

## **Empowering Women through Digital Technology: An Indian prospective**

**Ms. Ruchi Malhotra<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

Information technology has revolutionized the world as never before. The benefits accrued from the synergy of knowledge and IT need not be restricted to the upper strata of the society but have to freely flow to all segments of the female population. IT sector is considered to be no-discriminating. It is considered to be an equal opportunity employer for men & women. IT are powerful tools for women to use to overcome discrimination, achieve full equality, well being and participation in decisions that impact the quality of their lives and the future of their communities. Women can use technology to successfully build personal confidence & self-esteem that has wider implications in women's live. The aim of this paper is to show the position of women in newly emerging areas of information technology and to examine the different ways in which IT has benefited women in terms of employment. This paper also examines the effects of IT in rural area.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Digital Technology, NABANNA, SEWA, NGO'S, e-mahile

1 Assistant Professor, P.G. Department of Commerce, Mata Gujri College, Fatehgarh Sahib

### **Introduction**

The word 'Empowerment' means giving power. According to International Encyclopedia (1999) powers means having the capacity and means to direct one's life towards desired social, political and economic goals. Thus women Empowerment is a process by which women gain greater process and greater control over resources (income, knowledge, information, technology, skill and training). A nation that wants to progress cannot afford to ignore capacity building and empowerment of women. It is now well understood that any attempt to improve the quality of life of people in developing countries would be incomplete without progress towards the empowerment of women. Women's development is inextricably linked with technology. In India, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (**MHRD-1985**) and the National Commission for Women (**NCW**) have been worked to safeguard the rights and legal entitlement of women. The 73rd & 74th Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided some special powers to women that for reservation of seats

(33%), whereas the report HRD as March 2002, shows that the legislatures with the highest percentage of women are, Sweden 42.7%, Denmark

38%, Finland 36% and Iceland 34.9%. In India "The **New Panchayati Raj** " is the part of the effort to empower women at least at the village level. Information technologies are powerful tools for women which they can use to use to overcome discrimination, achieve full equality, well being and participation in decisions that impact the quality of their lives and future of their communities. Women can use technology to successfully build personal confidence & self-esteem that has wider implications in women's life.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:** The aim of this paper i.e. "**empowering women through digital technology**" is to cover the following objectives.

1. To show the position of women in newly emerging areas of information technology.
2. To study the different ways in which information technology has benefited the working women.
3. To study the impact of IT in rural women empowerment.

#### **STATUS OF WOMEN IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY:**

In spite of Gender discrimination, IT Sector is considered to be non-discriminating. It provides equal opportunity to men & women entrepreneurs. No doubt, women have limited access to technologies in India. However there are now enough experiences to show that when women are trained, they show remarkable understanding and control in using technologies effectively. For example the **African Women's Network of the Association for Progressive Communication** (APC) has conducted training workshops to support electronic networking among women's groups. In **Kenya** women and men weavers were trained in using the Internet to learn new weaving techniques and access more realistic prices for their products. In India too, there are many good practices for the use of IT's for women's empowerment. India shop, an e-commerce website (2005) in **Tamil Nadu**, has been designed to sell products made by rural women's co-operatives and NGO's. In **Gujarat**, India women producers use the Dairy Information System **KIOSK (DISK)** which manages a database of all milk cattle and provides information about veterinary Service and other practical information about the dairy sector. In **Himachal Pradesh**, women mid-school dropouts repair water pumps and manage computer data for the maintenance of the pumps. **SMILE** (Savitri Marketing Institution for Ladies Empowerment), a voluntary Organization in **Pune**, has increased Literary level of under privileged women through the usage of IT. Internet has helped them market their various products like soft toys,

candles, bags, utility items etc. Through internet there is greater awareness and exposure and market reach for the products. These evidences prove that IT has empowered the women all over the world. Given below is the data of various IT companies that show how women can grow when they are given equal opportunity.

### Ratios of women employment to total employment in IT sector

Name of the company	Total employment	Women employment	Ratio
WIPRO	12658	2530	1:5
TCS	21800	5450	1:4
INFOSYS	15356	2896	1:5
HEWLETT-PACKRD	2245	320	1:7
L&T INFOTEC	2250	900	1:2.5
HCL TECHONOLOGIES	5757	1150	1:5
SUN MICROSYSTEM	596	119	1:5
ROLTA INDIA	2634	123	1:1.9
ORACLE INDIA	2702	540	1:5
SIMENS INFORMATION	1390	260	1:6

The IT sector in India has created employment opportunities in areas such as telecommunications, banking, shopping, education, health and business. In addition, the internet has also generated new jobs in areas like the design, maintenance and management and management of sites on the World Wide Web. There are real possibilities that women may be able to access opportunities they never had before. According to prediction by National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), by 2014 there will be one and a half million jobs in the IT enabled services. If 50% to 70% of these jobs were to go to women, the impact will be tremendous.



