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YOJANA



SEPTEMBER 2021

A DEVELOPMENT MONTHLY

₹ 22

NARI SHAKTI

LEAD ARTICLE

Fighting Femicide

Dr Ranjana Kumari

FOCUS

Menstruation – A Human Issue

Anshu Gupta

SPECIAL ARTICLES

SHG-led Women Empowerment

Dr K K Tripathy

Women Excelling in Sports

Prof R Subramanian



DEVELOPMENT ROADMAP



Atmanirbhar Nari Shakti

The Prime Minister participated in 'Atmanirbhar Narishakti se Samvad' and interacted with women Self-Help-Group (SHG) members/community resource persons promoted under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM). To make them self-reliant, capitalisation support funds to the tune of Rs. 1625 crore to over 4 lakh SHGs were released. In addition, Rs. 25 crores as seed money for 7500 SHG members were released under the PMFME (PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises) Scheme of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries and Rs. 4.13 crore as funds to 75 FPOs (Farmer Producer Organisations) being promoted under the Mission. A compendium of success stories of women SHG members from all across the country, along with a handbook on universalisation of farm livelihoods was released by the Prime Minister.

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister lauded the self-help groups of women for their unprecedented services during the Corona period. The Prime Minister recognised their unparalleled contribution in making masks and sanitisers and providing food to the needy and spreading awareness. The Prime Minister said that to increase the scope of entrepreneurship among women and for greater participation in the resolve of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, major financial support has been given to more than 4 lakh SHGs. He said that the self-help groups and Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana have brought a new revolution in rural India. He added that today there are more than 42 crores Jan Dhan accounts of which close to 55% of the accounts are of women. He said the bank accounts were opened to make it easy to take loans from banks.

The Prime Minister also announced that now the limit for loans available to self-help groups without guarantee has been doubled to Rs. 20 lakh. He said that the condition



Continued on cover III...

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Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides
Rig Veda

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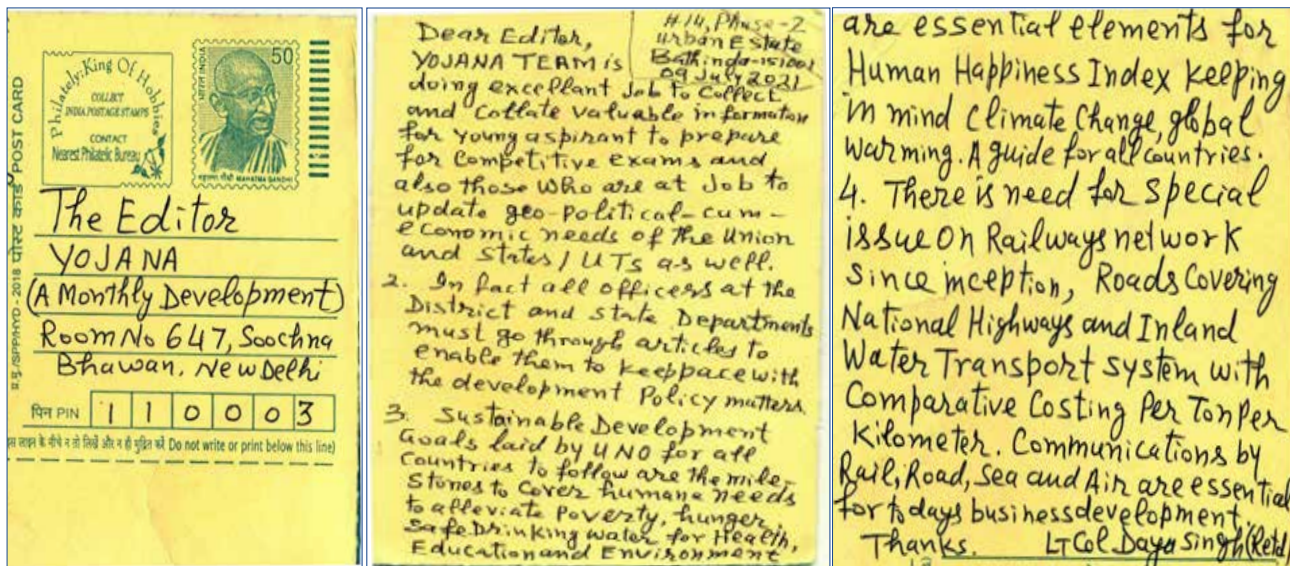
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Inbox



‘Aspirants’

I was searching for a platform for current affairs and further improvements of alternative policies of Government in just a frame. After a lull, I got the Yojana Magazine which emboldened me to read such articles every month with my unbridled enthusiasm. Now, I became fond of this Magazine, brings a willingness to learn about all policies of Government and to explore new solutions to old problems. It is my first experience reading the Yojana Magazine as a concerned reader, my commitment to learning and thinking about current affairs from Magazine encouraged me to be proactive and compassionate. And It would not be an exaggeration to say that, It fulfilled my desire for which I was very bewildered when I heard dialogue from Aspirant Web Series, “My day begins with Hindu (newspaper) and ends with Yojana”. Ironically, I pulled up my socks up to read the magazine regularly. And now I’m the Yojana Magazine buff.

– Uzair Ahmed
Muzaffarnagar, UP

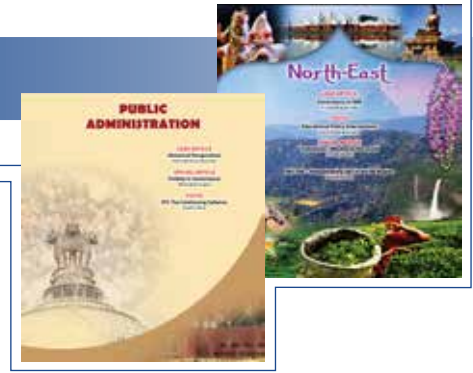
Important Topics

Yojana Team, your efforts to cover the information and knowledge are wonderful. I am reading this magazine since 2017 and I started to make notes through it. I found it very useful for competitive exams and general knowledge, especially your presentation of topics through the charts and pictures are so much helpful and interactive to learn the topics. You not only cover current affairs, but you also revive old topics which are related to history or political science, science, etc. For example, in June you covered the topic, “The Pandemic through Gandhian Perspective”. It was an amazing explanation and it revised my history concepts also you explained impressively about the health of people which is the most important issue of that current time.

– Rinku Ram
Chamba, Himachal Pradesh

Spectacular Content

The summer of 2015 was the year when I was introduced to this spectacular magazine. As a UPSC



aspirant, it is quite a knowledge booster for me. It is a cliché line, I know...But I'm a regular reader and will be forever. Your April 2021 issue was a great one which I have read recently. I am extremely grateful to the whole team of Yojana. May this journey continue forever!

– Prabhat K Mishra
University of Lucknow, UP

Best Companion for Competitions

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for publishing such authentic and valuable articles on highly relevant topics for all competitive exams including UPSC CSE (Prelims, Mains), UPPSC (Mains), SSC CGL (Descriptive Tier III) to name a few. I have been a regular reader of the magazine since January 2021 and I believe, the magazine has been one of my best companions in the preparation. The articles, in a lucid way, start a topic from the scratch and bring it to the contemporary scenario, highlighting potential issues or challenges and at the same time provide solutions to them. This structure of covering topics in a holistic and multidimensional way is nowhere else to be found. I would like to suggest the following topics/themes for upcoming issues: “Environment and Climate Change- an analysis of how at policy level Environment as a subject has evolved”, “Wildlife and Biodiversity of India”, “Globalization and Changing world order - Challenges and Opportunities for India”. I am sure that the issues on the above topics if covered by the Yojana Magazine would be incomparable.

– Shashank Mittal
Lucknow, UP

Issue on Northeast

The article regarding ‘Agriculture and Sustainable Development’ by Dr M Premjit Singh is very important and interesting to which covers all the facts very clearly and provide so much information about the north-eastern region. The July 2021 editorial was excellent and highly beneficial to every reader. Heartily thankful to team Yojana

and waiting for great topics with more information with such excellence.

– Anand Pathak
Siwan, Bihar

Covers Syllabus Prominently

I am a civil service aspirant. I have just joined an online coaching class and the teachers there suggested us to read the Yojana magazine. The July 2021 magazine on The North East is my first copy. I have read it and I realised that this book is a valuable asset or a key to the Indian Civil Services examination as it covers a major portion of syllabus in the general studies paper. I would like to thank all the contributors of each and every article in the Yojana Magazine.

– Divya Lekshmi
Kollam, Kerala

Education Policy

The article regarding ‘Educational Policy Interventions’ for the Region by Prof K M Baharul Islam of Yojana July 2021 edition presents a realistic solution for overhauling our educational systems and approaches at the regional level. There is a need for upgrading skill empowerment and enhancing the suitability of the domain-specific degrees in gaining employment. There is a necessity of introducing specific courses with motivational sessions mainstreaming across the programmes. It has become essential to examine regional educational policy and their effects on pedagogical innovation supported by ICT integration in schools. The educational policies for the integration of ICT in the classroom can serve different goals in relevant domains of an educational, cultural, social and economic character. The educational policy interventions should address functional skills, academic, cognitive, behavioural and social skills that directly affect the child’s ability access an education.

– Prateek Jha
Varanasi, UP

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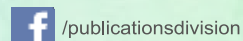
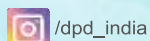
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An Enabling Environment

When we approached one of the authors for this issue, she mentioned her career choice or how able professional she is has nothing to do with her being a woman, and rightly so. Women usually do not work or choose professions 'to prove' themselves. But, they do prove that despite all odds, they bring to the table a set of competencies and skillsets equal to their male counterparts. The way demarcating certain professions as male-only is biased, in a similar manner considering women, in general, as superior to their male colleagues is discrimination of another sort. This often leads to a debate on humanist and feminist approaches, between creating parity and equal opportunities for all versus bringing women to a greater league than men.

But how can we talk of equality when a girl-child is not allowed to be born, is left malnourished, is not allowed to go to school or finish education, go for higher studies, choose a career of her choice, or lead a life at par with the men. In this entire chain, if any of the above is compromised, the women lose a chance of equal participation in society. This is where the need to 'empower' them arises like what is needed for any other marginalised section of the society. Precisely, it is not a question of 'weaker sex' but a weaker framework. When gender inequality is a norm in a patriarchal structure, then the least we can do in a society is to have a legal and institutional system to work for those who are subjugated and discriminated against because of their gender. When violence is used as a weapon to show supremacy and dominance, then there has to have a sound system to act against the perpetrators of this crime and safeguard women's rights, dignity, and livelihoods.

In the recently concluded Olympics, sportswomen shared stories about why they wanted to have a better life for themselves and their families hence chose sports as a means to break the chain of struggle and poverty. There were also instances from the same event where sportswomen chose their mental well-being above the race towards medals. It tells us how even acknowledging the hardships and then making tough choices in their lives is also a step towards empowering themselves. It is not always being ahead or on the top but rising after each fall and walking with even greater strength and resolve. These lessons from the field of sports are equally applicable to other professions as well.

This issue aims to celebrate women making a mark in their respective fields. Also, it highlights various issues they face in the society and workplace especially in the times of pandemic. Discussing the most basic matters related to hygiene and dignity in the form of menstruation helped us come to a point where it nowhere remains merely a 'women-only subject, but it is more a human issue to be managed. Similarly, ensuring an environment of safety and security is a primary parameter for equal growth. Gender discrimination is unfortunately everywhere around us, especially in the unorganised sector. Be it in terms of lack of pay parity, biases against those women who might take maternity leaves in the future, or those infiltrating questions asked in interviews about the career breaks women might have to take to focus on childbirth, the list is endless. In such a scenario, what all needs to be done, as a society, to bring it to a level playing is a question the policymakers need to ponder upon. Those small nudges in the system and slight support wherever required can go a long way in creating an enabling environment for women to grow and prosper. □



Fighting Femicide

Dr Ranjana Kumari

Gender inequality remains at large throughout India and thousands of women face widespread social, cultural, and economic discrimination within the family as well as in the wider community. All the more, the ongoing pandemic has affected women more than anything else, be it in rise in cases of Domestic Violence (DV), Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), withdrawal of girl children from educational institutions, rise in incidences of child/early marriage, economic seclusion, job losses, men entering ‘women’s work spaces’, balancing the double burden of extended work time with work-from-home and care and domestic work, etc. Violence Against Women (VAW) is a growing concern throughout the region and within South Asia, which is home to one-fifth of the world population, violence, or the risk of violence, permeates every aspect of women’s lives from birth to death.

It is estimated that one-third of South Asian women experience violence throughout their lives and VAW is institutionalised through family structures, wider social and economic frameworks, and cultural and religious traditions. This violence is insidious, it is a widely accepted method for controlling women, is largely overlooked by law enforcement agencies, and is ignored by those in power. One in three women (35 per cent) has experienced some form of violence during her lifetime - more than one billion women worldwide. The violence against women is more glaring as Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the condition of women in every walk of life.

Definition of Femicide

The term femicide was originally defined as the killing of women but has been adapted over time to represent the act of killing women because of their gender. In this sense, femicide is understood to be motivated by misogyny and prejudice against women. For a case to be considered femicide there must be an implied intention to carry out the crime and a demonstrated connection between the crime and the gender of the victim. Several crimes against women that can be recognised as femicide include sexual murders, mortality resulting from domestic or family violence, and cultural or institutional violence that results in mortality. A 53% rise is seen in crime against women in 2020 from

cases rising from 1411 cases/month to 2165 cases/month after a lockdown was imposed. In India, the mortality rate for women from Covid is 3.3 per cent compared to 2.9 per cent for men. Throughout India, several forms of violence against women fit within the definition of femicide including domestic violence, honour killings, dowry deaths, sex-selective abortions, infanticide, domestic violence, and witch-hunting. This paper will focus on domestic violence, dowry deaths, and sex-selective abortions.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is prevalent across India and is widely accepted as a legitimate part of family life by both women and men. The family institution is an extremely important aspect of Indian culture and is central to the country’s social and economic frameworks. However, for many women the family does not represent a safe and protective unit, rather it reinforces wider patterns of gender discrimination and legitimises violence as a method for controlling and subjugating women. The most recent National Family Health Survey found that in India 34% of women between the ages of 15-49 have experienced violence at some point since they turned 15 and that 37% of married women have experienced violence. During the lockdown, Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence cases have been doubled as reported by the National Commission for Women (NCW). Given the extremely high rate of under-reporting

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of violence against women, particularly domestic violence, the actual number of women who experience violence within the home is thought to be significantly higher. 92.9% of cases of crime against women are pending in city courts. The number of women who are killed by intimate partners or relatives in India each year remains unknown. However, domestic violence is one of the most common sources of violence against women and is therefore understood to be one of the biggest causes of femicide throughout the country. Many women activists question police responses to suicide cases and suggest that many crimes are covered up by family members and police and are reported as suicide rather than murder.

