

WOMEN AND TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

The basic right of women to self-determination and self-fulfillment including access to choices and the power to choose their own lives and roles gained momentum by the end of 19th century. As a part of process of empowerment, we need to reaffirm and clarify our understanding of feminism. Feminism begins with the situation of women and analyses the way that women's situation has been shaped by and in turn shapes the whole social world.

National economics have been more liberal that they have permitted free flow of capital and knowledge among countries in the event of LPG era. The involvement of women in the global village is very much realized in the field of Technology, Journalism Publishing and Mass Media.

The mass media and Technology are an important link to promote aspirations and progressive change in women's status in a global environment. The scope of the media to support women's progress and project women achievers as role models in yet to be tapped fully. Our honourable president Pradeepa Patel and the speaker Meira Kumar, a wide number of women ministers and Kiran Beadi, Kalpana Shawla, Sumitha Williams, Lathiga Saran are the best role models in the present era in our country. Women are still in the process of gaining education and health, better employment opportunities and becoming active participants in social change. The exposure to mass media & Technology encourages women to come out of powerless and exploitative to an eco-friendly environment.

Introduction

Women in the modern service sector tend to be heavily concentrated in occupations that run parallel in traditional household tasks such as nursery, primary and middle school teachers, nurses, social and welfare workers, clerks and secretaries. A very low percentage of women are placed in Higher education. Women's participation grew stronger in their struggle for rights and equality. The basic right of women to self-determination and self-fulfillment including access to choices and the power to choose their own lives and roles gained momentum by the end of 19th century.

Feminism

As a part of process of empowerment, we need to reaffirm and clarify our understanding of feminism. Feminism begins with the situation of women and analyses the way that women's situation has been shaped by and in turn shapes the whole social world.

Feminism offers us a holistic perspective on all issues related to human life-one that strives for the broadest and deepest development of individuals, and societies through freedom from the systems of domination that characterize our world, men over women, rich over poor. Feminism is a positive and creative challenge to global systems of domination, exploitation and inequality.

Feminist Development

Feminist development means equality of participation and control for women in every step of the way, building a theory and practice of development that is in the interests of the majority of the world's people not only of its women. A Feminist vision must include but not end with equality for women in Economic, Political, Class and Social structures designed to reserve power for a small minority will not accommodate such equality.

Science and Technology are central to our society and practical future. A feminist analysis of science and technology is necessary in trying to understand whether Science and Technology, as they now shaped, are compatible with feminist goals for the future.

Here, it is important to note that the bill on women reservation of 33% in parliament has been passed successfully on 10 March 2010 in India.

Women & Globalization

The majority of women in developing countries including India suffer disproportionately from poverty, illiteracy and malnutrition. Women in India also have to contend with oppressive traditions,

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exploitation and the lack of self work or identity that continues to disadvantage them. The traditional division of rights and responsibilities in many cultures including India place women in an inferior position socially, economically, legally and politically.

The status of women in India in education, employment, politics and health shows that women generally are still to evolve as decisive participants in development. However, women are trying to adopt themselves in the fast changing economic environment under the influence of globalization and expand the concept of freedom, opportunities and achievements. Globalization is posing challenges in diverse fields including political, economic, social and cultural. In the developing world, globalization is perceived as a project of modernity leading to changes in women's roles.

Now-a-days National economics have been more liberal that they have permitted free flow of capital and knowledge among countries in the event of LPG era. With the entry of multinational corporations (MNCs) and transnational corporations (TNCs) women are finding employment in electronics, garment export units, Pharmaceutical Industries, business processing outsourcing (BPO) Industry, information Technology and allied Industries. The involvement of women in the global village is very much realized in the field of Technology, Journalism Publishing and Mass Media.

Women and Mass Media

Mass media focus on women achievers in diverse fields to inspire young girls and speak much of women empowerment. Mass Communication is an important factor influencing women's development and empowerment, shaping social values attitudes and behavior (Prasad 2004)

The weekly news magazine outlook (Nov 1, 2004) in its special women's issue focused on the role models for women, their struggle, collective action and women who redefined their roles by rejecting the dominant traditions and how men are responding to the changing new generation of urban women.

In Independence Day special issue of a widely read English magazine, "The week" (August 14th, 2005) had an exclusive story featuring 58 young people who performed exceptionally well in their respective fields. Among these youth, there were 23 women, eight-cinema actress, five sports women, three social activists, two singers, an artist, an author, a musician and a managing director of a business company.

The rapid growth in the mass media sectors, especially in the electronic media have led to the involvement of a growing number of women in the mass media, newspapers, magazines, radio, television channels and cinema. The last decade saw a boom for women in journalism. The number of women journalist (inclusive of electronic media) in the national capital of Delhi is around 900 and even in the city Chennai, it is impressive 200. (Aram and Menon 2005: 202)

Today the women journalist are not only reporting to fashion, cooking, art and culture, but they are also reporting on politics, international affairs, sports, business, war, and terrorism which are previously regarded as conventional male reports. Even tsunami has also featured by many women reporters.

