



# Role of electronic media in rural women empowerment

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## ABSTRACT

Rural 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 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 woman to become free from the control of others, that is, to assume power to control her own life and to determine her own conditions. There must be opportunities for people to meet and exchange views and opinions, and ways of recording what is agreed and done and there must be scope for having fun and celebrating achievement. As far women empowerment is considered these are few indicators considered useful which are as confidence and understanding, skills in analysis and communication, trust, caring and tolerance, communication and co-operation.

## INTRODUCTION

When god created woman he was working late on the 6<sup>th</sup> day ....An angel came by and asked. "Why spend so much time on her?" The lord answered. "Have you seen all the specifications I have to meet to shape her?" ....She must function on all the kinds of foods,...she must be able to embrace several kids at the same time, give a hug that can heal anything from a bruised knee to a broken heart, she must do all this with only two hands,...She cures herself when sick and can work 18 hours a day" .....

The ANGEL was impressed ..." Just two hands ....impossible!" And this is the standard model?!...." The Angel came closer and touched the woman "....." But

you have made her so soft, Lord .....She is soft, said the Lord," But I have made her strong. You can't imagine what she can endure and overcome "..... "Can she think?" The Angel asked....The Lord answered. "Not only can she think, she can reason and negotiate" ....What's it for?" Asked the Angel ....The Lord said. "Tears are her way of expressing her grief, her doubts, her love, her loneliness, her suffering and her pride..." This made a big impression on the Angel," Lord, you are genius. You thought of everything. A woman is indeed marvellous!" ... Lord said." Indeed she is. She holds happiness, love and opinions. She smiles when she feels like screaming. She sings when she feels like crying, cries when happy and laughs when afraid. She fights for what she believes in. Her love is unconditional. Her heart is broken when a

next –of-kin or a friend dies but she finds strength to get on with life.” The Angel asked, so she is a perfect? The Lord replied No. She has just one drawback” She often forgets what she is worth.” Each year we celebrate International Women’s day on March 8<sup>th</sup> with a determination to commemorate the achievements of women, and to acknowledge the special status they deserve in society. The significant question is what difference has it made to the position of women? Have women become really strong, and have their long term struggles ended?

At an individual level empowerment is as building confidence, insight and understanding and developing personal skills, for example, being able to analyze situations and communicate more effectively with others. Being empowered proposed some level of common sense and emotional maturity and assess to appropriate information and know how; it also implies someone who cares about others and is tolerant of other’s views and behaviour (within limits!).

Empowerment within group or community, empowerment can be taken to involve building trust, co-operation and communication between members, and a prerequisite for this is that there are appropriate structures, protocols and procedures in place, with effective sanctions against those who default or abuse the system. There must be opportunities for people to meet and exchange views and opinions, and ways of recording what is agreed and done; and there must be scope for having fun and celebrating achievement. As for women empowerment is considered these are few indicators considered useful which are as follows:

- Confidence and understanding
- Skills in analysis and communication
- Trust, caring and tolerance
- Communication and co-operation

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 co-operation of each other. In the context of 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 environment needs of their own communities.

### **Need and importance of new electronic media for rural women empowerment :**

Rural 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 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 woman 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 of “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 at 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. The things are related to women’s status and their future. However, India 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 legislations; it must be supported by change in the women’s social circumstances and situations and also men’s sexiest attitude to women.

### **Electronic media: A tool for women empowerment:**

Gender researchers and feminist scholars have also become interested in new media as a development which has the potential to break down or flatten social hierarchies (Friedman, 2005) in more general terms. For

example, Williamson suggests that digital media have already begun to challenge socio-cultural and political norms in Britain (Williamson, 2009). New media differs from traditional 'old' media in that its structures of ownership and participation are new and directly challenge the monopoly on mass communication possessed by traditional media producers: 'The internet has fragmented and decentralized the context in which communication occurs' (ibid, 2009). Blogs are used as public diaries where women discuss public and personal issues in their life and development. Story telling used by women in blogs to introduce their thoughts has been proven to have its major effect (Ayish, 2011). Geniets (2010) also finds that new media provides a potential break with old social hierarchies: 'new technologies give individual producers of media content more freedom, and empower them to expose, interact with and reveal backstage behaviour related information about themselves as well as others to a mass media audience.' However, while new media, overall, is identified as an agent for (generally positive) social change, its effects are not gender neutral. New Media help people to connect, it easily collaborate with other people and create new content, services, communities and channels of communication that help people to deliver information and services. People of all ages and backgrounds are online and using new media tools for a variety of reasons such as searching of information and connecting with others. The term "New media" may be defined as an interactive forms of communication that use the Internet, including podcasts, RSS feeds, social networks, text messaging, blogs, wikis, virtual worlds and more. We take as a starting point the basic definition of 'new media' provided by Google web definitions and Wikipedia which defines it as 'on-demand access to content any time, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation. Another aspect of new media is the real-time generation of new, unregulated

content' (Google web definitions, Wikipedia). The rise of new media has increased communication between people all over the world and through Internet. It has allowed people to express themselves through blogs, websites, pictures and other user generated media. New media makes it possible for anyone to create, modify and share content and share it with others, using relatively simple tools that are often free or inexpensive. New media requires a computer or mobile device with Internet access.

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 rural 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 smart phones, 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 soon.

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