement of women in the information technology on an equal footing with men would directly contribute to improving the livelihood of people, making it more sustainable and thereby promoting the social and economic advancement of societies. Governments must design and implement national policies and programmes that promote science and technology education for women and girls and encourage women to enter into high value-added information and communication technology career. Programmes should be strengthened to bring about a greater involvement of women in science and technology. These should include measures to motivate girls to take up science and technology for higher education and also ensure that development projects with scientific and technical inputs have a total involvement of women. Efforts to develop a scientific temper and awareness need should be stepped up. Special measures should be adopted for their training in areas where they have special skills like communication and information

technology. Efforts to develop appropriate technologies suited to women's needs as well as to reduce their drudgery have to be given a special focus too. It is not the concern of one nation only, but there are many players and stakeholders with the aim to reach this millennium goal. Programmes should be worked out to empower women through innovative scientific activities integrating action oriented literacy, sound micro-finance, and micro-enterprise training as well as an understanding of legal rights and advocacy. Apart from the efforts of the United Nations family of organizations, multilateral bodies, and civil society, the positive role of women also depends on the supportive attitudes of their local family unit, the local community in each village and town. We just hope that women become empowered at 100 per cent and become equal to men so that both of them work side by side for a better world of today. According to Information and Communication Technology can be a powerful catalyst for the political and social women empowerment and the promotion of gender equality. The different technological initiatives established by the developmental organizations cater to the needs of women and attend to institutional requirements. The divergent requirements demand multiple technological tools such as community radio, video, television, tele/video conferencing, telephone, mobile phone, voice mail, use of blue tooth, digital cameras, computers with the internet. A large number of programmes on a variety of subjects of health, legal rights, education, social problems, gender, governance, collective strength, etc., and folk songs recorded and broadcasted by women. The multiple roles and responsibilities of women in the rural heavy workloads are one of the major constraints faced by women. Due to the rigid patriarchal system, often the magnitude of labor is never reduced. Hence, it becomes rather difficult for rural women to reach out to a community learning center or village knowledge center to learn new skills. The initial investments for pioneering a technological initiative or a computer hub demands mega-investments. Even though the cost of mobile is low, still some of the women are not able to own it due to lack of money or stringent attitudes of male members in the family. As a large number of women in the rural areas are illiterate or have just primary education, they wish to have the use of technological tools in their vernacular language which is seldom available. Most of the training modules are not in local languages. In most of the rural areas, there is a grave concern for regular electricity and internet connections. In the case of the repair or maintenance, to get the professional help is a herculean task because due to poor roads and lack of transport facilities, they find it too difficult to reach the villages. The various social problems faced by women in Indian society have to be addressed. Unless the violence against women, dowry, eve-teasing, and feminization of poverty is reduced, it may offer a conducive atmosphere for women to have further new learning. The government is yet to extend ICT policies which are pro-rural poor women. It is a dire need of the hour that the state and central governments come out of policies and programmes which can promote digital literacy and ownership of ICT tools. The rural India holds 68.8% of the population in more than six lakhs villages. The successes of women who are engaged in agriculture and its allied activities largely depend upon their wider communication with others. Their production or manufacturing and marketing brings out the better outcome based on their broader networking. Periodical and prompt education will enlighten them in knowing the various gender issues. It can lead them in an analytical prospective paving the way of becoming content creators and designers of the programmes promoting gender equality. Rural women who are used to the technological initiatives gain enhanced self-confidence, improved capacity, and sustainable growth. Despite their lower educational status, the training given by the implementing agencies can equip them to meet the growing demands. As a result, their economical independence is restored.

