



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: ROLE OF NEW MEDIA

* *Dr. Amrita Majumder*,

* Assistant Professor, Guru Nanak College of Education and Research, Bhandup.

Abstract:

Empowerment of women has emerged as an important issue in recent time. As per the latest Census in the year 2011, the total female sex ratio in India is 940 per 1000 males. The population of India is more than 1.21 billion and out of this, women constitute nearly 50% of the total population, Women empowerment in India is a much debated topic.

The empowerment of women is being regarded these days as a very important aspect for the development of the country. Empowering women aims to inspire them and persuade them to come out from different adverse conditions, be it societal or religious, that have traditionally kept them suppressed and unable to see their true strength, power and beauty. We are living in the modern era, even though; today in the rural areas women are suffering from various problems in different fields of life.

New Media plays an important and vital role in women's empowerment and its development. Media can create an awakening inspiration to achieve their potential as a prime source of change in the society we live in.

With the growing dominance of the Internet, blog, chat, Social sites etc, the use of New Media has already begun and consequently, communication is rapidly changing and becoming mobile, interactive, personalized and multi-channel. The Internet has served as a vehicle or as a channel to convey information in a useful and easy to understand manner. This extraordinary revolution is affecting the basic structure of societies, and is raising discussions and debates that are profoundly related to women: the rapid transformation of the boundaries between the public and the private spaces, the relationship between the new media and women's empowerment. New Media is considered as an important source in helping the women empowered. It is helping as the important source and access to speak out against the oppression and marginalization of women at the grass root level. The media is considered as the most potent and influential mean in this regard as it has the capacity of persuading and molding opinion. The relationship of the media and the women is important because whatever image women have in our country is influenced by media... It is thus vital, to utilize the media for the improving the status of women in India and divulging their role in national development.

Basically, this paper deals with empowerment of women through the New Media (Internet). Empowerment of women led to the development of the family, community, society, state and nation. This paper will specially highlight the positive perception and use of New Media as a development tool to empower the women.

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INTRODUCTION:

As far as Gender equality is concerned, its values are being accepted and promoted in almost all regions of the world. The country's overall development depends greatly on the inclusion of women in its development process. The importance of gender equality is well recognized and well accepted for development. Men and women can neither reach excellence with the cooperation of each other.

In the context of the knowledge sphere, the issues of gender equality, equity and empowerment of women become even more significant as women have a strategic role in incubation and transfer of critical knowledge, which often forms the blue print for survival of communities to depth and minimize their risk in adverse circumstances. Women, because of their biological and social roles, are generally more rooted than men in the confines of their locality. They are therefore more aware than men of the social, economic and environmental needs of their own communities. (Miller, 2000).

Women play an important role in the development of society and the nation. In this century in various developments in scientific and technological era the status of women is changing at a fast pace but at the same time, we cannot ignore the part of the society where women are marginalized, discriminated against and feel oppressed because of different gender divide issues. Empowerment of women has emerged as an important issue in recent time and the process of development will be left incomplete without the active participation of women. Women are the transmitters of culture in all societies. The status of women in a society is a true mirror of its social, religious, cultural and spiritual level.

There is a need to uncover many factors like Cultural

and Social aspects, self decision making, economic independency, health and sanitation, participation in decision making, awareness and exercise of rights, political participation and many more issues that can help progressive development of women in the society.

For the emancipation of women in every field, self decision making, economic independence and creating awareness in them about their rights and responsibilities is very important. The media is considered as the most effective and important tool in this regard as it has the power of molding public opinion. All over the world, the impact of media and new media has been witnessed in recent years, with online platforms becoming increasingly powerful mechanisms for mobilizing popular support. People in India are demanding change, and they are harnessing the power of modern media to make their voices heard. Media is an important tool that affects all aspects of our life. It can work for the development of women and gender equality. Right information given by the media can empower the rural women and protect them from various problems. Various New Media tools such as blogs, facebook, social sites and internet are used for empowering the women by education, information, awareness, economic empowerment and self decision making. The Internet can be easily used for empowerment of women. As we all know, the relationship between the media and women is important because whatever image women have in our country is influenced by the media. It is thus vital to utilize the media for improving the status of women and empower them and divulging their role in national development. Keeping this in view, the present paper is focused on the role of New Media



(Internet) in empowerment of women.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA:

The reality of women's lives remains invisible to men and women alike and this invisibility persists at all levels beginning with the family to the nation. Although geographically men and women share the same space, they live in different worlds. The mere fact that "Women hold up half the sky" - does not appear to give them a position of dignity and equality. True, over the years women have made great strides in many areas with notable progression reducing some gender gaps. Yet, "the afflicted world in which we live is characterized by deeply unequal sharing of the burden of adversities between men and women". Sprawling inequalities persist in their access to education, health care, physical and financial resources and opportunities in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. The impact of inequality is reflected in the status of women worldwide and in India

Women are extensively exposed to the mass media, particularly television and now the Internet, which is allowing them to know of the world around them, their rights and new opportunities. Efforts have been made by incorporating the new media in educating people regarding various programs that can help in their empowerment. This approach will help integrate women more fully into the economic, political, and social mainstream of independent India. According to Jensen and Oster (2003) cable television was impacting the attitudes of women and the authors find an increase in the female school enrolment and decrease in fertility.