Dowry Deaths

The dowry system also reinforces discrimination against women and dowry-related deaths continue to compromise women's safety throughout India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. According to NCRB reports, on average, every hour a woman succumbs to dowry deaths in India with the annual figure rising upwards to 7000. Dowry is a cultural tradition in which the family of the bride gives cash and presents to the family of the groom. It was originally meant to support new couples beginning their married life. However, India's prevailing patriarchy as well as rising economic demands have turned dowry into a commercial transaction that is underpinned by socio-economic standing and reinforces the financial dependency of women on their husbands. Violence against women often increases when

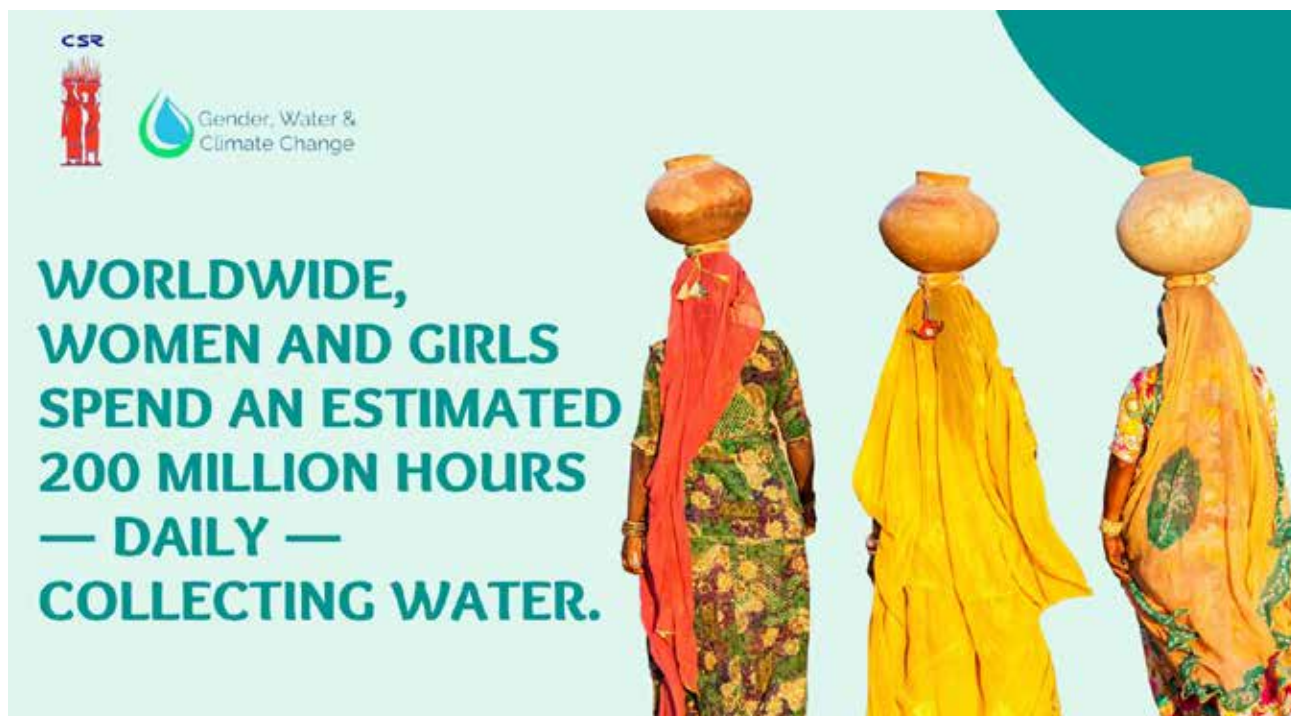
Several crimes against women that can be recognised as femicide include sexual murders, mortality resulting from domestic or family violence, and cultural or institutional violence that results in mortality.

a family requests a larger dowry after marriage or shows dissatisfaction with the dowry they have received. Whilst dowry is illegal it continues to be practised throughout the country and dowry-related violence is an ongoing issue for Indian women. Dowry-related death is closely linked to a woman's age at marriage, her education level, and her exposure to mass media. Within India, states with lower female literacy

rates, higher rates of child marriage, and less access to mass media generally experience more dowry deaths. Particularly during the pandemic, there is a spike in child marriage and early marriages. Around 898 child marriages were stopped by CHILDLINE (1098) during the lockdown.

Sex-selective abortions

The practice of sex-selected abortions throughout South Asia, particularly in India, highlights the extent of patriarchy and misogyny throughout the region. It is a particularly insidious form of violence because it prevents girl children from being born purely because they are girls. The practice of sex-selective abortions is growing throughout the region. About 6.8 million lesser female births will be recorded across India by 2030 because of the persistent usage of selective abortions, researchers estimate. The increasing availability of prenatal technologies means that families are able to determine the sex of the foetus and are choosing to abort female foetuses at an alarming rate. An estimated 10 million female foetuses have been aborted over the past two decades. Somewhat surprisingly, gender-biased sex selection



has historically been overwhelmingly practiced among educated, middle-class families. However, as the availability of the sex-determination technology has increased there has also been an increase in the practice amongst lower-class and rural communities.

Responses to Femicide

While dowry deaths and sex-selective abortions reflect a strong culture of violence against women throughout India there is a strong effort in all sectors of Indian society to stem the tide of gender-based violence and femicide and achieve equality between men and women. New laws and policies as well as growing support from law enforcement agencies and civil society groups are empowering women to seek assistance in the case of violence and abuse. Furthermore, efforts are being made to improve the implementation of legislation that is helping to increase the rate of conviction and reducing the prevalence of gender-related crimes. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 bans the request and payment of the dowry of any form as a precondition for marriage. Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC/PNDT) Act, 1994 prohibits the use of prenatal technologies to determine the sex of a foetus and several states have launched vigilance cells to curb incidences of female foeticide. There is no legislation directly addressing honour killings and currently, the crime is dealt with under the Indian Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code. Women's organisations have also worked to educate women on their rights and provide support to those who have experienced violence. Many NGOs across the country provide counselling, legal support, and

The family institution is an extremely important aspect of Indian culture and is central to the country's social and economic frameworks. However, for many women the family does not represent a safe and protective unit, rather it reinforces wider patterns of gender discrimination and legitimises violence as a method for controlling and subjugating women.

livelihood programmes for women so that they can become more empowered and financially independent. This is paralleled by government initiatives to promote women's social and political empowerment. The reservation of 33% of seats in India's local government increased women's political participation and has led to more gender-friendly governance. The development of further affirmative legislation in the State of Goa, which allocates nearly half of the state's representative council seats for women, has led to Goa being considered safer for women than New Delhi and Mumbai. However, in the

year 2020, India ranked 142 among 193 countries in terms of the percentage of women in Parliament. A total of 78 women MPs were elected in 2019, i.e. 14.4%. The number of women voters had risen from 47% (2014) to about 48% (2019) while women MPs in the 16th Lok Sabha stand at 11.2% after more than 70 years of Independence. In spite of these efforts femicide persists throughout India. While legislation may protect victims of violence in theory in many cases the penalties outlined within the legislation are weak. Furthermore, the implementation of these laws remains limited and in many cases ineffective in preventing femicide or prosecuting the perpetrators of this violence.

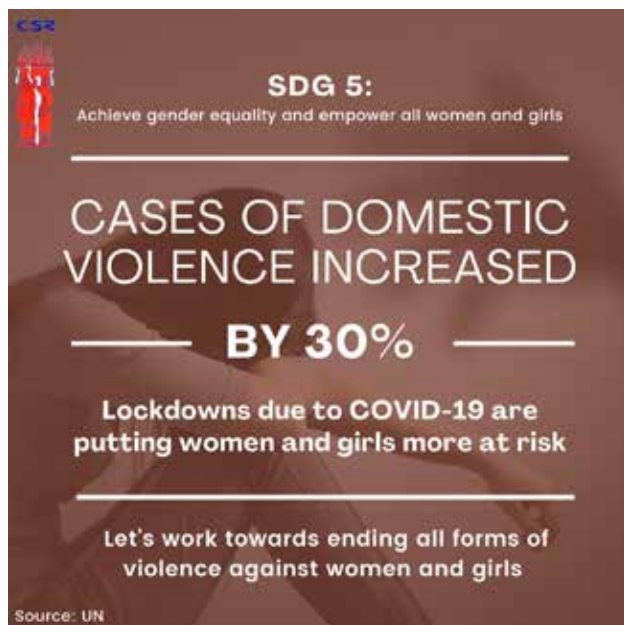
A lack of commitment to ending VAW at the political level is evident across India and is preventing substantive action at the legislative, policy, and programmatic level. The governments must be held to account for its failure to effectively address femicide or ensure women's rights. Furthermore, efforts must be made to encourage and support governments to develop effective and comprehensive approaches to femicide.

Approaches Required to Address Femicide

Tackling femicide is extremely difficult especially given that gender discrimination and violence against women are so embedded within India's social, cultural, and economic structures. Responses to femicide must be comprehensive and involve the development and implementation of strong legislation, gender-sensitive law enforcement policies and protocols, awareness-raising at the grassroots level, support for individuals and families experiencing violence, and the realisation of women's social, economic, and political rights. The impact of femicide on Indian women and society is extreme and current responses are failing to both protect women from violence and prevent violence from occurring.

Legislation for Violence against Women

The development of legislation and legal frameworks for addressing femicide is an important step in tackling violence against women and strong legislation is vital





According to a global survey*, 60% girls & women have faced some kind of online harassment.



1 out of every 5 women have either left or reduced their use of social media platforms due to this.

*Survey conducted by Plan International.

for holding perpetrators of violence to account for. Legislation is also essential for addressing structural gender discrimination as well as cultural and social legitimisation of violence against women. However, the development of legislation is not enough and few efforts have been made throughout India to ensure that women-friendly legislation moves beyond symbolism and is implemented effectively. A lack of funding and infrastructure to address violence remains one of the biggest impediments to the effective implementation of this legislation and little budgetary allocations are directed towards the reduction of violence against women and the realisation of women's rights. The lack of funding prevents law enforcement bodies from effectively carrying out activities required to implement legislation including carrying out programmes aimed at addressing violence. Furthermore, the failure of government agencies to allocate funding to services providers for training and awareness-raising has meant that a lack of awareness about, and understanding of, the law persists amongst the general public as well as law enforcement bodies. Monitoring of the implementation of this legislation is also vital. The lack of monitoring and supervision of the Pre-Conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act including inspections of genetic clinics and centres has meant that pre-natal diagnostic techniques/scans continue to be used to determine the sex of the child

and abort girl children. Many clinics do not maintain accurate or up-to-date patient records making it difficult to follow up on cases suspected to involve sex-selective abortions. In the case of mobile clinics and other sex selection test centres the implementation of this legislation is even more difficult and these areas have largely been unaffected by the PC & PNDT Act.

Sensitisation of Police Personnel

One of the main issues associated with the implementation of violence against women legislation is the response of law enforcement personnel to crimes against women. In many cases the lack of training amongst law enforcement agencies means that police have little understanding of violence against women legislation, are unaware of their duties in responding to cases of violence, and are influenced by social structures of gender bias and discrimination when responding to crimes.

The failure of police to respond to reports of violence including their refusal to register First Information Reports in cases of domestic violence and dowry harassment or dowry death is common and is compounded by widespread harassment of women by police officers when reporting a crime. These factors, as well as women's lack of confidence in police responses to violence, result in violence escalating and increase the risk

New laws and policies as well as growing support from law enforcement agencies and civil society groups are empowering women to seek assistance in the case of violence and abuse. Furthermore, efforts are being made to improve the implementation of legislation that is helping to increase the rate of conviction and reduce the prevalence of gender-related crimes.



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of femicide. Furthermore, the perpetrators of this violence are not held to account for their actions. Efforts must be made to sensitise police policies and processes related to the handling of violence cases. Protocols must be developed so that police officers know how to respond when women report crimes and appropriate monitoring systems must be established to ensure these protocols are being followed. Furthermore, gender sensitisation training must become mandatory for all police personnel in order to breakdown structures of gender discrimination, develop women-friendly culture within police frameworks, and educate police on women rights, and laws protecting women from violence.

Increase in Support Services for Women

There is inadequate support available for women who experience violence and in many cases their lack of resources means they are forced to endure ongoing violence. Support programmes can strengthen infrastructure by increasing shelter homes and improving medical facilities. This infrastructure ensures that women who wish to leave violent situations have safe alternative accommodation, medical services, and social-support services. Support services can also educate women on their rights and the legislation protecting them from violence and can assist them to make positive changes in their lives and to respond to violence. Awareness-building programmes around women's rights are essential to addressing the underlying causes of domestic violence. Currently, only approximately 1% of women report incidences of abuse and many are not aware of their rights or legislation protecting them from violence and harassment.

Addressing Patriarchy

Femicide cannot be fully addressed without tackling the widespread patriarchy and misogyny that permeates much of Indian society. Strong efforts must be made to engage with local communities, build connections with community leaders, and to develop education programmes on women's rights. These programmes will inform women of their rights and the services that are available to them in the case of violence. They will also educate men on the consequences of committing violence and will demonstrate that this behaviour is both socially unacceptable and a breach of the law. It is vital that the overwhelming culture of patriarchy is taken into consideration when developing interventions so that education campaigns highlight the value of girl children and women to society and outdated attitudes towards women are replaced with respect and gender sensitivity. India is modernising at a rapid rate and traditional cultures and practices are being forced to adapt to meet new economic and social frameworks. More and more Indian women are emerging as educated, independent citizens and are paving the way for a new gender-friendly India. The rise in violence against women and femicide can be seen, in part, as a response to this change and as an attempt to reassert traditional power structures. However, strong efforts are being made to educate communities on the importance and benefits of women's rights and women are becoming more empowered to seek assistance from NGOs and law enforcement agencies. With further action and support from the government and civil society, Indian women will overcome this growing violence and become an increasingly influential part of society. □



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Menstruation – A Human Issue

Anshu Gupta

Women play the ‘building block’ roles in our society as caretakers, farmers, entrepreneurs, conscience keepers, and educators, though with a constant struggle to get acknowledged as equal human beings. Is Menstruation a woman’s issue or a human issue, therefore? Why isn’t a woman’s dignity seen as connected to her menstruation? What about the connection between women’s nutritional needs or unavailability of undergarments, with her menstrual needs? This pandemic has offered us a chance to acknowledge and correct many gaps in our understanding of Menstrual Hygiene Management.

