



Empowering Change: The Impact of Women and Diverse Communities on India's Path to Development

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Abstract— India's ambitious initiative, *Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-reliant India)*, aims to boost the nation's economic self-sufficiency and growth. Women's economic empowerment is crucial for achieving this goal. Skill development plays a pivotal role in equipping women with the necessary tools to participate effectively in the workforce and contribute to *Atmanirbhar Bharat*. This paper explores the current state of women's skill development in India, the challenges they face, and proposes strategies to enhance their skill acquisition for the nation's self-reliance. The paper argues that by addressing existing barriers and implementing targeted interventions, skill development can be a powerful catalyst for women's economic empowerment and contribute to the success of *Atmanirbhar Bharat*. Women's skill development is crucial for achieving the goals of *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, which aims for self-reliance and economic empowerment. This paper explores the significance of skill development programs targeted towards women, examining their impact on women's economic independence and the overall development of the nation. Through a review of existing literature and case studies, this paper provides insights into the challenges and opportunities in skill development initiatives for women in India. Additionally, policy recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of such programs and foster women's participation in the workforce, thereby contributing to the realization of *Atmanirbhar Bharat*.



Keywords— Skill Development, Women Empowerment, *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, Entrepreneurship, Economic Independence.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Empowering women isn’t just the right thing to do—it’s the smart thing to do.” — **Barack Obama**

“Women's empowerment is not just about giving women a voice; it’s about amplifying their voices and making sure they are heard at all levels” (Guterres, 2023). In alignment with this sentiment expressed by former President Barack Obama, the empowerment of women stands as a cornerstone in the pursuit of socio-economic progress and national self-reliance. In the context of India's vision for *Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)*, the emphasis on women's skill development emerges as a crucial pathway toward economic empowerment and inclusive growth. However, historical and systemic barriers have often hindered their participation in the workforce and inhibited their ability to contribute meaningfully to the economy.

Recognizing this challenge, various skill development initiatives have been launched to equip women with the necessary knowledge, capabilities, and resources to thrive in diverse sectors ranging from entrepreneurship to traditional crafts.

By investing in the skill development of women, India can unleash a wave of innovation, productivity, and resilience that will propel the nation towards the realization of its *Atmanirbhar Bharat* vision. The vision of *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, or *Self-reliant India*, seeks to propel the nation towards economic independence and global leadership. However, this ambitious goal cannot be fully realized without the active participation and empowerment of half the population: women. As Nelson Mandela aptly stated, “Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression” (Mandela,

1995). In the context of Atmanirbhar Bharat, women's economic empowerment stands as a cornerstone, and skilling holds the key to unlocking its potential.

Women in India face significant barriers to entering and thriving in the workforce. The World Bank reports that only 20% of Indian women participate in the labor force, compared to 54% globally (World Bank, 2020). This gender gap stems from various factors, including limited access to education, societal norms restricting mobility and opportunities, and lack of relevant skills aligned with market demands. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach, with skill development acting as a critical catalyst for women's economic empowerment.

By equipping women with marketable skills, we unlock their potential to contribute meaningfully to the national economy. This not only increases household incomes and improves living standards but also fosters social progress and creates a more inclusive society. As the World Economic Forum emphasizes, "investing in women's skills is not just the right thing to do, it is also the smart thing to do" (World Economic Forum, 2020). Skills development is a driving force for improving household productivity, employability and income-earning opportunities for rural women and also for enhancing food security and promoting environmentally sustainable rural development and livelihoods (Anuradha & Reddy, 2013).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The investigators have reviewed the literature with reference to skill development of women in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan of Government of India which will give an understanding about the earlier research in the field and research gaps.

Sowjanya S. Shetty & M, Dr. V. Basil Hans (2019) have opined that if the girls are given quality education and skilled to secure a livelihood that would be the best way to ensure progress of the society and also contribute in development of the Nation.

Musharraf Jahan (2019) mentioned that the status of women is improving due to technology and with help of advanced technology women have now access to new jobs, professions & occupations.

Manjot Kaur, Sukhdeep Kaur Mann & Kanwaljit Kaur (2018) have opined that the skills & knowledge that a woman acquires, always proves beneficial, sooner or later.

