

Chapter 13

Women Empowerment and Inclusive Growth Through ICT in India

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ABSTRACT

Women have always been an integral part of human development. The women participate in the inclusive growth of a country. Women empowerment is the multi-dimensional process of the development of the economic, social, and political position of women. It is also the way to safeguard them against all types of cruelty. As information and communication technology (ICT) is widely accepted as a key force for growth and empowerment and it shares a good proportion to the growth and development of the nation, ICT played a crucial role in providing a platform to improve skills, knowledge sharing, and training. The interest in the area of ICT is increasing to foster women's empowerment. ICT tools have facilitated women to discover, explore, interchange, analyze, and present information without any prejudice. ICTs are playing a crucial role in creating more economic and social welfare in India. This chapter discusses how women in India are influenced by ICT to achieve inclusive growth and empowerment.

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INTRODUCTION

“The Indian Constitution contains several provisions ensuring gender equality, including its Preamble, Fundamental Duties, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles”. As a result, women are not only guaranteed equality, but they are also empowered to take positive discrimination measures in order to benefit themselves (National Policy for Women Empowerment).

What is meant by empowerment? Is it just economic growth? No, empowerment is far more than economic growth. Empowerment may comprise social, mental, political, educational, and psychological advancement.

The three pillars of empowerment are resources, agency, and achievement. According to Kabeer (1994), resources refer to the ability and freedom to control physical, financial, human and intellectual resources (Desai, 2010; Sen, 1992; Sen, 1999; Sen, 2009); agency refers to making personal choices. In addition to universally shared basic functioning, freedom and resources are also what constitute achievement or “functioning achievements” (Kabeer, 1999). According to scientists in the field, empowerment can be determined or influenced by several key factors. Among these are age, gender, marital status, nationality, social role, health, economic activity, and household distribution within each household (Sen, 1992; Sen, 1999; Sen, 2009; Kabeer, 1994; Trommlerová, Klasen, & Leßmann, 2015).

It also includes growth in decision-making, analyzing the situations, facing different challenges, and coping with every circumstance to improve the growth of a country. They lost their education at every level due to the school closure. Apart from education, due to the closure of schools, the children also suffered from getting mid-day meal which was provided by the government. Mid-day meal is an important factor for children to attend school. A McKinsey Global Institute study estimates that India could increase its GDP by US\$ 770 billion by 2025 simply by offering equal opportunities for women. However, women currently contribute 18% to the nation’s gross domestic product (CII Blog, 2022).

The social status of Rigvedic women in India was high and their living conditions were decent. The living situation and high social status were the hallmarks of those women. The Pre-Vedic period was a time when women had more independence in terms of education, decision-making, property rights, and remarriage, among other things. There was no Patriarchal System or Gender discrimination in the Pre-Vedic-Epoch, so women lived in true paradise. When the Aryans came to India in around 1500 BCE, women’s status declined and a caste system was established, aggravating women’s plight (Malik, F.A. & Malik H. A., 2022).

According to Michelle Obama, “women are capable to achieve anything”. Women’s status has undergone numerous ups and downs over the ages. In modern Indian society, women’s ancient and medieval roles are preserved and degraded,

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