### Women among the various subsets of IT

S.NO	IT sector	F/M ratio	Type of work and skill requirement
1	Software industry	19:81	Software development not just design, customization and adaptation of software
2	Telecom industry	40:60	Technical and creative work required highly qualified engineers
3	Airlines	80:20	Customer service, required communication, language & software skill
4	ITES(medical transcription)	45:55	Demand in linguistics and functional/ domain skill
5	BPO	49:51	Indian BPO is predominantly voice-based (outbound calls)

### BENEFITS OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY FOR WORKING WOMEN

Information technology has catalyzed the process of women's empowerment by opening up avenues for women to freely articulate and share their experiences, concerns and knowledge created the possibility of their further enrichment. The use of IT has broadened the scope of their activities and enabled them to address issues previously beyond their capacity. Women have traditionally been excluded from the external information sphere, both deliberately and because of factors working to their disadvantage such as lack of freedom of movement or low levels of education. IT opens up a direct window for women to the outside world. Information flows to them without any distortion and censoring. This leads to broadening of perspectives; greater understanding of their current situation. IT has played an important role in changing the concept of work and workplace. Due to IT, women have employment options as flexibility and work at home concept. **Tele-TechIndia**, a joint venture BPO Company between Tele-Tech and the Bharti group, gives its employees a choice of four-day weeks instead of normal five. There are incentives for housewives & other part time workers for 30 hour weeks. Mumbai-based Data matics Technologies, a BPO which processes data allows women to work from home, 20 hours a week. This facilities employment for married women, especially with small children.

IT has made the role of time and distance less significant in organizing business and production related activities. As a result of technology, a high proportion of jobs outsourced by big firms are going to women. IT offers women flexibility in time & space. Women, therefore can work from outside the office, often from their home and at anytime and raise extra income to become more financially independent and empowered. New areas of employment such as telemarketing, medical transcriptions etc. have also opened up tremendous job opportunities for women. These jobs are definitely underpaid and fall at lower segment of IT Jobs, nevertheless, they are opening up avenues where none existed before.

### **IMPACT OF IT ON RURAL WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

In India, women comprise a large portion of the rural population and play a substantial role in the rural sector. These women engage in economics activities such as handicrafts and sewing or rolling cigarettes, weaving of baskets and fabrics, working in cities as vendors. They are in urgent need of following information for their further development:-

1. Educational opportunities outside the village.
2. Job opportunities in both formal and informal sector.
3. Government assistance programs career advancement within the restrictions of traditions.
4. Modern child care facilities.
5. Legal provisions to counter sexual harassment, domestic violence & social injustice. By providing above information, IT played a greater role for rural women empowerment.

IT also helped in rural women's empowerment by making them aware about the world and more particularly, What is happening in India? Internet has helped them in assimilating information about variety, range and quality of products publicity and marketing of products and services. Apart from being used as a tool of information, application of IT has created avenues for women empowerment. Note worthy examples are that of SEWA, Embalam, **NABANNA & e-mahile**. **SEWA** (Self Employed Women's Association) uses IT for women empowerment. It uses an Internet based training programme to development a cadre of barefoot managers among the poor women workers, focusing on women in panchayats, forests & soon.

**M.S. Swaminathan** research project in Pondicherry in Embalam district has led to creation of information villages. Ten villages are connected by a hybrid wired and



wireless network. This has enabled villagers to obtain information that they need and use this information to make improvements. Local volunteers gather the information & feed it in to an interne. Most of the operators and volunteers, providing primary information are women more than 50%, thus giving them status and influence.

**NABANNA** is a success story of rural women's empowerment through IT. "Networking Rural Women and Knowledge" a **UNESCO** Project in Nabanna, India explores innovative uses of databases, intranet portals for the benefits of poor women. **UNESCO Report (2004)** reports the following changes in women after gaining access to information through Nasanna.

1. Women gained more respect at family and community level as a result of IT Skills acquired at center.
2. Younger women felt that they can easily approach the Job market with greater confidence than before.
3. Women became more creative after learning a program like Paint brush in windows.
4. Women have achieved on increase in income as well as enhancement of solidarity among women in community.

e-Mahile is a project being implemented under the ASARE Scheme by the KSWDC (Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation), for women this project is conceptualized to provide all possible services to the rural public through rural women. Rural women are taught how to access the internet for collecting information and use it for various works. Then each trained women is provided a Laptop, Printer, UPS, Soil testing Kit, LCD projector, Digital Camera, Internet Connection & educational CD's. This project has empowered the rural women by helping them to serve their villages and thereby earn a decent income.

## **Conclusion**

It can be concluded that the women is empowered through the help of Information technology. It has changed their position from past. The development of IT has enabled the women section to participate in each and every walk of life. It has empowered the women by enhancing their skills, knowledge and income. Flexi timings and work at home with internet has enabled the more women to join the labor force. Thus IT has played a greater role in women's empowerment. It potential to sweep across political, geographical, economic and social barriers is just the leverage that women need to build for themselves a new identity and a more honorable place in society.

## References

- [1] Michael, J. Handel (2003), “complex picture of IT and employment emerges in India” <http://www.sri.com>.
- [2] [www.nesscom.org](http://www.nesscom.org)
- [3] Enhancing women empowerment through ICT, [wcd.nic.in/research/ict-reporttn.pdf](http://wcd.nic.in/research/ict-reporttn.pdf)
- [4] Word bank report 2004.
- [5] <http://www.census.gov/ipc/prod/wid-9801.pdf>
- [6] Sreeramulu .G (2006), “empowerment of women through IT”, kalpaz publisher.
- [7] Backhaus. k, & Tikko. S.,(2004) “Conceptualizing and researching women as executive.” Carrer development international.9(4/5), pp501-517.