While Covid-19 has globally exposed deeper social, psychological, and economic disasters for millions of women who were already at the margins of our society, yet it has further meant a much harder battle for their *Survival* and *Dignity*. Sharing small homes with no private spaces, in slums, remote villages, tribal areas, in conflict zones, the Covid lockdown deeply eroded the wellbeing of these already neglected communities of women like sex workers, tribal women, migrant worker women, women with disabilities, and others. Working on disasters and menstruation for over two decades, now we, at Goonj, witnessed this double disaster on an unprecedented scale in this Global Pandemic of Covid-19.

Menstruation as a human right and issue

Women play the ‘building block’ roles in our society as caretakers, farmers, entrepreneurs, conscience keepers,

and educators, though with a constant struggle to get acknowledged as equal human beings. Is Menstruation a woman’s issue or a human issue, therefore? Why isn’t a woman’s dignity seen as connected to her menstruation? What about the connection between women’s nutritional needs or unavailability of undergarments, with her menstrual needs? Many such questions still haven’t made it to the larger narrative of MHM (Menstrual Hygiene Management) in India. Is MHM even a good label to comprehensively address the multifaceted menstrual challenges women face? This pandemic has offered us a chance to acknowledge and correct the many gaps in our understanding of MHM. In India, the policy framework around menstruation is still evolving and Covid-19 has pointed us to where the cracks are...where the light should fall... where the seeds of change must be sown... We don’t have to look very far, refer to Gandhi’s talisman: “Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man/woman



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whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him/her. Will he/she gain anything by it? Will it restore him/her to a control over his/her own life and destiny?" is a good guiding principle to start with.

Organisations working on this issue must go beyond merely addressing the menstrual needs of women and focus on acknowledging them, listening to their stories of strength, resilience, and contributions, to understand their realities and bring in those insights for the policymakers.

At Goonj, the focus has been on cloth as a metaphor for the ignored needs and the connection it has with a woman's dignity. It's time we establish menstruation as a human issue in our world and prioritise it just like food, medicine, water, etc.

Goonj initiated working on this issue around two decades ago when we sensed the absence of an affordable, accessible, familiar, and environment-friendly product, among a vast majority of rural women. It started when Goonj first worked on more than 100 truckloads of tsunami disaster wastage in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The team of 40 women from nearby slums, working on sorting the mammoth cloth piles were instrumental in the first insight on what kind of cloth should be used for making cloth pads. These women themselves used various samples first. From this small practical lab evolved the length, width & thickness of the first cloth pad - MY Pad. For many of us in the cities, the design of a sanitary pad would automatically bring up images of a market pad but for these women a basic pad they were familiar with was ready.

There upon, for the last two decades under our 'Not just a piece of cloth' (NJPC) initiative, we started utilising urban textile surplus cotton cloth to make MY pad. The urban surplus cloth goes through rigorous processing to emerge as an environment-friendly, reusable better piece of cloth pad. When we heard women speak about their many issues around menstruation, it helped us evolve our 'Triple A' Approach - Awareness, Accessibility, and Affordability, where we use the MY Pads as a tool for mindset and behaviour change, among the most missed out communities like tribals, disaster-affected, sex workers, migrant workers, etc. Our Chuppi Todo Baithak/Break the Silence meetings became the *Safe Spaces* for *deep listening, open dialogue, and action*. These meetings held over the years were the places where we bust the myths around the unhygienic practices, while showing women how to make their own cloth pads at home. So far, more than 1.8 million sq. meters of surplus cotton



cloth was converted into MY Pads since 2005, while more than 7 million 'MY Pads' have been reached out to menstruators (all people who menstruate includes-adolescent girls, women, transgender men, and non-binary people) across India. With their capacity of reusing the pad 2-3 times, this number swells up to 35 million+. Since 2015, we have reached out to more than 2 lacs 26 thousand participants through these meetings, along with more than 3 lacs undergarments.

A piece of cloth, as a pad, is an affordable and accessible solution that affords *agency, affordability* to a vast majority of users in far-flung areas. Their options are otherwise limited to cow dung, sand, and ash. A woman of Koi tribe in Daringbadi (Odisha) told us in a Chuppi Todo Baithak, "*Even today while working in the field or when cloth is not available we use leaves from the local Sal trees.*" On further probing, she revealed, "*On average every woman has two pieces of clothes to use. We use them for months, sometimes for a year till the cloth tears off.*" Many women buy cloth once a year and many families still take credit from local money lenders to buy these pieces of cloth.

Organisations working on this issue must go beyond just addressing the menstrual needs of women and focus on acknowledging them, listening to their stories of strength, resilience, and contributions, to understand their realities and bring in those insights for the policymakers.



Goonj's model comprehensively mobilises and motivates menstruators to solve their own related infrastructural problems, bringing in the intersection of WASH issues. The community decided and led local infrastructural projects like the construction of bathrooms, common dustbins for disposal of pads, or the development of nutrition gardens effectively bringing a strong element of behaviour and mindset change into the programme implementation.

Menstruation and Disaster Response Work

In the last two decades of working on a series of major and ignored disasters like earthquakes, landslides, floods, cyclones, fires, and excessive cold weather, we have been consistently campaigning nationwide, on cloth as a basic but unaddressed need of a vast majority. As a result of our disaster response work we know that poverty is a big ongoing disaster for a vast majority. We need not wait for natural disasters to stand with people. Unfortunately, large-scale cloth giving and collection happens for a disaster even though many people need cloth throughout the year. At the time of a disaster, this need grows manifold. In the absence of adequate cloth even to wear, menstruators, already struggling for other basics, also find it tough to buy enough clean cloth for this need. Lack of menstrual health and hygiene awareness only makes matters worse. Witnessing these harsh post-disaster realities, early in our work, we brought MHM as

an integral part of our relief kits and included MHM in our rehabilitation efforts as well. In all of our millions of *Disaster Response Kits*, sanitary pads have thus been an integral part of essential relief. As per National Family Health Survey-4 approx 42% girls and women in the age range of 15-24 years from urban areas depend on cloth pads every month. In Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, as the supply chains collapsed we saw how the humble piece of cloth became a source of sustenance of menstruators. It just goes to show how an easily available piece of cloth can work as a viable option for menstrual needs.

A woman of Koi tribe in Daringbadi (Odisha) told us in a Chuppi Todo Baithak (Break the Silence Meeting), "Even today while working in the field or when cloth is not available we use leaves from the local Sal trees." On further probing, she revealed, "On average every woman has two pieces of clothes to use. We use them for months, sometimes for a year till the cloth tears off." Many women buy cloth once a year and many families still take credit from local money lenders to buy these pieces of cloth.

Around 70% of the health care workers are women (according to the WHO) but the PPE kit design does not account for their menstrual needs. In many health care facilities like Primary health care and isolation centres there is no access to menstrual products supplies to the patients or those managing the patients. In this pandemic, there is a need to integrate menstrual health supplies with other health supplies.

Menstruation- Missing Voices and Issues

While we talk about menstruation, menstrual challenges of a vast majority of human kind are still left out, from the larger mapping of the Menstrual Hygiene Management narrative. There are about 18 million disabled women, more than 5 million tribal women, 65 million migrant women, 2 million woman sex workers, and many others in India and there are bigger numbers





globally... Surfacing the multiple transactional, social, cultural, financial menstrual challenges of these missed out menstruators, into the narrative of development work, will help in addressing these issues comprehensively. Consider this... *Parents of girls with disabilities consider having their daughter's uterus medically removed, to avoid sanitation problems arising when the girl would menstruate and to avoid a possible pregnancy if the girl was sexually abused.* Managing menstruation after a disaster, results in the absence of pads, private spaces, health facilities etc., turning it into a more difficult situation. Tribal women who already face lack of nutrition, education, along with early childbearing, and reproductive health issues tend to face complications throughout their lives. Migrant and landless labourers working in fields or construction sites face many difficulties living in cramped, unhygienic surroundings, using unclean, poorly lit, shared toilets, or practising open defecation. Work towards dignified menstruation should be comprehensive and inclusive and must be informed by the voices of women from different parts of our society.

Menstruation- Environmental Impact and Sustainability

Goonj has approached MHM in a holistic, sustainable way - right from addressing the culture of shame and silence, building WASH infrastructure to addressing nutrition, using the humble piece of cloth, otherwise headed to the landfills. According to the United Nations Environment Programme reports, 2,000 gallons of water is needed to make one pair of jeans. Clothing and footwear production is responsible for 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, clothing production has doubled between 2000-2014, and every second, the equivalent of one garbage truck of textiles is land-filled or burned. Cloth surplus from the textile industry is a leading contributor to pollution and climate change as well but it can be turned into an opportunity for making cloth pads at a large scale. As per the Pulse Report 2017 developed by The Boston Consulting Group and Global Fashion Agenda, of all the discarded

clothing, only 10% overall is recycled, only 8% is reused as second-hand clothing and 57% is sent to landfills. On the other hand, it takes 400 to 800 years for a disposable pad to degrade. A recent research by the University of Manchester, UK has revealed that if the disposability of menstrual products is not prioritised as much as their accessibility, then India could be dealing with unmanageable heaps of discarded waste products in less than 50 years. While the commercial market forces have

In Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, as the supply chains collapsed we saw how the humble piece of cloth became a source of sustenance of menstruators all across. It just goes to show why cloth is easily available at home, a viable option for menstruation.

predominantly established sanitary products as the answer to the problem, they have sidelined the conventional cloth, an age-old solution. As a result we as a country risk creating a bigger problem of menstrual waste while trying to solve the issue of menstrual products' accessibility. Promoting the use of cloth or reusable sanitary pads is not cultural revivalism. In fact, it is the right step towards a more natural and sustainable option.

Conclusion

In the past two decades in India, menstruation and menstrual hygiene management (MHM) have evolved in a big way to find a space and voice on the policy level as well as in mainstream cinema. On the other hand, to a layperson, it still is a basic biological function for the menstruator, and thus their personal problem. This gap between the top public policy and ground-level realities around menstruation also points to the need for a more comprehensive look at the issue, beyond the access and availability of menstrual products. We all know that menstruation is a taboo, perpetuated by a culture of shame and silence among women and girls who menstruate and are unable to manage their menstruation in a healthy and dignified way. Finding solutions for this vast and complex majority calls for seeing menstruation as a human issue rather than a woman's issue and to acknowledge its intersectionality with poverty, gender inequality, public health, disasters, climate change, development, and infrastructure. More importantly, as a human issue, it calls for acknowledging its deep connection with human dignity, agency, and voice of the most missed out menstruators and their related issues. □

Ground Experiences

Anjali Thakur

“I do not wish women to have power over men; but themselves”, Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), this statement holds true even after centuries. The empowerment and autonomy of women over their own choices, rights, bodies, and decisions are not only helpful for their growth but for the achievement of the country’s or community’s sustainable development. Even though women constitute almost 50% of the total world population, they lack even basic fundamental rights.

Gender equality is a basic human right, and it is also fundamental to have a peaceful, prosperous and egalitarian world. Extreme manifestations of gender/sexual violence have their roots in everyday patriarchal discrimination and discourses that cut across professional, educational, governmental and social institutions. Women often face many difficulties and lack of freedom within their family, community, and patriarchal society. These patriarchal norms have restricted women’s mobility, access to education, healthcare and even a life of dignity and equality.

Women or girls who experience violence or are victims of abject social situations most often do not even have a source of help or a place to go to seek refuge, let alone accessing their agency and feeling empowered. Another challenge can be seen as the gaps between policy and practice of legal systems. Even though the country’s legislations protect women/girls, the implementation and the enforcement of these laws at the grassroots is frail. However, many

civil society organisations, as well as government policies in India, have initiated programmes to give voice to the voiceless and help them find the right amount of help.

Violence against women and girls has been deeply rooted in stereotypes and social models that accept violence. The prevention mechanisms play a vital role in eliminating the violence and making women/ girls aware and self-sufficient to avail support services and make decisions about their life.

Many organisations including Shakti Shalini work actively in the

socio-economically marginalised communities to build skills and create gender sensitivity among women and girls so that they build in themselves zero tolerance to violence and come out as empowered, sensitive and a person taking charge of their own lives. The programme is dedicated to encouraging a culture of learning and growth within the communities. The network of activities and facilities provides a nurturing environment through which they can develop into individuals taking full charge of their lives. It plays a crucial role in healing and strengthening an



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individual, building self-confidence and independence.

Shakti Shalini has been working for gender equality at the grassroots since 1987, especially during the second wave of feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. From supporting the survivors of gender/sexual violence to assisting them in the journey to make their own decisions and become independent and self-reliant, Shakti Shalini has travelled a journey of 30 years and beyond. The organisation's vision to create a world on its principles where the agency of an individual is dignified with zero tolerance to violence has resulted in supporting more than 15000 survivors so far. The mission of the organisation is to make a significant and sustainable contribution in nurturing a world that considers equality, safety, agency, dignity, health, care, and compassion operating across political, legal, economic, educational structures, and socio-cultural fabrics.

One major challenge these organisations have faced in the past 1.5 years is the Covid-19 pandemic. Just like it has affected everyone's life, it also became a major problem for our survivors and other projects. We felt the need to launch new helplines that too 24*7, looking at the need of the survivors. The survivors were stuck at home and sometimes could only call at specific hours- in the night when everyone was asleep, or early morning. Our organisation also collaborated/partnered with other organisations for

a wider reach pan India. Our rescue operations also became challenging as police authorities were occupied with maintaining Covid protocols and could not help us much as earlier. The transportation for our counsellors, as well as the survivors, became a big hassle, as public transport was not available and there were restrictions on mobility. To tackle all these problems, we had to shift most of our services online, and train our employees for the same. Everything was managed over calls and video sessions. Along with this, another major issue that we faced was how to bring a new survivor of violence to our shelter, due to the risk of Covid. Thorough testing was needed as it might have put the survivors already staying in the shelter at risk. We also re-strategised our interventions and were mindful of the needs of our communities. During this time, meeting basic needs had become a major task- getting ration and daily needs, and so we had to

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shift our focus to that and cater to the people in the community, putting our regular work with them on hold. The team was consistently available on call for support. Our employees left no stone unturned in being there for our communities and survivors in this tough time. If nothing, this pandemic helped us learn a lot and to work on our own skills to cope up with such troublesome times. The interventions that the organisation had been doing in the years, they were put on hold to attend to the immediate needs of the survivors and community residents.