The majority of female journalists in India are senior editors, reporters, sub editors, special correspondents, foreign correspondents or even women photographers. The national commission for women initiated a project on the status of women journalists in the print media as a part of a broader study on working women in India (Bhagat 2005)

A number of 190 women journalist from the regional press and 220 from the English press constituting 410 women journalist in the print media were surveyed from 141 news organizations in India.

Women and Technology

Globalization has been a powerful source of change driving national economies, deepening their international connections and transforming social, political and cultural life. Globalization involves processes that not only cross national boundaries or link states but which rely on world wide flows of capital, communications and manufactured goods from region to region (Sethi 1999: 11).

Women are also gaining knowledge of the use of computers, internet, and mobile phones with higher education and employment in urban industrial centres and increasing income that facilitates their access to new communication technologies. Women in rural areas also being trained to access a variety of information through information and communication technology (ICT) initiative sponsored by the government, non-governmental organizations and international development agencies.

Technology entails building up of capacities of women to overcome social and institutional barriers and strengthening their participation in the economic and political process for an overall improvement in their quality of lives. Knowledge networking offers the unprecedented potential to empower every

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woman as each woman is a potential recipient and incubator of knowledge in a truly networked world and place them in software world through-out the world.

Empowerment of women in the context of technology is understood as building the ability and skills of women to gain insight of actions and issues in the external environment, which influence them to build their capacity to get involved and voice their concerns through mass media and technology related process and make informed decisions.

A magazine called "Women space" stated that it was entirely devoted to women and the internet in using the internet to empower women and create a women's community online. The editors wrote in their first issue "The digital revolution can either help or hinder women depending on the choices they make now. They have launched a women's internet campaign for women and girls" for equal access, equal participation and equal voice in communication technologies.

There are 87 websites which deal with women issues. Some of the websites are,

- Education equality -- <http://www.feminist.org/education>.
- Disabled women's network (Dawn)-Ontario -- <http://www.thot.net>
- Feminist.com -- <http://www.Feminist.com>
- Feminist campus.org -- <http://www.feminist.campus.org>
- Feminist majority Foundation online -- <http://www.feminist.org>
- Gender and Diversities Institutes -- <http://www.edn.org.GDI>
- Gender issues -- <http://www.gao.gov>.

Women and ICT

ICT offers immense possibilities for reducing poverty, overcoming women's isolation, giving women a voice improving governance and advancing gender equality. Information and Communication Technologies are diverse set of technological tools and resources to create, disseminate, store, bring value-addition and manage information. They are for everyone and women have to be an equal beneficiary to the advantages offered by the technology and the products and process which emerge from their use.

Knowledge sharing mechanism recognizes the value of knowledge possessed by women and provides space for value-addition and amalgamation of women's knowledge in the global knowledge pool. This mechanism could be used by women in creative ways both to communicate with other people who are on line and also to disseminate information to people in the outside world who are not in online through the use of convergence and hybrid technologies such as community emails, community radio broadcast, tele-centres, news letters, videos and thereby mobilize resources and support, reach out new markets and open up avenues for life long learning.

One of the most powerful applications of ICT in the domain of knowledge networking is electronic commerce. Electronic commerce refers not just to selling of products and services online but to the promotion of a new class of ICT- savvy women entrepreneurs in both rural and urban areas. Women overtime have learnt the advantages offered by ICT and its potential in opening up windows to the outside world. This has put them in a greater control over the activities performed by them- laying the foundation for entrepreneurship development.

A successful example of an ICT enabling business which has access to the internet and a micro financing is the use of smart cards by Indian women milk collectors in Rajasthan. The smart cards are used to record the quality fat content and sales of milk to distributors and also serve as a bankbook allowing them to take decisions on spending and increasing their profits through the elimination of middlemen called Dhudhwala. ICT in education has also recognised much importance. ICT in open distance learning, virtual education, e-learning, e-content are becoming popular now-a-days.

Conclusion

The mass media and Technology are important link to promote aspirations and progressive change in women's status in a global environment. The scope of the media to support women's progress and project women achievers as role models is yet to be tapped fully. Our honourable president Pradeepa Patel and the speaker Meera Kumar, a wide number of women ministers and Kiran Beadi, Kalpana Shawla, Sumitha Williams, Lathiga Saran are the best role models in the present era in our country. Women are still in the process of gaining education and health, better employment opportunities and becoming active participants in social change. The exposure to mass media & Technology encourages women to come out of powerless and exploitative to an eco-friendly environment.

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