"Gender inequality holds back the growth of individuals, the development of nations and the evolution of societies to the disadvantage of both

men and women". Gender issues are not simply talking about women's issues. Understanding gender means understanding opportunities, constraints and the impact of change as they affect both men and women. (The term "Gender" is used to describe a set of qualities and behaviors expected from men and women by their societies. A person's social identity is formed by these expectations)

In the modern time, women in India were given freedom & rights such as freedom of expression & equality as well as the right to be educated. Various prestigious positions at this period were held by women. They're enjoying the 'ladies first' facility in different fields. However, some problems such as dowry, domestic violence, sex selective abortion, female infanticide are still prevalent. The women in rural areas are deprived of minimum facilities of enlightenment and education. In urban areas women are educated about the social benefits including awareness about the existing social problems in the society, good recognition & image in the family & community, role in making important decision in their family, plan & promote better education for their children, taking care of health of the aged and the children just to mention a few. Women are also allowed to participate in political and public life. The government of India is also setting aside funds that are used to empower women & other initiatives that will empower them.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF NEW MEDIA FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

Women empowerment is very much necessary in the nation's growth be it economically, politically or socially. The term 'empowerment of women' has become popular especially after the 1980s. It refers to the process of strengthening the hands of women



who have been suffering from various disabilities, inequalities and gender discrimination. The term “empowerment of women” refers to the process of providing power to women to become free from the control of others, that is, to assume power to control her own life and to determine her own conditions. The term “empowerment of women” could also be understood as the process of providing equal rights, opportunities, responsibilities and power positions to women so that they are able to play a role on par with men in society.

In this contemporary world, women need to gain the same amount of power that men have. There is inequality and vulnerability of women in all spheres of life; they need empowerment in all walks of life. In India, women are still facing different obstacles in male-dominated cultures. These things are related to women’s status and their future. However, Indian women are slowly getting empowerment in the sectors like education, politics, the work force and even more power within their own households, there is a need to work at the grass root level to empower them especially in rural areas. Father of the nation- Mahatma Gandhi firmly states that the status of the women will not change merely by bringing legislation; it must be supported by change in the women’s social circumstances and situations and also men’s sexist attitude to women.

Safety for women is an obsolete word for Women in Today’s India; they still receive negative sexual attention from males. Indian societies have received notoriety for being unsafe for women. Whereby the fair sex is not only being hassled, stalked and raped but incidents of immoral trafficking also are very high.

All over the world, the impact of New media has

been witnessed in recent years, with online platforms becoming increasingly powerful mechanisms for mobilizing popular support. India is no exception, and the media coverage of this particularly horrific Delhi gang rape case and the online responses changed the mindsets of the youth and it seems that people are no longer willing to accept rape and sexual assault as "a simple fact of life." People in India demanded change, and they used the power of modern media to make their voices heard. In Delhi gang rape case Platforms such as the Face book group ‘Gang Rape in Delhi’ and ‘Justice for Raped Girl in Delhi’ have united people in expressing their hopes for a future free from similar cases. People raised their voices through Twitter, Facebook and other new media, expressing their frustrations against the government and administration. Following news of the case reaching the masses, the huge crowds of protestors taking to the streets provide an indication of the growing strength of the internet and new media in harnessing public support. Perhaps for the first time, the internet and new media were utilized as tools to mobilize public support throughout India. People contacted each other and established platforms from which they campaigned for governmental action, with the intention of ensuring justice for the victim and offering protection for all Indian women. This outpouring of public outrage was not accidental; it was organized through new media and other messages which brought people – especially Indian youth – together in support of a cause which they feel has become extremely important in their country. Within 10 days of the incident, Face book groups ‘Gang raped in Delhi’ created on December 20, 2012 and ‘Delhi for Women’s Safety’ created on December 18, 2012

received 5046 and 4263 'Likes' respectively. Other Face book groups such as 'Another girl gang raped in Delhi – Can we stop it?', 'Delhi Gang Rape – Please Don't Ignore "Must Read" For Damini', and 'Delhi Gang Rape – Protest' emerged as individual fight against such crimes. These groups acted like platforms for justice and empowering women and have given a voice to everyone, even those who want to protest against sexual assault cases in India even if they are out of the country.

Empowerment of women is a long and difficult process which is to be promoted with full public support and this could be successful only when those women who have been suppressed by the male dominated society taking undue advantage of their lack of education and poverty can fight to claim their true place in the society.

CONCLUSION:

Today, Information Technology has changed the communication paradigm, making it no longer difficult to reach a large number of people. It can be seen that new media has played a significant role in the empowerment of women through the help of Information and Communication Technology. Out of the total 150 million Internet users in the country, around 60 million women in India are now online and use the Internet to manage their day-to-day life. With easy access to Internet at homes, cyber cafes, offices and growing adoption of smartphones, the Internet is being used by women for a variety of things The development of New Media has enabled the women section to participate in the daily affairs of the state , which range from the household work to education , health , governance and so on New Media is emerging as a powerful tool for gender empowerment in a developing country like

India. There has been a rapid growth in the ICT sector since the late 1980's and the use of ICT has dramatically expanded since 1990's. The use of the internet as a form of new media., the creation of different websites that focus on women empowerment in terms of education , literacy , health , knowledge , lifestyle and many more areas have proliferated. Today it is possible to find anything related to empowerment by typing keyword searches using a reliable internet browser. New Media have a huge potential for the empowerment of women, however the overall use of this media by women is very low. New Media has played an important role in empowering women. In sum, the way new media has played its part in portraying the atrocities faced by the women and empowering the women, no other sector has done.

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