A key part of empowerment comes through education, skill-building, employment, healthcare and decision making. It has been observed that women/ girls who are educated, and have enough support and pursue a meaningful career, contribute to the country's economy in later life. Women empowerment is the key to political stability, economic growth, gender equality and social transformation. When women and girls are supported to develop skills, pursue their dreams and take control of their own lives, they gain confidence to speak up and attain greater success for their communities. Equal participation and equal representation of women in political spaces can enable them to put forward their concerns and challenges, therefore benefitting all women. One of the challenges that can be seen as a massive deterrence in the journey to women empowerment can be changing mindsets, given that these



attitudes are deeply entrenched in the patriarchal cultures and traditions. While the entire world is battling Covid-19, we also experience another challenge “shadow pandemic”, and growing violence against women and girls. With the spike in cases of violence and abuse against women and girls, the prevention work has taken a backseat and responding to the needs of the survivors has become the priority.

The need of the hour is to strategise interventions that are intersectional and intersectoral, democratic and participatory, inclusive and non-discriminatory, grounded in research

and science, creative and artistic, and make sensitivity and care their cornerstone. Women empowerment is impossible to achieve without actively engaging men, youth and adolescents in the journey to bring equality and carry forward the work. It is with these intentions and principles in mind that each of the interventions is designed, and they come together in unison to provide dignity to women and ensuring gender equality. Shakti Shalini’s support services and regular counselling (as per requirements/ needs) services are open for men/ women and LGBTQIA community since mostly,

women are the victims of violence. Pehchan, connoting identity, Shakti Shalini’s shelter home for distressed women, offers protection, guidance, support and counselling to women seeking help. Many survivors of violence while approaching Shakti Shalini struggle to find a safe and comfortable environment/space to live away from the perpetrators and hence the counsellors fashion and refashion their approach as per the needs, choices and contexts of each individual. Counselling has proven to be an extremely effective method of mitigating the suffering of survivors. □

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YE-1623/2021

SHG-led Women Empowerment

*Dr K K Tripathy
Dr S K Wadkar*

Economic policies of India have always emphasised the development of poor, marginalised, and disadvantaged sections of the society – particularly the women. The government’s schematic interventions have underscored the importance of raising citizen’s income through social mobilisation, social capital formation, community entrepreneurship, and community-led product and productivity growth. The role of women in economic and social development has remained of utmost importance for policymakers and planners in India.

The Government of India has drawn several policy measures to achieve “gender equality” and “gender empowerment”. One of such measures is the promotion and economic activation of Self-Help groups (SHGs). SHGs are voluntary associations of economically poor, usually drawn from the same socio-economic background and who resolve to come together for a common purpose of solving their issues and problems through self-help and community action.

SHG-led Women Empowerment Drive

In 1984, for the first time, the concept of social mobilisation and business development through organising of SHGs was introduced based on Prof. Yunus’s ‘Grameen Bank’ model. Initially, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), along with empanelled Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) designed and developed the promotional ecosystem, including the SHGs-Bank linkage programme. In the year 1990, the Reserve Bank of India recognised SHGs as an alternate credit flow model. Thus, there was a paradigm shift in the development banking in India, whereby SHGs were accepted as group-based clients of banks for both deposit and credit linkages, collateral-free lending, and lending to groups without specification of purpose/ project. Prof. S. R. Hashim (1997) committee reviewed the poverty alleviation and employment generation programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India and recommended shifting focus from an individual beneficiary approach to a group-based business development approach. Hence, Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)

and its associated schemes were merged and a new scheme called ‘Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana’ (SGSY) was launched to provide self-employment to below the poverty line households through the formation of SHGs to bring them out of poverty during 1999 to 2011.

Prof. R. Radhakrishna (2009) Committee reviewed the performance of SGSY and suggested changes in its design from a ‘top-down poverty alleviation’ approach to a ‘community-managed livelihood’ approach. To do so there is a need for a sensitive support structure right from the National, State level to sub-district/ block levels for inducing social mobilisation and building strong grassroots institutions with continuous nurturing support for 6-8 years. It was also felt that the underprivileged managed their livelihoods through a mix of activities,



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the ongoing DAY-NRLM scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development, the focus is on scaling-up and institutionalisation of SHGs across various states. The objective is to reduce poverty by enabling poor households to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities, resulting in an appreciable improvement in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis, through building strong grassroots institutions for the poor. The programme aims to ensure that at least one woman member from each rural poor household (about 9 crores) is brought into women SHGs and their federations within a definite time frame. Since 2013-14 women SHGs have cumulatively leveraged a credit of Rs. 3.56 lakh crores from banks to take up income-generating activities.

The key emphasis is on universal social mobilisation for including all target households; institution-building i.e. a 3-tier structure, ‘SHGs’ at the ward level, ‘Village Organisations (VOs)’ at the village level, and ‘Cluster Level Federations (CLFs)’ at the cluster/ block level; universal financial inclusion; enhancing & expanding existing livelihood options for the member of SHGs, and inculcating the entrepreneurial spirit to empower them psychologically, socially, economically and politically (Figure 1).

The SHG movement follows five principles or ‘Panchasutra’ viz. Regular Meetings; Regular Savings; Regular Inter-Loaning; Timely Repayment of Loans; and Up-to-date books of Accounts. In addition, five additional principles now followed by SHGs are Health, Nutrition, and Sanitation; Education; Active involvement in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs); Access to Entitlements and Schemes; and Creating Opportunities for Sustainable Livelihoods. These taken together are called - ‘Dashasutras’ under DAY-NRLM.

with different cash-flows, seasonality, and support requirements. The emphasis was also given to linking SHG members to social safety/ welfare schemes and programs. The need for institutionalisation of SHG movement was felt necessary. Thus, based on the Prof. Radhakrishna Committee recommendation, SGSY was restructured into National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) by the Ministry of Rural Development to provide a sharper and greater focus as well as momentum for poverty elimination on 9th December 2010. NRLM Mission was launched on 3rd June 2011. The complete transition of SGSY into NRLM was effective from 1st April 2013. The NRLM has been renamed as Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).

DAY-NRLM & Women Empowerment

DAY-NRLM – which is being implemented since 2011 on a mission mode, has twin objectives of (a) organising rural poor women into SHGs; and (b) constantly nurturing and assisting them to take up economic activities. In

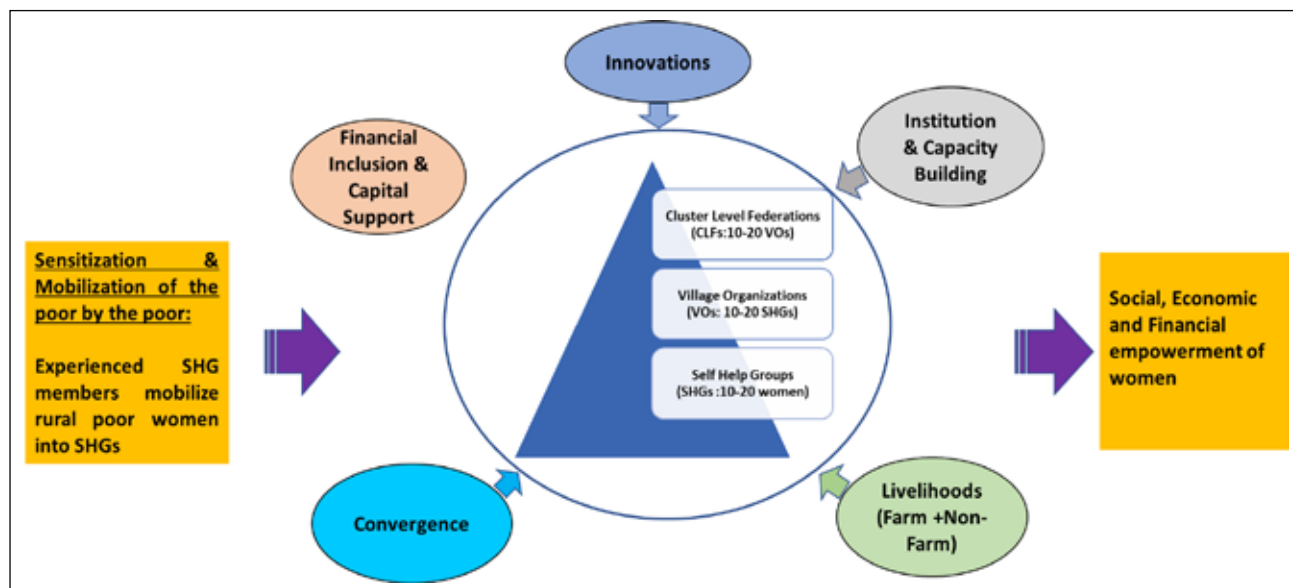


Figure 1: Key Features DAY-NRLM and Institutional Structure of SHGs

Women Entrepreneurship and Economic Progress

The absence of appropriate entrepreneurial culture, credit flow issues to community-led business units give rise to many economic and extra-economic problems. If people are organised and are provided with basic facilities, they would not only be able to participate actively in the economic process but also will contribute positively to their own well-being and the overall welfare of their society. The right choice of opportunity or project feasibility is considered to be a major part of a drive towards earning profits in new economic enterprises. Utilising opportunities and resources (both physical and human) requires capable systems. Self-help groups generate resources for the operation of their economic units through inter-loaning and bank credit linkage activities. However, their occupational choices are often not in line with their ability to manage, operate and sustain their activities. There are mainly three central aspects of entrepreneurship as identified by classical economists: (a) uncertainty and risk, (b) managerial competence, and (c) creative opportunism or innovation. This requires empowerment of millions of SHGs. Thus, if the community business entities owned and operated by women SHGs are empowered they can ensure job

The programme aims to ensure that at least one woman member from each rural poor household (about 9 crores) is brought into women SHGs and their federations within a definite time frame.

opportunities by effectively utilising available local resources and transform these resources into profitable products as per the local need and the acceptability of consumers. Exhibit 1 indicates the mechanism of conversion of scarce resources into employment and income-generating activities for economic progress and poverty alleviation via SHG units' appropriate

occupational choices and community-led actions. The need is to have a proper evaluation of proposed economic ventures and a rigorous analysis of the financial and physical viability of the occupation along with exploration of innovative and intended business pathways.

DAY-NRLM & Empowering Process

The nucleus of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) has been built around a basic human nature of the feeling of self-worth and the self-help. The scheme has rightly identified and underscored an unwavering and sustainable synergy between the financially deprived people and the formal financial institutions, stimulated through socially mobilised, small, cohesive, and informal SHGs. Four pillars of the scheme embody the empowerment processes of the women members of the affinity groups.