Anjali Vyas (2018) has stated that as India progresses towards knowledge economy it is necessary to focus on advancement of skills which are relevant to the emerging economic environment.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are:

- To understand through the review of literature the Skill development of Women in India.
- To understand how Skill development of Women can help in the success of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
- To provide some way-forward based on the observations and findings of the study.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study in this paper is based on descriptive research based on the secondary data and information sourced from internet, relevant books, journals, magazines, articles, media reports and Government portals on Skill India, website of world bank etc. The research design of the study is descriptive, in-depth analysis of the research study has been adopted and available secondary data have been extensively used for the study.

V. WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Skill development empowers women by equipping them with the necessary knowledge, abilities, and confidence to navigate the labor market (ILO, 2019). It improves their employability, earning potential, and career mobility, leading to greater economic independence and a better standard of living for themselves and their families. Furthermore, skilled women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to economic growth and innovation (OECD, 2018). Women's economic empowerment is not just a matter of social justice; it is a fundamental driver of sustainable development and prosperity. This essay explores the importance of skill development for women's economic empowerment, highlighting its transformative impact on individuals, communities, and economies.

Enhancing Employability: Skill development initiatives provide women with the technical, vocational, and soft skills needed to access a wide range of employment opportunities. By acquiring market-relevant skills, women can overcome traditional gender stereotypes and secure gainful employment in sectors previously dominated by men. This not only enhances their economic independence but also contributes to the overall productivity and competitiveness of the labor market.

Fostering Entrepreneurship: Entrepreneurship offers women a pathway to economic autonomy and self-reliance. Through entrepreneurship development programs, women can acquire the business acumen, financial literacy, and

management skills necessary to establish and sustain their enterprises. By supporting women-owned businesses, societies can unleash a wave of innovation, job creation, and wealth generation, driving economic growth from the grassroots level.

Closing the Gender Pay Gap: Skill development empowers women to negotiate better wages and benefits, thereby narrowing the gender pay gap. By equipping women with skills that are in high demand and commanding premium compensation, societies can address disparities in earnings and promote greater income equality. This not only benefits individual women but also strengthens household incomes and reduces poverty levels.

Promoting Inclusive Growth: Investing in women's skill development is a powerful strategy for promoting inclusive growth and social cohesion. By ensuring that women have equal access to education, training, and employment opportunities, societies can harness the full potential of their human capital. This, in turn, leads to more resilient and sustainable economies, as women reinvest their earnings in their families, communities, and future generations.

VI. BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S SKILL DEVELOPMENT

India's transition to one of the largest and faster growing global economies during the last decade has been a remarkable phenomenon. In order to sustain its growth speed, an efficient and continuous system of skill development for its workforce especially for rural women is critically imperative. Despite the various efforts by the government, there is still a long way to go to bring the skill development mission to completion due to the presence of various obstacles in the path of rural women. Some of the obstacles in skill development faced by the rural women are as following:

Illiteracy among Rural Women: The literacy rate of

women in India is very low as compared to its male counterpart and it is one of the major obstacles that need to be taken care of. The uneducated rural women do not have the knowledge of measurement and basic accounting. Therefore, rural women are ignorant of new technology or unskilled. They are often unable to do research & gain the necessary training.

Lower Access and Retention in Education: Access and retention can be analysed by focusing on rates of enrolment at a particular level of education. Problems of gender disparity and discrimination begin with access to schooling. Insufficient attention is being given to social and cultural barriers which prevent girls and women from entering the education system. Issues like long distances to school, poor sanitation facilities, poverty, higher drop-out rates in females etc. impact the women empowerment.

Gender-insensitive Facilities at Training Institutes: Long distances to schools/training institutions and lack of public transport. High education and training fees, while women generally have little cash of their own and limited bargaining power to access household money for training. Trainers and educators who often have discriminatory attitudes towards girls and women. Lack of female teachers and trainers, especially in rural areas.

Social Norms and Negative Attitudes: Negative attitudes towards the benefits of educating girls and lower priority for girls education. Girls are seen as relatively "transitory assets" – not worthy of long-term investment – as they leave their parents home after getting married.

Lack of Self-confidence & Decision Making Power: In rural areas, over 50 per cent of adolescent girls lack access to adequate sanitation facilities, due to which women & girls are subjected to teasing, sexual harassment, violence and consequently to feeling of humiliation, insecurity and distress.