### **Women Empowerment through Electronic Communication**

The use of improved technology will contribute to reduce women's working hours and increase women's participation in knowledge-based labor market. Development of scientific and technological infrastructure for the

involvement of women in infrastructure development activities will generate employment for them. An action plan has been formulated for the implementation of the policy. Women are treated as weaker sex in the society. Realizing the importance of women in the society to improve the status of women, the government has formulated many schemes and policies. Many of the schemes such as *Streeshakti*, *Myrada*, *SGSY*, etc., are encouraging rural women to take up self-employment and generate savings. Further, the participation of women in the administration of Panchayat Raj Institutions is also aimed for the women's political empowerment. All these policies and schemes are published in the newspapers and magazines so that women must gain awareness on the same. Further, there are many programmes on radio and television, which are interactive for women empowerment. There are also websites and social networking sites which popularize the women empowerment activities in India. Social media could enhance women's participation in the economic and political life and allows them to increase their self-expression and promote social change and this is a strong belief that has risen up in the society. Women face barriers in real life that hinders women from participating in social media and seeing the impact it has on their lives. One of the barriers is ICT literacy, which is the ability to use digital technology, communication tools and/or networks to define access, manage, integrate, evaluate, create and communicate information ethically and legally in order to function in a knowledge society. Lack of education can be overcome by training. Other kinds of constraints which are highly significant are the social constraints. Those include family and society barriers and stereotypes placed on women especially in the places where female users operate.

### **Vision-2021**

Information technology has changed the communication paradigm, making it no longer difficult to reach a large number of people more or less at the same time; and that too enable them to respond, interact as well as obtain a copy of the information within a low-cost. Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) apart from sensitizing people against this heinous crime and helping them in general to change their opinion about a girl child, can also play a highly interventionist role by proactively pursuing cases against erring doctors, booking them under the law of the land. Ministry of Science and Technology has emphasized the need for developing science and technology to achieve goals set out in Vision-2021 and to ensure overall development of the country. According to Vision-2021, increased participation of women in science and technology-related activities and technological advancement devised for assisting women are equally important. The scope of using technology can be increased more that promote safety for women, reduce their working hours and also provide a comfortable life for women. In order to make this vision a reality and to achieve the target of being a middle-income country, the ministry has formulated a large number of related schemes as well as research programme on science and technology. Government is committed to utilizing science and technology for women's advancement. Accordingly to Ministry has incorporated women's development in its strategic policies and framework to guide its activities. At the same time, different rules and acts relating to women empowerment and their advancement are being formulated and allied development projects on the same issues are being undertaken and implemented. National Science & Technology Policy (NSTP) 2011 has been formulated to modernize the execution of development activities in the country through the application of science and technology. It also focuses on the empowerment of women through ensuring their full and equal participation in all activities of science and technology. One of the main objectives of National Women Development Policy, 2011 is to design and import women-friendly technologies as well as to proscribe the use of technologies that go against the wellbeing of women.

The use of improved technology will contribute to reduce women's working hours and increase women's participation in knowledge-based labor market. Development of scientific and technological infrastructure for the

involvement of women in infrastructure development activities will generate employment for them. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has been implementing various programmes and schemes aimed at improving the socio economic empowerment of women through initiatives such as mobilization of women into Self Help Groups (SHGs), provision of training in various livelihood skills, up-gradation of skills to enable them to take up income generation activities through self employment or wage employment.

## CONCLUSIONS

The whole world is passing through a period of “Information Explosion”. This is the age of information. The electronic media, particularly satellite channels have completely changed the media scenario. All information has now been reaching to every home in any remote area. This has not only changed the psychology of people but also changed their approach and lifestyle in offices as well as in homes. With the revolution in communication technology, any information can reach in every part of the world within no time. The last few decades have seen tremendous changes in the lifestyles of men and women across all over the globe and particularly so in India.

A large group of working women of India is in the rural and unorganized sectors. Socially the majorities of Indian women are still tradition-bound and are in a disadvantageous position. Inequality in women's access to and participation in all communications systems, especially the electronic communication and their insufficient mobilization to promote women's contribution to society is of a great importance. Since globalization is opening up the Indian economy suddenly at a very high speed, during the past decades, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behavior, especially of children and young adults. The advances in technology and social media have a greater role in the empowerment of women who have been lacking previously. The Government of India has been making concerted efforts to empower women with development ICTs. It is the duty of all men and women to join hands in this noble task.

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