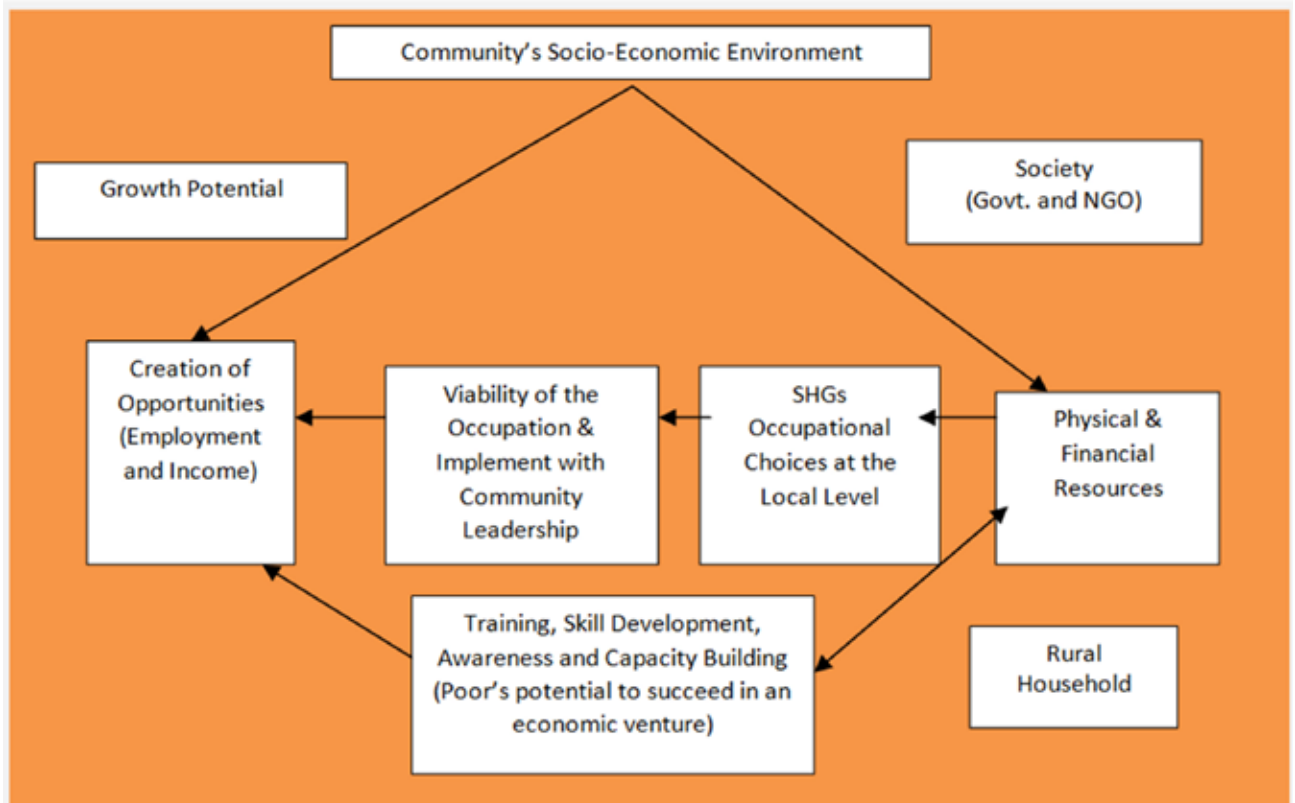


Exhibit 1: Economic Progress through SHGs

Table 1: Empowerment Parameters, Constraints, and Resolution Under DAY-NRLM

S. N.	Empowerment Parameters	Constraints & Resolution
1.	Universal Social Mobilization	Identification and inclusion of the poor for obtaining scheme benefits has remained a challenge. An attempt needs to be made to develop community resource persons (CRPs) and utilize their services for participatory identification of rural poor to ensure inclusive community entrepreneurship. The CRPs are the best suitable entities to understand village and group dynamics and can convince PRIs and other key stakeholders to support SHG network. This would not only help improve access and availability of services but would increase social unity for economic progress.
2.	Promotion of Institutions of the Poor	Lack of conceptual clarity on the legal framework of the federations, deviations in the perceived role and forms of CLFs, and low competency of CLF board members in managing business activities require steps for attracting and retaining skilled and trained management staff/ human resources at VO and CLF level. Instituting a 3-tier structure – SHGs at ward level, VOs at the village level, and CLFs at cluster/ sub-block level would promote livelihood collectives by optimizing available resources. This will build a self-determined cadre of women SHGs, reduce social issues/evils like alcohol consumption, caste/class conflicts, child labour, domestic violence, etc. and increase participation in Gram Sabhas.
3.	Training, Capacity Building & Skill Upgradation	Lack of appropriate training plans, quality training materials, and availability of expert training institutions have impacted SHGs' capacity-building initiatives. In addition to the periodic training need assessments by expert agencies, timely training and capacity building of SHGs, their leaders, their community resource persons, and service providers can sensitize and orient stakeholders, including Panchayati Raj Institutions on the potential of SHGs in the community empowerment with business growth.
4.	Universal Financial Inclusion	Lack of uniform financial management systems at all tiers of SHGs has impacted growth in the bank accounts, improvement in the financial literacy, and absorption capacity of community members. The need of the hour is to focus on both demand and supply sides of financial inclusion, promote financial literacy and provide capital support, set up linkages with financial institutions, and promote business correspondence and community facilitators/ Bank Mitra to ensure universal coverage of micro-insurance services.
5.	Multiple & Diversified Livelihoods	Lack of progressive leadership for inclusiveness of small-sized enterprises at the federal level adversely impacted the stabilization, spread, and outreach of existing livelihoods and their diversification. Livelihood activities are more of a consumptive purpose. The commercial purpose of it, along with market/ forward linkages, is largely missing. To meet this constraint, efforts are needed to promote those livelihoods which can cope with risks and vulnerabilities. In addition to deepening and expanding existing livelihoods options and tapping new opportunities, the focus should be on infrastructure creation and marketing support to ensure access to timely services, safety nets, and entitlements.
6.	Support Structure at the Community	Creation of business environment, enhancement of skills, and identification of value chains with proper clustering across the state along with positioning competent human resources in the SHGs ecosystem are required for the all-round development of collectivized livelihood activities. Further, improving the capacities of women in farm and non-farm activities to access public and market institutions and schemes within a convergence framework would transform rural unemployed youths into self-employed entrepreneurs. Suitable linkages with Government, District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs), and PRIs and provision of external sensitive and technical support structures would help to sustain community organizations.
7.	Schematic Convergence	Field level schematic convergence is the need of the hour to bring synergies directly or indirectly with the institutions of the poor. The focus should be on the convergence of schemes of Central Ministries/Departments as well as States. Partnerships with non-government organizations (NGOs) and other civil society Organizations (CSOs) and linkages with PRIs would facilitate mutually beneficial working relationships through better access to govt. schemes and ensure improved quality of life.

The first such pillar is social mobilisation, formation, and promotion of sustainable institutions of the poor. So far, 5.6 crore rural women have been mobilised into 68 lakhs SHGs; 2.93 lakh primary (VOs) and 25,467 secondary level federations (CLFs) have been promoted under NRLM. These community-based organisations adhere to core principles of democratic governance and financial accountability, participate effectively in local governance and development, mediate livelihood concerns and social issues affecting the poor members on a 24*7 basis, facilitate access of the poor to entitlements and public services.

Next is the pillar of financial inclusion where focus is laid on both demand and supply-side interventions. Demand-side interventions ensure the promotion of effective book-keeping; provision of capital support to SHGs; creating a culture of prompt repayments of loans; financial literacy and counselling; support for the micro-investment plan for repeat finance; institutionalising Community Based Recovery Mechanism (CBRM), etc. [Figure 2]. Supply-side interventions confirm the formation of sub-committees of State-level Bankers Committee (SLBC) in all States; bankers' sensitisation on concept, practices, and requirements of SHGs through exposure visits, workshops, and trainings; positioning of Bank Sakhis in all bank branches; promoting alternate models for delivery of banking services in remote areas; facilitating regular conduct of credit committee meetings from Block to State levels; mitigating risks through insurance coverage, etc.

'Livelihoods' constitute the third pillar of women empowerment where poor households are made capable to cope up with vulnerabilities – debt bondage, food insecurity,

These community-based organisations adhere to core principles of democratic governance and financial accountability, participate effectively in local governance and development, mediate livelihood concerns and social issues affecting the poor members on a 24X7 basis, facilitate access of the poor to entitlements and public services.

health crisis, and migration; to make sustainable farming/non farming income. The focus is on strengthening existing and new income sources, promotion of opportunities in emerging markets – micro-enterprises, self-employment, skill-based employment, etc. The activities spread across areas from sustainable agriculture to organic farming; promotion of Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP); strong capacity building architecture; value chain intervention; custom hiring centres, etc. Under a sub-component of NRLM, Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), around 35.88 lakh

women farmers were supported under non-chemical based agro-ecological interventions; dedicated interventions for NTFP; creation of value chain infrastructure in multiple states for several commodities viz. Maize, Mango, Floriculture, Dairy, Goat, etc. To sustain these efforts and provide continuous support, the NRLM has created community-led livelihood extension services with the help of about 31,889 Community Resource Persons (CRPs). The scheme empowered women SHGs to take up non-farm livelihoods activities too. Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) promoted rural start-ups in the non-farm sector. The initiative has supported 1.82 lakh entrepreneurs in 125 blocks since 2015. A total of 30,352 enterprises have been set up under SVEP so far.

The fourth and last pillar of empowerment is social inclusion and convergence. Platforms established by SHGs are leveraged for better implementation of multiple public welfare schemes/programmes. Local authorities can optimise public investments and can create durable, productive and sustainable assets and secure livelihood of rural households through convergence of self-employment activities of DAY-NRLM with the resources and activities



Figure 2: Step-wise gradual processes leading to financial inclusion of SHGs



of other programmes/schemes available with panchayat institutions, rural development, and other district/block-level line departments.

Issues and Challenges

The SHG movement traversed from the “thrift and saving” in the 1980s to the “livelihood” based economic empowerment method since the 2000s under DAY-NRLM. As a result, 70 lakhs SHGs as ‘Informal Organisations’ promoted in India, federated into 3.27 lakh VOs and further federated at the cluster/block level into 28,000 Cluster Level Federations (CLFs). However, to sustain this movement and make them competitive, there is a need for building a robust and stable community structure that is scalable across states. This demands robust institution-building and awarding a legal identity to the existing CLFs. This too requires careful planning and contemplation. Most of the State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) are in the phase of transitioning and are considering the suitability of specific legislations to support the 3-tier structure of SHG federations. Most of the States are trying to explore an appropriate legal framework for CLFs. Table 1 captures parameter-wise constraints and their effective resolution.

Women entrepreneurship development at the community level relies on how socio-economically empowered they are. The empowerment of women in collectives like SHGs stands on four strong pillars of

(i) social mobilisation, formation and promotion of sustainable institutions of the poor; (ii) universal financial inclusion; (iii) livelihoods capable to cope with vulnerabilities like debt bondage, food insecurity, health crisis, and migration; and (iv) social inclusion and convergence of multiple development scheme resources.

In the pillar of financial inclusion, focus is laid on both demand and supply-side interventions. Demand-side interventions ensure the promotion of effective book-keeping; provision of capital support to SHGs; creating a culture of prompt repayments of loans; financial literacy and counselling; support for the micro-investment plan for repeat finance; institutionalising Community Based Recovery Mechanism (CBRM), etc.

The village entrepreneurship development approach of DAY-NRLM is aimed at creating a catalytic local entrepreneurial ecosystem and encouraging the rural unemployed youth to take up local enterprises on their own. Focus on mobilisation of more SHGs and taking their support services for creation and operation of rural farm and non-farm infrastructure would help improve rural livelihoods and income. The new and innovative rural enterprises scheduled to be established under DAY-NRLM have the potential to (a) ensure financial inclusion of SHGs & farmers; (b) increase household income; (c) assure training, placements to the millions of rural youths; and (d) facilitate farm and non-farm logistics at the community

level. The potential would transform into reality provided several vital issues and constraints viz. social mobilization, promotion of institutions of the poor, training, capacity building, and skill upgradation, financial inclusion, multiple & diversified livelihoods, sensitive support structure, schematic convergence are addressed in a participatory manner in consultation with the stakeholders of DAY-NRLM. □

Women in India’s Toy Industry

Rai Sengupta

Spanning thousands of years, toy manufacturing in India is as old as civilisation itself. With some of the earliest evidence of terracotta toys being found in Harappa (c. 2,500 BCE)– a key site of the Indus Valley Civilisation - it is remarkable to note that the history of toy manufacturing in India is inextricably linked to the larger story of India’s past.

In present times, traditional Indian toys reflect the diversity of our nation – with raw materials, technology, design, and toy structure reflecting regional variations and cultural nuances. Interestingly, toy manufacturing continues to play a vital role in charting New India’s growth story, with women at the fulcrum of this industry in present times.

According to a report by the National Productivity Council, India’s toy industry employs three million workers, of which 70 per cent are women¹. Given its labour-intensive nature, this industry has emerged as a major employer of female workers – offering mutually reinforcing pathways of empowerment for both the women workers and the sector as a whole.

At one level, employment in the toy manufacturing sector offers its female-majority workforce avenues for socio-economic empowerment, financial security, and skill development. At another, it also offers opportunities

for women to act as agents of change by preserving local toy forms, intrinsic to their regions. For instance, most Assamese households² have the tradition of women making cloth dolls in each family and passing on the art from the mother to the daughter. Moreover, toy manufacturing also creates possibilities for men and women artisans to work with one another, thereby promoting equal task division and partnerships. For instance, in Tamil Nadu³ the manufacturing processes of ‘*Vilachary*’ clay toys are divided between men and women. The men roll it into layers and make the moulds while the women decorate the toys with brushes kept in coconut shells.

The sector’s female majority labour force in turn has contributed to its rapidly growing economic possibilities. India’s current toy industry is estimated to be valued at \$1.5 billion and has the potential to grow to \$2-3 billion by 2024⁴. Such prospects are in turn driven by India’s demographic trends: by 2027, 80 per cent of India’s



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Wooden Painted Toys

📍 Kondapalli



population be young, and there will have been a 2.5x increase in income per capita (from 2016)⁵. Coupled with a growing awareness of the benefits of traditionally produced and ecologically friendly toys, India's domestic toy demand is predicted to grow at 10-15 per cent against the global average of 5 per cent⁶. Such estimates promise strengthened avenues of female employment and women-led socio-economic growth within the sector.

At the same time, the toy sector also faces certain challenges. For one, it continues to be significantly fragmented, with 90 per cent of the market being unorganised⁷. Moreover, according to the Toy Association of India, 75 per cent of domestic manufacturing originates in micro-industries, while 22 per cent comes from MSMEs. Less than 3 per cent of the domestic toy manufacturing processes come from large units. Such an industrial spread underscores the need to organise the existing units into clusters to streamline manufacturing processes. Further, the retail value of the Indian toy market is INR 16,000 crores of which close to three-fourths are Chinese imports.

According to a report by the National Productivity Council, India's toy industry employs three million workers, of which 70 per cent are women. Given its labor-intensive nature, this industry has emerged as a major employer of female workers – offering mutually reinforcing pathways of empowerment for both the women workers and the sector as a whole.

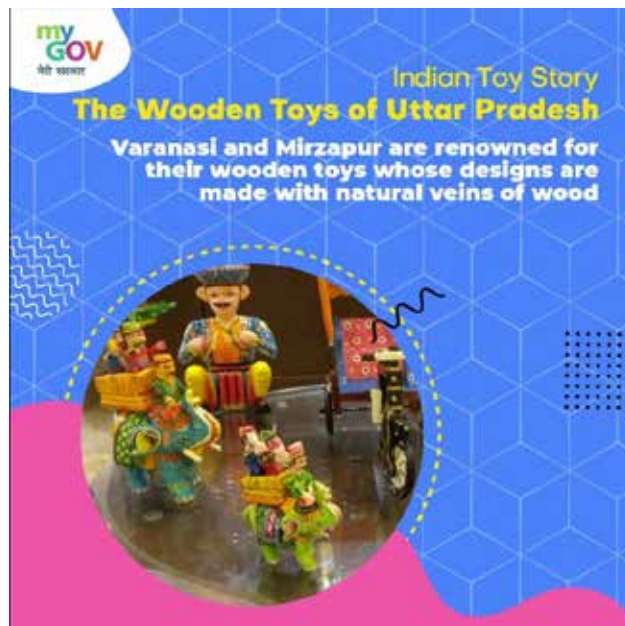
The Government of India has undertaken many initiatives to mitigate these challenges while continuing to provide impetus to female employment in toy industry. In January 2021, it launched 'Toycathon', a hackathon for students, teachers, experts, and startups to develop toys and games based on Indian culture and ethos. To promote the indigenous toy manufacturing industry, this multi-Ministerial effort sought to create an 'Aatmanirbhar' eco-system for local manufacturers by exploring their untapped potential. Further, by involving students across schools and universities in the process,

India's youth were made active participants in charting its growth trajectory. Moreover, as part of this national effort to crowdsource ideas, the Ministry of Women and

Child Development emphasised the importance of the toy industry in ensuring women-led economic progress, while helping children understand the ethos of Indian culture through traditional toys.

In addition, toy manufacturing clusters across the country have come to be formally recognised and supported by government efforts. State governments





are in the process of allocating spaces for toy parks. Further, efforts towards the creation of manufacturing clusters have borne fruit. For instance, Koppal District in Karnataka has recently been recognised as the country’s first toy manufacturing cluster. In line with the clarion call of ‘Vocal for Local’, this 400-acre cluster seeks to attract investments INR 5,000 crores while creating employment for 30,000 people by leveraging economies of scale. In particular, the Koppal cluster seeks to prioritise employment for women workers, in recognition of the key role played by these workers in the toy sector. Initiatives to provide skill training to women workers have been envisioned as part of this cluster formation, thereby ensuring long-term capacity building for women workers, and ensuring the sustainability of their livelihoods.