VII. PROGRAMMES AND TRAINING FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Programmes and Schemes for Skill Development	Details	Websites
Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)	Skill the young generation and prepare them as industry requirements through various skill certification programmes.	http://www.pmkvyofficial.org/
Capacity building Scheme (CBS)	Providing residential skill training for the youth of north-eastern region	https://msde.gov.in
Udaan Scheme	A consumer-to-consumer trade platform, to promote small & medium businesses in India	https://udaan.com/
India International Skill Centres (IISC)	Provides high-skilled young labour force to meet the need for global demand	https://msde.gov.in

The dual system of Training (DST)	To allow industries to partner with government and private ITIs for high-employment courses	https://msde.gov.in
Flexi-MoU	The initiative enables firms to teach applicants based on their skills and offers trainees and industrial environment linked with market needs and the newest technology.	https://msde.gov.in
Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDOT)	To protect their safety and security, PDOT provides workers training and knowledge on the customs, laws, and other aspects of the destination country	http://pdot.me.gov.in/
Learn and Earn	The initiative intends to improve minority youth's modern/traditional skills based on their qualifications, current economic trends, and market potential, which may lead to work or self-employment	https://www.iisd.co.in/seekho-aur-kamao.php
Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)	DDU-GKY intends to train underprivileged rural youth and provide them with work with above-minimum pay.	https://www.iisd.co.in/ddu-gky-project.php
SANKALP	The Schemes tries to foster entrepreneurship via education and training ,advocacy, and access to a support network and by promoting social companies for equitable growth	https://sankalp.msde.gov.in/

The Ministries of Women & Child Development (WCD) and Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) are partnering to enable, skill and empower the women and youth of India. Women Training under MSDE takes care of providing skill training to women and aims at stimulating employment opportunities among women of various socio-economic levels and different age groups. Lives of over 35.36 lakh women have been transformed and their livelihood secured through Skill Development Training under following initiatives of the Skill India Mission launched by MSDE.

Long Term Skill Development Training- through around 15,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) with special focus on enrolment of women (173,105 women trainees in 2019).

Short Term Skill Development Training- to promote increased participation of women in the workforce through appropriate skilling and gender mainstreaming of skills under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) – 40% of 73 lakh candidates trained under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 2016-2020 are women candidates. Around 6000 training targets have been allocated to train women in 4 Pradhan Mantri Mahila Kaushal Kendra (PMMKK). Exclusive ladies' batches for skill development training under the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) in all Centrally Funded Institutes (CFIs) etc

Essential Skills Training and Vocational Training- to non-literates, neo-literates as well as school drop-outs through Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) to uplift rural population economically with special focus on women (

90% female trainees).

Women's Vocational Training Programme (WVTP)- promotes Vocational Training for women for wage-employment in industry, as instructors and also promotes their self employment through Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS), Crafts Instructor Training Scheme (CITS) and Advanced Vocational Training Scheme (AVTS) etc.

School Initiatives and Higher Education- In the school education space, NSDC along with Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) have identified 73 Job roles across 21 Sectors to be offered and in the higher education space, NSDC is working with All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) for facilitation of its flagship initiative of PMKVYTI (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana – Technical Institute) with special focus on women candidates.

VIII. WAYS OF FACILITATING SKILL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AMONG RURAL WOMEN

There have been numerous methods to smooth the progress of skill development activities among rural women, which are as follows: (Radhika Kapur, 2014).

Gender-responsive strategy: Develop a gender-responsive strategy for education, training and entrepreneurship development that responds to the needs of rural girls and women.

Free and quality education: Extend girls' participation in free and quality basic education on an equal basis with boys by promoting a gender-responsive learning

environment.

Enhancing the skill development infrastructure: Creating and enhancing the skill development infrastructure all over India.

Establishment of skill development centers: Skill development centers should be established in rural and urban areas, especially where women can reach easily.

Offer of differential wages: Differential wages should be offered for the skilled and certified workforce to encourage recognition of the skill development programs by the society so that more and more women join them.

IX. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

This research paper delves into the critical role of skill development in empowering women and paving the path towards Atmanirbhar Bharat. Additionally, it has been noted that the idea of technical training and skill development for women needs to go beyond the traditional objective of imparting technical and managerial competencies.

X. CONCLUSION

In the case of women, in particular, the goal of skill development is not only to prepare them for the workforce but also to enhance the performance of women employees by raising the quality of their work. Training and skill development will aid women's entire personality development and improve self-esteem. Exercise is also recommended to be tailored to enhance women's talents for skill growth to be more successful. However, a focus on improvement should not come at the expense of learning new talents, particularly in the case of women who would otherwise become more firmly rooted in conventional roles and skills. The courses in skill development help find work and advance one's career. Policies such as increasing access to skill development by providing more seats for women, gender mainstreaming of training content and delivery, and usage of digital platforms for women's empowerment should be simplified.

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