From now on, as India looks to build its ‘*toyconomy*’– women workers will continue to play a significant role

in fulfilling domestic demand, reducing imports, and raising India’s share of toy manufacturing in the global marketplace. It is vital to promote female-led innovation in India’s toy manufacturing industry, thereby empowering women to transform our nation’s growth story while passing on a centuries-old legacy to New India. □

Endnotes

1. <http://www.npcindia.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Research-Report-Toy-Industry-ES-HQ.pdf>
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Women at MSME Workplace

Faiz Askari

Women-led development will pave the way for Aatmanirbhar Bharat, especially in the MSME sector. India is a treasure box of resources and has tremendous potential and capacity to encourage women entrepreneurs in micro and small businesses to cope with and rescue the economy.

It is true and commonly accepted that an empowered woman is the real changemaker for her family, her society, and her community. In my opinion, the maturity of societies can be judged by the virtue of the status of women in that respective society.

Though India has rich cultural and social legacies but there are some rituals which were imposed on the

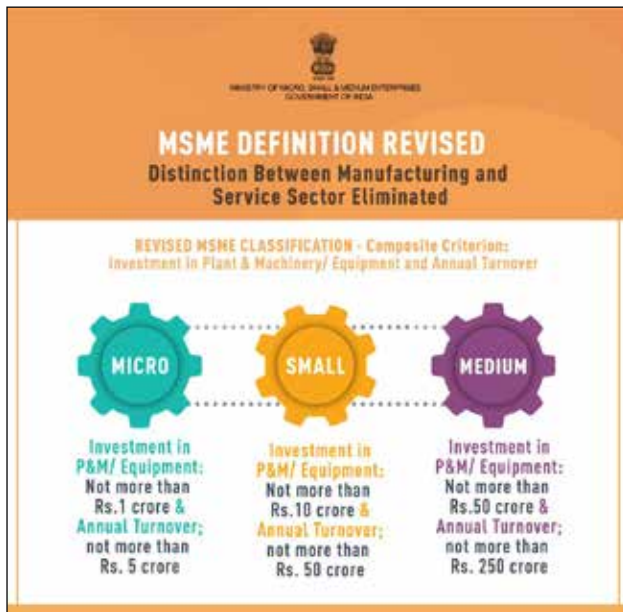
society by some powerful individuals. The orthodox outlook towards women is something that led to social evils like gender discrimination and women-related crime.

On the contrary, only one thing has the potential to enhance the status of women in society and that is empowerment of women.

Women empowerment has been effective through



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various initiatives. The Government of India has also taken up this issue seriously and has created several schemes and programmes towards this issue. Motivating women entrepreneurship and the role of women at workplaces are two such elements.

At SMESStreet we have a very specialised approach towards women entrepreneurship groups because we understand that the biggest push for women empowerment can be motivation towards women entrepreneurship issues and ensuring a positive ecosystem for women at workplaces.

MSMEs being one of the largest employers in India, their role in motivating women's role in workplaces is critical.

We have recently conducted a market study in which we tried to understand the status of women workforces.

Understanding MSME Workforce

At SMESStreet we pick up various subjects related to critical and contemporary subjects of entrepreneurship and MSMEs in particular.

From March 2021 to May 2021 SMESStreet did a nationwide connect with MSMEs to understand their perspective towards the presence and participation of women in their respective workforce.

In this study, we tried to touch

upon and understand the following aspects of Women at MSMEs (Workplace):

- Role of Women workforce as Executive Employees
- Participation of women in Decision making
- Role of Women in Managerial positions
- Business owners' feedback on their women workforce
- Productivity or Output of female employees for the organisation
- Socio-economic situation of women workforce
- Key benefits of Women Employees for an organisation
- Industry sectors that are showing traction towards the women workforce.

Besides women's role at workplaces, we also motivate the women entrepreneurs by highlighting their success stories, by guiding the aspiring women entrepreneurs towards policies and schemes promoting women entrepreneurship.

Government's Focus Towards Women Entrepreneurship

The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) was launched on 8 March 2018 on the occasion of International Women's Day as NITI Aayog's flagship initiative. WEP has pan India coverage and does not have state-specific programme/s. Registration on the portal and all subsequent services are provided free of cost for WEP users. WEP caters to both aspiring and well-established women in the space of entrepreneurship.

Women entrepreneurship is being promoted in a big way in the Northeast and while the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) came forward to provide a Viability Fund to new startups, it has at the same time undertaken several initiatives to encourage and supplement the efforts of women Self-help groups.

Women-led development will pave the way for Aatmanirbhar Bharat, especially in the MSME sector. India is a treasure trove of resources and has tremendous potential and capacity to encourage women entrepreneurs in micro and small businesses to help them sustain economic growth. □

The biggest push for women's empowerment can be motivation towards women entrepreneurship issues and ensuring a positive ecosystem for women at workplaces. MSMEs being one of the largest employers in India, their role in motivating women's role in workplaces is critical. The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) was launched on 8 March 2018 on the occasion of International Women's Day as NITI Aayog's flagship initiative. WEP has pan India coverage and does not have state-specific programme/s.



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Innovating Breast Cancer Screening

Nimish Kapoor

There is an unwillingness among women to come up for regular breast cancer screening not only due to concerns over privacy, pain, and radiation exposure but also with associated stigma and lack of awareness. In India, due to the large population, mass screening using devices like a mammogram is not practical and affordable. Dr Seema's innovation is a big achievement in the area of medical electronics devices which can save the lives of lakhs of potential breast cancer victims. She has developed a low-cost, portable, easy-to-use breast cancer screening device, the first of its kind.

Masters in Chemistry from the Department of Chemistry, University of Calicut and M.Tech and PhD in Polymer Technology from the Cochin University of Science and Technology, Dr A. Seema is a scientist at the Centre for Materials for Electronics Technology (C-MET), Thrissur, Kerala. She sets an example in front of the women scientists and technologists of the country by receiving the prestigious Nari Shakti Puraskar-2018, from the President for her outstanding contributions to benefit women through science and technology including the development of a wearable device for breast cancer screening.

Breast cancer affects women both in the developed and the developing world. As per WHO, breast cancer accounts for 2.09 million cases and 627000 deaths globally. It is the most common cancer in women in India and accounts for 14% of all cancers in women. It can occur at any age but the incidence rates in India begin to rise in the early thirties and peak at ages 50-64 years. As per the statistics, one in twenty-eight Indian women is likely to develop breast cancer during her lifetime. It is more for urban women than for the rural group. A report stated that cancer caused 5% of the total disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) in the Indian population in 2016.

In this scenario, Dr Seema's innovation is a big achievement in the area of medical electronics devices which can save the lives of lakhs of potential breast cancer victims. She has developed a low-cost, portable,



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easy-to-use breast cancer screening device, the first of its kind. In India, because of the large population, mass screening using devices like a mammogram is not practical and affordable. According to Dr Seema, “the visit of the Director of Malabar Cancer Centre (MCC) to C-MET, Thrissur has scintillated my thoughts in developing a low-cost, portable, easy-to-use breast cancer screening device, first of its kind. During the discussion, MCC Director expressed great concern over the cancer screening scenario in India, especially in the case of breast cancer”.

There is an unwillingness among women to come up for regular screening not only due to concerns over privacy, pain, and radiation exposure but also with associated stigma and lack of awareness. Cost and local availability of facilities are the other challenges for mass screening. Based on the specific request by the Director, MCC for an urgent requirement of such a device to save the valuable life of women, Dr Seema dedicated herself to the cause. She realised that the chip thermistors developed by her research group can detect the minute changes in the temperature of malignant cells at the initial stages. Subsequently she came up with a “Thermal sensor-based

monitoring system for early detection and screening of breast cancer”. Unlike Mammography, it is a simple wearable device for screening breast cancer with which women are comfortable, ensures privacy, is absolutely painless, portable, and takes only around 30 minutes and can even be operated by ASHA workers. The 2D and 3D analyses software along with GUI for wearable devices were also developed. GUI, the graphical user interface, is a form of user interface that allows users to interact with electronic devices through graphic icons and an audio indicator such as primary notation, instead of text-based user interfaces, typed command labels or text navigation.

Unlike Mammography, it is a simple wearable device for screening breast cancer with which women are comfortable, ensures privacy, is absolutely painless, portable, and takes only around 30 minutes and can even be operated by ASHA workers.

With the device developed by Dr Seema, mass screening of both rural and urban Indian women for breast cancer is possible at an affordable cost. The device has high sensitivity and is hence suitable for quick initial screening. The device is also suitable for young women with dense breast tissues. Since rural women have inhibition to visit the hospital and as the screening can be done at their own home or locality with privacy ensured, more and more women are ready to turn up



the technology to a much higher level by developing a 3D analysis system that gives six vital parameters for breast tumour including location, depth, size, metabolic heat generation, and blood perfusion rate.

During the past twenty years of research, Dr A Seema executed 15 requirement-driven R&D projects and three consultancy services. Three technologies have been transferred to industries for commercialisation and four are ready for transfer. Her R&D activities focus on applied research and demonstration of technologies on a pilot plant scale. Projects having societal significance leading to the development of indigenous technologies of industrial relevance and critical products for strategic sectors were executed jointly with different institutes. The products developed include graphene, aerogel, and activated carbon-based supercapacitors;

for the screening. This test method helps control breast cancer in the Indian women, ensure complete cure at the initial stages itself and save valuable human lives. For this invention, she received Nari Shakti Puraskar-2018, and the prestigious National Award for Women's Development through Application of Science and Technology by DST in 2019. This invention was selected as one of the ten best innovations in the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration under the innovations category. She is also a recipient of the BOYSCAST fellowship, under which she was a visiting scientist at the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, Cornell University, USA. She was also awarded "OPPI recognition" by Organization of Pharmaceutical Producers of India.

The development of wearable device and analysis system for breast cancer detection was purely interdisciplinary in nature and required diverse expertise in Chemistry, Physics, Engineering, Computer Science, Medical Science, and so on. Her quest for excellence, scientific temperament, clarity in vision, and open attitude to learn new things had empowered her to be astoundingly successful in executing multidisciplinary activities. This technology was transferred to a private engineering company for production and dissemination. She is currently hand-holding them for mass testing, getting necessary approvals from regulating agencies, and launching the first version of the product on a pan-India basis. Further, she steered

chip thermistors and thermal sensors; graphene and piezo composite-based actuators, cristobalite for reusable launch vehicles, etc.

She has also developed graphene-based supercapacitors from 0.1F to 300F for various energy storage applications, including graphene coin cell modules for Indian defence applications, 300F graphene supercapacitors for renewable power storage applications, etc. Besides this, she is currently heading an important project, in association with ECIL, for developing aerogel supercapacitor

The device has high sensitivity and is hence suitable for quick initial screening. The device is also suitable for young women with dense breast tissues.

modules for Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) for electronic voting machine (EVM), which will lead to huge savings on the number of dry cell batteries and



also alleviate the related environmental issues.

In remote areas where there is no regular power supply, people suffer from a lack of proper lighting system for teaching their children, cooking during the night, or stepping out of the house in the dark. The quickly rechargeable emergency lamp developed by Dr Seema can be recharged in less than a minute and can provide light for up to an hour. This is a low-cost portable system, which can also be charged from renewable energy sources like solar. This will help women in remote areas where electric connections to houses are inadequate in number. This technology was transferred to a start-up industry for commercialisation. Now she is engaged in imparting entrepreneurial training to scheduled tribe community in making solar lanterns so that they can earn their livelihood, as well as lighting of every Indian household can be ensured.

She has developed a transparent acoustic transducers which can be used as active noise cancellation (ANC) devices. This finds applications in incubators for infants, where the child can be monitored from outside whereas unnecessary external sound will be eliminated. This can also be used for noise reduction/cancellation for instruments used in hospital ICUs. She has also developed reinforcing filler material for adhesive used

For this invention, she received Nari Shakti Puraskar 2018, the highest Civilian honour for Women in India by the President of India, and the prestigious National Award for Women's Development through Application of Science and Technology by DST in 2019.

in reusable launch vehicles (RLVs). ISRO has used these fillers in the space capsule recovery experiment (SRE-I). Accordingly, Pilot Plant production for this space-qualified filler was established at C-MET. ISRO has qualified the material, listed it in their indigenisation of space materials programme, and awarded a letter of appreciation to her research group.

Dr A. Seema was born on 20 April 1972 in the Kozhikode district of Kerala. When most of the science students aspired for an engineering or medical profession, she was more fascinated by basic and applied sciences and was keen on opting for a career that can contribute to the development of society through science and technology. Since childhood, she realised that pursuing research was her calling. The life history of the eminent scientist Marie Curie taught as a part of the English curriculum in high school greatly influenced her and instilled the aspiration to choose research as her ardour.

After qualifying for GATE, she did M.Tech in Polymer Technology from Cochin University of Science and Technology. She worked as a lecturer at the Department of Polymer Science and Rubber Technology for two years and registered for PhD in the area of composites. She got both CSIR SRF and a job offer in 1998 from the Centre for Materials for Electronics Technology (C-MET), a national institute dedicated to electronic materials, components, and devices. She opted for a research career at C-MET.

She believes that research becomes successful when it is useful for the larger benefit of society. The most exciting and passionate thing in her life is to find solutions to the problems of society through the application of science and technology. There is nothing happier in her life than seeing her technologies making positive changes in the lives of people. For instance, during the initial testing of the wearable device for breast cancer screening, some abnormalities in certain women were picked up by the device and it saved their lives. She cherishes this as one of the most overwhelming experiences in her life.

She also finds time to interact with students in colleges and universities, to provide popular science lectures, and inspire them to choose a career in science and contribute to the development of mankind. Undoubtedly, Dr A. Seema has created a history in the early detection of breast cancer. According to her, "Success is to consistently pursue best in yourself to make a positive difference in the life of everyone." □



Women Excelling in Sports: Psychological Aspects

*Prof R Subramanian
Dr C Kubendran
Dr A Jaychitra*

This article summarises how a female athlete's mental and emotional well-being assists her to attain peak performance in sports and games in the international arena. Mental strength is the best psychological measure that enables women athletes to perform their best during competitive situations. It is the ability of an athlete to consistently perform the best of his or her potential and skill, regardless of the circumstances.

Sports psychology plays a vital role in the sports training programme and deals with how various psychological states and traits influence sports performance. This role is crucial in the sense that athletic success depends significantly on the willingness of sports performers to put in mental as well as physical efforts in pursuit of excellence. The situation of sports-women in general and especially during pandemic, has augmented the focus on psychological well-being, affecting their overall health and performance. The experts in the field of sports have recognised that athlete can learn and improve the mental skills needed to achieve excellence in sports.

“Sport success is determined in part by physical conditioning, skill, and preparation. But it is also influenced by psychological factors such as self-confidence, motivation, concentration, and emotional control”. Damon Burton, et.al., 2008.

Psychological Aspects

“Positively focused goals are usually more effective, particularly for new or difficult skills, because they help athletes focus on correct execution. Moreover, positive goals tend to promote greater self-confidence and intrinsic motivation”. Damon Burton, et.al., 2008.

Nowadays, many sports experts and coaches recognise the power of mental training. It involves using the senses to create or recreate an experience in one's mind. Imaging a sport skill is like performing the skill,

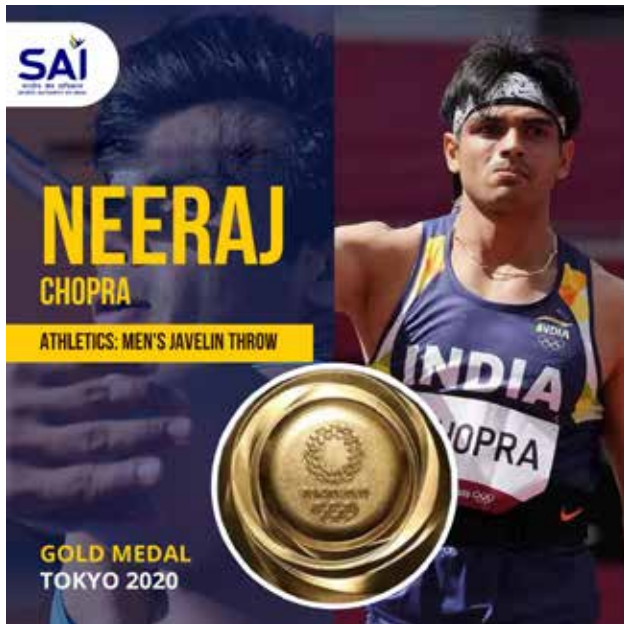
except that athletes experience the action only in their minds.

Confidence consistently appears as a key skill possessed by successful athletes, and international-level athletes have identified confidence as the most crucial mental skill defining mental strength.



Silver for Mirabai Chanu : Mirabai Chanu clinches the first Silver for India at the Tokyo Olympics in the 49kg category.

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Neeraj Chopra: Neeraj Chopra creates history by becoming the 1st Indian Track and Field athlete to clinch Gold at the Olympics.



Wrestling: Silver for Ravi. India's Ravi Dahiya loses to Uguev Zavur 4-7 in the final of the 57 Kg Men's Freestyle wrestling to win India's second Silver medal and 5th medal overall at Tokyo 2020.

“Concentration, or the ability to focus on the task at hand while ignoring distractions, is a vital determinant of successful performance in sport. It has long been known that skilled athletes allow their minds to wander and find it difficult to stay in the present moment in competitive situations. Research shows that people’s concentration system is inherently fragile as a result of a combination of

evolutionary and psychological factors”. Britton W. Brewer, 2009.

Athletes have identified several important types of confidence including the need to believe in their abilities to execute physical skills, attain high levels of physical fitness, make correct decisions, execute mental skills such as focused attention and stress management, bounce back



Bajrang Punia - Wrestling: Bajrang Punia beats Daulet Niyazbekov 8-0 in a thrilling match to win Bronze Medal.



Boxing: Lovlina Borgohain clinches Bronze in women 69kg Boxing event.

from lows, overcome obstacles and setbacks, achieve mastery and personal performance standards, and win over opponents.

Mental toughness is an individual's ability or a personality trait that is characterised by psychological ability to bounce back from negative outcomes or setbacks, and not letting the same negative aspects affect their performance or task at hand. A mentally tough individual can display consistency and persistence even when she face difficult and challenging situations.

An athlete needs to have an unwavering sense of mental toughness as it is an integral component of sports psychology that not only influences the athlete to maximise her potential and performance but also helps the athlete to deal with adversities during her game. Mental toughness provides the athlete to have a well-established sense of her achievements and goals she would set for herself and also influence the athletes to act and behave in a goal-oriented manner. An athlete with a high level of mental toughness displays virtues such as motivation, persistence, sheer dedication, and a strong will to do what she aims for.

“Athletes spend hundreds of hours preparing themselves physically for competition. Some athletes squander their extensive physical preparation by failing to prepare themselves mentally for competition. Other athletes, however, complement their physical training with mental training that prepares them maximally for the wide range of circumstances they may face before and during the competition. Sport psychologists can facilitate mental preparation by helping athletes to anticipate likely and unlikely-but-possible competition-day events and to develop routines as well as plans to deal with such events”.
Britton W. Brewer, 2009.

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Mental toughness also allows an athlete to develop a sense of creativity and innovation as she practises more and more. The reason is that a mentally tough athlete will not be afraid to try new things and implement the same when in need. Apart from the physical and emotional advantages a mentally

tough athlete may display positive emotions and behaviours at the time of injuries and of rehabilitation. Mental toughness provides an athlete to see the positive side of all the various



Badminton: History has been created as it's a back to back Olympic medal for India's P.V Sindhu. She wins the Bronze against China's He Bing Jiao 21-13, 21-15 at Tokyo 2020.



Hockey: A historic medal wins after 41 years for the men's hockey team. We are proud of our Men in Blue for displaying the grit & perseverance to bring home the Third place medal.



Aditi Ashok - Golf: Aditi Ashok creates history by becoming the first Indian women to represent India in Golf in two consecutive Olympics.

downfalls she faces throughout the game. The athlete does not think of negative outcomes and focuses on the mental preparation they can do while at rest or when undergoing rehabilitation.

The holistic idea of mental toughness in sports is to provide the athlete with a strong sense of positivity even when she is low during her game or life. Most of the athletes who are very talented and well established in their sport, when facing adverse situations such as loss, injuries, and negative emotions, tend to have an emotional breakdown which is also physiologically reflected at times. These well-established athletes sometimes lack a strong

sense of mental toughness.

It is very important to note that mental toughness is one psychological component that cannot be trained and practiced without experience. It is a phenomenon which is encountered and experienced as one faces difficult situations in life and the game. However, only a few psychological interventions cannot maximise one's mental toughness as compared to an athlete who has developed mental toughness naturally. In international events like the Olympics, mental strength accounts for a significant attribute required. There are some teams known for training their members on psychological front, which reflects on the field. This is a less travelled territory for Indian sportspersons so far.

Conclusion

Successful career of female athletes depends upon both physical ability and mental stability which are essential components of their successful sports performance. Positive goals, confidence, and concentration are closely related to the optimisation of a female athlete's sports performance and leadership for a successful path. As more women opt for sports in their careers, there is a need for psychological programmes to train them in order to balance their life by excelling in their field. □

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Fit India Run 2.0

- **Fit India Freedom Run** being organised as part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav
- **Fit India Freedom Run** is being held in **744 Districts, 75 villages** in each of the **744 Districts, and 30,000 Educational Institutions** across the country
- **Through this initiative, more than 7.50 crore youth and citizens** are expected to take part in the Run



The campaign aims to encourage people to take up fitness activities such as running and sports in their daily lives and get freedom from obesity, laziness, stress, anxiety, diseases, etc. Through this campaign, citizens are given a call to make a resolve to include physical activity of at least 30 minutes daily in their lives "FITNESS KI DOSE AADHA GHANTA ROZ".

The key activities of Fit India Freedom Run 2.0 include pledges, rendering of the National Anthem, Freedom Run, cultural functions, awareness among Youth Volunteers to participate, and also organise similar Freedom Runs in their villages. People can register and upload their run on Fit India portal <https://fitindia.gov.in> and promote Freedom Run on their social media channels with #Run4India and #AzadikaAmritMahotsav.

Prominent people, public representatives, influencers, social workers, sportspersons, media personalities, doctors, farmers, and Army personnel are being requested to participate, encourage and motivate the people by gracing these events at various levels. Events will be organised physically and virtually all across the country by following the Covid-19 protocols.

The poster is titled "THREE GOLDEN RULES" in large, bold, red letters on a yellow background. To the left, a woman in a white sari with a green border and a white face mask is pointing towards the sign. The background shows a rural landscape with a tree, a house, and a well. In the top left corner, there is the logo of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India. In the top right corner, there is a logo that says "Help us to help you" with a hand icon. Below the sign, there are three circular icons representing the rules: a person wearing a mask, hands being washed with soap, and two people standing apart. At the bottom, there is text that says "For Information related to COVID Call the state helpline number of the Ministry of Health and Welfare number 1075 (Toll free)" and a row of social media handles for the ministry.

Women in Uniform

Rekha Nambiar

India is an interesting case study when it comes to the role of women in society & the workplace. While legally, we have been granted and assured of the same rights as our male counterparts; socially and culturally, equality has been slow in coming. As a woman in a uniformed service, I would like to touch upon my observations and experiences in a Central Armed Police Force these past two decades and the changing profile of women in police organisations across the length and breadth of our country.

Women have faced and continue to face problems such as mental and sexual harassment in the workplace. Instances of gender bias and gender insensitive behaviour abound. Workplace problems like paucity of women bathrooms, etc. are common in Police stations and offices all over the country. Gender discrimination in awarding of plum assignments and lack of adequate family support deter many women from pursuing careers to their full potential. Roadblocks, intended or incidental; both impede and make the promise of equality difficult to achieve.

Speaking of myself, I admit I was lucky to be born into an enlightened family. My sense of self-worth was groomed & cultivated from infancy. I never had to fight for opportunity or equality. Since my reality is rose-tinted, therefore, I can never speak for the multitudes of women who have had to fight for equality. I have never had to withstand the pressure of a disapproving or unsupportive family. However, it is regrettably true that the path has not been as free from obstacles for many women.

As women enter the workplace in larger numbers, the workplace environment is evolving to accommodate

them. This can easily be seen if we compare and contrast the mental attitudes, social mores and workplace environments of three consecutive generations; the Baby Boomers, The Gen Xers, and The Millennials.

The “Baby Boomers” were born in the 1940s and 1950s. The women of the generation were socialised and brought up to believe that their best career option was marriage and motherhood. Indeed, entering the workforce was even frowned upon and considered less than ideal and very few brave souls of this generation ventured to devote themselves to a career.

In contrast, the Gen Xers, who were born in the 1960s and 1970s, grew up as a transitional generation. They strove

for both successful marriages and sterling careers. As a transitional generation, they faced sobering challenges. Expanding on the Feminist Movement started by the baby boomers, they knocked on the doors of traditional male bastions and entered the workforce in male-dominated careers.

They attempted to win at both career and tradition and succeeded in two very important aspects.

First, they opened doors, making it easier for other



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women to follow and enter non-traditional jobs, and registered their presence in many male-dominated careers.

Their second and equally important contribution was in raising the next generation, the Millennials, to be well-adjusted individuals; largely devoid of the gender prejudices of the previous generation.

Born in the 1980s and 1990s, Millennial males are much more open-minded and reject the rigid, traditional gender roles and pigeonholing of gender-based choice of careers. The Millennial males are more welcoming of women in the workforce and respectfully interact with their female colleagues as equals.

Millennial females have been raised to believe that it is not only their right to aspire to careers but understand that they must contribute and participate in Nation building.

In the short span of 40-50 years, there has been a sea-change in attitudes. It has not been without turbulence and turmoil, but the juggernaut has generated enough momentum to move inexorably towards gender parity.

As more and more woman claim their place under the sun, a quiet revolution is taking place. The general confidence of women in themselves, their abilities and their capabilities is steadily rising. They are no longer satisfied with being mute spectators in their lives and are increasingly making important life decisions for themselves. These changes are bound to increase the pace at which women emancipate themselves.

It is in this capacity I see a role for women such as myself, who have already invested decades within the system. It is the moral duty of women who are already in the workforce to act as mentors and guides to the new entrants.

It is equally important that women understand that they are bucking the system and it is human nature to resist change. Hence, they must take the resistance they face in their stride, stand their ground and carve a place for themselves through diligence and application to their chosen careers. Crucial to this effort is the understanding that not all resistance is rooted in gender bias.

Integrity and intelligence, hard work and perseverance, commitment and competence are pre-requisites to success in any career.

There will always be challenges the workplace. There will always be tough days. There will always be opposition and reverses. There will always be setbacks that need to be overcome. The name of the game is doggedness. It does not matter if you

fall. What matters is what you do after you fall. What matters is that you pick yourself up and recommit yourself to the effort. In the words of author Ryan Holliday, "What impedes us can also empower us." It is equally imperative that we understand that hard work, perseverance and commitment are the chosen tools of successful individuals, irrespective of gender. The same rules apply to men and women alike.

At this juncture, I would like to touch upon two life-changing experiences, early in my career, which have moulded me into the kind of officer I have become. Both experiences taught me that my gender was essentially irrelevant to the nature and scope of work I was doing. Similarly, the gender of my colleagues had little to do with our official interactions and the synergies which resulted from these interactions.

Const Nautyal (name changed) served under my command. I joined the unit when he was already serving in it. I was briefed when I joined the unit that Const Nautyal was an alcoholic who was known to be quarrelsome, intractable, and undisciplined. He was not amenable to counselling or punitive action. Very soon I got reports of his being drunk on duty. Not one to brook indiscipline, I issued Charge-Sheet to him and cut a full week's salary. Two days later, he got into a fight while under the influence of alcohol. This infraction was also met with swift and merciless discipline. Another seven days' pay was docked. The 3rd and 4th incidents followed with similar punitive reactions. There was no change in Const Nautyal. My subordinates recommended that I start the paperwork for having him dismissed from service.

Before taking the last step, I went to Const Nautyal at his Duty Post to talk with him. There were no accusations or recriminations. No allegations or charges were levelled. I just wanted to know why he was on this path of self-destruction.

After half an hour of stony silence, while I sat with him and probed and withdrew alternatively, to give him space to think, he finally opened up. He told me that he had lost three sons to Muscular Dystrophy. Each of his sons had been diagnosed between the ages of 7-9 and had finally succumbed to the disease between the ages of 14-17.

I then called his wife from her native village along with other concerned relatives. With Const Nautyal's approval and involvement, he was admitted into a de-addiction programme and also a counselling programme for him and his wife.

As women enter the workplace in larger numbers, the workplace environment is evolving to accommodate them. This can easily be seen if we compare & contrast the mental attitudes, social mores and workplace environments of three consecutive generations; the Baby Boomers, The Gen Xers, and The Millennials.

A radically transformed Const Nautyal rejoined the unit in a few months. Ct. Nautyal was one of my most disciplined, devoted constables. He could always be relied upon to deliver. Understanding that the road to successful de-addiction is often painful and relapses are often possible, I made it a point to monitor him and keep in touch. His commitment to sobriety was heartening.

Several months later, I had to take an extended leave of absence, for almost a month due to personal exigencies. Those were the days before mobile phones and I remained completely cut-off from my office and work.

I returned to work to learn that Const Nautyal had relapsed. He had gotten drunk and had entered into an argument with unknown elements far from the place of work and had been beaten to death. His body was found abandoned by the roadside the following day.

My office orderly informed me that Const Nautyal had tried to meet me for three days consecutively before his demise. I later learnt that his fourth and youngest son too had been diagnosed with Muscular Dystrophy aged eight.

Const Rawat was a young constable who was serving under my charge in his first unit posting. He was part of the Quick Reaction Team and I was conducting a mock drill at 0100 hours, in the morning to assess the alertness of the team. As the team members poured out of their vehicles in the dark, unlighted deserted corner of the facility and navigate the uneven ground to take their positions, I saw Const Rawat stumble and fall. Like a true soldier, his instinct to protect his weapon kicked in and he landed awkwardly on his elbow. Standing around 10 feet away, I heard the loud sound of snapping bone.

When I walked up to him with my torch on, I saw his eyes swimming with pain. I picked up his weapon, relieving the fractured arm of the added weight, and ordered him to stand up. Without uttering a whimper of protest, the young man followed the orders. His eyes were locked onto my face.

He stood in silence while I checked and stabilised his fractured arm. I put him into the ambulance and sent him to the nearest tertiary-care trauma and orthopaedic hospital with the doctor and an attendant. The entire time, Const Rawat's eyes were fixed on me. He neither vocalised regarding his pain or discomfort nor did he ask me any question while I decided on the hospital or treatment options for him.

I was relieved from my shift, which had run to over 30 sleepless hours at 0900 hrs. Mentally and physically exhausted I longed for my bed. I had to be back on my shift by 1700 hrs.

It is equally important that women understand that they are bucking the system and it is human nature to resist change. Hence, they must take the resistance they face in their stride, stand their ground and carve a place for themselves through diligence and application to their chosen careers.

But, the memory of the previous night and Const Rawat's behaviour and the lingering memory of Const Nautyal made me drive to the hospital instead. When I entered his room, Const Rawat, who had maintained his composure at the time of the accident and soon after, now looked at me and wept unashamedly. He was physically comfortable and pain-free but was so touched by my visit to the hospital, that he was moved to tears. Wiping his eyes, he told me that the kindness hurt more

than the broken bone.

I was humbled and awestruck by the simplicity and open-heartedness of that young man.

Today, over 20 years later, I take stock of these two life-changing experiences. Had I brought something new to the table? Had I displayed any characteristic or response beyond the capacity of any male officer? Was there anything uniquely feminine in my responses? My honest assessment is NO.

I had only shown the same normal decencies that one human would show another in his/her hour of need and Const Nautyal and Const Rawat had responded positively to the decencies of a genderless authority figure whose moral duty it was to look out for them.

The current National data puts female representation in various state police organisations and CAPFs at a dismal 5.7%. This despite positive, protective discrimination of women and the passing of Womens' Reservation Bill, assuring 33% recruitment for women in various services.

However, women have not found representation in countless careers. Who then is the culprit? Is it our social mores that ignore the law of the land and conspire to hold women back? Or have women themselves been slow to exploit the opportunities the country has made available to them? As a country, we need to recognise that we cannot thrive and succeed if half of us are held in shackles.

Interestingly, the first woman IPS officer, Ms Kiran Bedi broke the glass ceiling in 1972. Now, routinely, women join the IPS every year. Similarly, countless women have entered into Central Armed Police Organisations for the past several decades. Yet, policing is still considered a non-traditional career choice for women.

The ultimate truth is that to achieve true gender parity, we must condemn chauvinism and feminism alike. It is not a war of the sexes that we seek. Rather, the need of the hour is for all men and women to come together in unity, assuring equality and justice to all. □

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The Movements of Palayakkars

Dr L Selvamuthu Kumarsami

[Continued from the August 2021 issue of Yojana]

In May 1799, Lord Wellesley, the Governor-General of India directed the British forces of Tiruchirappalli, Tanjore, and Madurai to Tirunelveli, the hotbed of the freedom movement centre. On 1st September Major Bannerman served an ultimatum instructing Kattabomman to surrender and ordered him to attend on 4th September at Palayamkotti, a military station of the British. Kattabomman replied that he would come on an auspicious day. Bannerman considered this reply as evasive and attacked Panjalamkurichi. On 4th September 1799, the Company forces led by Bannerman attacked the fort of Panjalamkurichi. It was the day of the festival Jakkamma, the family deity of Kattabomman. Hence, Oomaithurai and his men had gone to Tiruchendur. Subramania Pillai was also away for his native village. Their absence in the Panjalamkurichi was intimated to the Company by its loyal Palayakkar, Ettappa Naick, a kin of Kattabomman. Maj. Bannerman surrounded the fort assisted by his able infantry, cavalry, and cannon forces.

Before attacking, Bannerman sent a word to Kattabomman that the war could be averted if he would hand over Sivasubramania Pillai, however, Kattabomman refused for the second time. Oomaithurai rushed back to Panjalamkurichi. Sivasubramania Pillai also joined Kattabomman at the fort. On 5th September 1799, Kattabomman's fort was attacked. A fierce fight ensued. The British had sophisticated weapons and a force numbering 500. They were also helped by Ettappa Naick and his strong army of 4000 people. Kattabomman's army had only conventional weapons but they offered stiff resistance. Bannerman had thought of capturing Panjalamkurichi in a day but he had to struggle for five days. Reinforcements from Palayamkottai reached on 16th September 1799, but even then he could not capture Kattabomman, Oomaithurai and Shivasubramania Pillai.

Kattabomman with his men sought refuge at Nagalapuram but the Company scented it through informers and attacked Nagalapuram. There was a minor battle and Sivasubramania Pillai was taken captive.

Kattabomman and his younger brother managed to escape. Along with Sivasubramania Pillai, Soundarapandiyar, the younger brother of Nagalapuram Palayakkar was also taken captive. Both of them were executed at Nagalapuram on 13th September 1799, and their dead bodies were denied a decent burial.

Kattabomman and Oomaithurai were condemned to wander in exile. No Palayakkar was ready to entertain them because they were afraid of disobeying the Company's fiat. They had been warned that any hospitality shown to Kattabomman, would be taken as an inimical act to the Company. If any attempt was made to trace them, all such acts would be considered friendship with the British. Thondaman of Pudukkottai and Ettappa Naick of Ettayapuram were the two palayakkars who aspired to this friendship. The Rajah of Pudukkottai was a long time friend of Kattabomman. Thinking that his loyalty would not change, Kattabomman sought refuge with Vijayaragunatha Thondaman of Pudukkotai. He was entertained at the palace for two days. On the third day when Kattabomman woke up from a siesta, he found himself surrounded by soldiers. Being unarmed, he could not resist any of them. The two brothers were taken to Kayattar where Bannerman was camping with his forces.

There the brothers were separated. Oomaithurai was taken to the jail at Palayamkottai. Kattabomman was held captive at Kayattar itself. On 16th October 1799, Kattabomman was tried before an assembly of Palayakkars, summoned at Kayattar. He was accused of inciting opposition towards the Company, organising the Palayakkars against the authority of the Company, insulting Collector Jackson and murdering a British soldier, Clarke at Ramanathapuram. Kattabomman did not plead innocence but questioned the very validity of the charges. He boldly said that he did not look upon his actions as crimes. In an assertive tone and with contempt for death, Kattabomman did not accept the charges levelled against him. Thereupon, Bannerman announced the death penalty. On 17th October 1799, he was hanged to death on a tamarind tree, near the old fort of Kayattar. Kattabomman faced the last moments of his life as a

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dignified hero who fought for inalienable rights. All the Palayakkars, including the loyal ones, were invited to witness the execution of Kattabomman. In his letter to the Governor of Madras, Bannerman wrote that this arrangement was intended to warn prospective rebels. The British General himself highlighted Kattabomman's heroic acceptance of death. As he walked up to the tamarind tree to embrace his sentence, he looked calm and peaceful. The Palayakkars, lined up on both sides, received his contemptuous looks. He did not allow the hangman to put the noose around his neck. He did it himself as his last contribution to the cause of freedom. Kattabomman was the Palayakkar at Panjalamkurichi only for nine years. Throughout the period he did not submit to the British yoke. Indeed, Katabomman and few Naick Poligars organised the Western Palayakkar League, which culminated in the Second Palayakkar Movement. India's early struggle for independence reached the next phase in Tamil region along with the rebellion of Kattabomman.

After Kattabomman's execution, the fort at Panjalamkurichi was levelled to the ground. The loyal Palayakkars were asked to demolish their forts voluntarily. Forty-two forts were destroyed. Bannerman's declaration proscribed the manufacture and use of rifles and ammunition by the palayakkars. The ordinary people were prevented from keeping any weapons at all. The loyal Palayakkars were made responsible for the good behaviour of their tenants. By this declaration, they were degraded from their kingly status to revenue renters. They also could not have their annual durbars.

While Oomaithurai was in Palayamkottai prison, the Kambala Naicks were burning in their hearts with a vengeful fury against the British. A few rebels assembled in Ottanatham, a village near Maniyachi Junction. They planned to revive their supremacy in the region by installing Oomaithurai again as the Palayakkar of Panjalamkurichi. Marudhu Pandyan of Sivagangai and Gopala Naick of Virupakshi helped the freedom fighters in Palayamkottai by sending forces into a rescue operation. In January 1801, the insurgents numbered 200, under the guise of pilgrims proceeding to Tiruchendur, moved to Palayamkottai. On reaching Palayamkottai on 2nd February 1801, the conspirators attacked the prison and liberated Oomaithurai. The fighters under Oomaithurai fled away to Vallanadu Hills and from there they moved to Panjalamkurichi. The freedom fighters attacked the military posts of the British. Alwarthirunagari, Srivaikuntam, Kadalkudi, Nagalapuram, Kolarpatti, and Tuticorin fell into the hands of the insurgents. Oomaithurai could gather the support of the subaltern people like the Pallars of Paramankurichi, the Maravas of Marugalkurichi and Manad, and the Nadars of Kurumbur who had bitter experiences with Kattabomman. Forgetting

all their sufferings, they supported the movement led by Oomaithurai. With their support, Oomaithurai built the razed fort again at Panjalamkurichi. The fort was a parallelogram in shape, 500 x300 feet with walls of twelve feet in height. Oomaithurai anticipated an attack by the Company forces. This time, he armed himself with modern weapons including rifles and bombs. Even the British commanders admitted that the newly built fort was far stronger than the first one destroyed by Major Bannerman.

To capture Oomaithurai, Major Macaulay, the station military general mobilised the company forces from all sides. Capt. Martin, Maj. Sheppard and Lt. Versy arrived to assist Maj. Macaulay. When the British forces reached near the newly erected fort of Panjalamkurichi on 9th February 1801, they were astonished and returned to Palayamkottai on 10th February 1801. On 31st March 1801, Macaulay assembled the British forces and attacked the fort. When the fort was not breached, new reinforcements arrived under Lt. Col. Agnew. On 23rd May 1801, the fort was besieged and captured. The freedom fighters, numbering 300 under Oomaithurai escaped and in an encounter, the fighters lost 1050 while the British lost 600. Inflicted with some wounds, Oomaithurai moved to Kamudhi. Along with the Palayakkar of Kulattur he committed depredations in and around Kamudhi. Oomaithurai was warmly welcomed at Kamudhi by Marudhu Pandyan and from there he moved to Siruvayal, the headquarters of Marudhu Pandyan.

Marudhu Pandyan and Third Palayakkar Movement

The relationship between the Marudhu brothers who were the Palayakkars of Sivaganga and the Company was not at all cordial. Despite this, Oomaithurai sought asylum there. Marudhu, the elder, and Marudhu, the younger, in the beginning had served as the army chiefs of Muthuvaduganatha Thevar. In a war with the British, Muthuvaduganathan met a heroic death. Even though his heroic wife Velunachiyar and his military generals, Marudhu Pandyas were there on the battlefield they could not save him.

After the death of Muthuvaduganatha Thevar, his wife Velunachiyar took up the reins of administration at Sivagangai Palayam. The Sivagangai Palayam government was under their control. After the sudden demise of Velunachiyar, Marudhu the elder who was till then the general, became the Palayakkar. Even though the easygoing Marudhu the elder was nominally in power, only the able Marudhu the younger was the de facto ruler. There prevailed no political conflict between Marudhu Pandyas and the Company until they took over the administration of the Sivagangai Palayam.

Consequently, there arose a deep division among the people of Sivagangai with the Marudhu Pandyas coming

to power. A section of the people argued that the Marudhu Pandyas could not be the successors to Muthuvaduganatha Thevar as they did not come from a royal family. As usual, the Company took upon itself the responsibility of arbitration in this dispute, unasked for. It sent a notice asking Marudhu, the elder, to prove his legitimacy as heir to the Palayam. Elder Marudhu's coming to power in Sivaganga could not be held indisputable. In those days might was right, and in the history of Sivagangai the Generals coming to power on the death of the King was not altogether new. But this argument of the Marudhu Pandyas was rejected by the Company and they ordered them to hand over the administration to the legitimate heir. This incensed the Marudhu Pandyas. They thought that the succession issue was a domestic problem to be settled by the people of Sivagangai. The alien intervention had nothing to do with it. So they were discontented. And When joined by Oomathurai at this critical juncture they got ready to fight the British. But the Company forestalled them.

Before commencing military operations against Sivagangai, the British issued a diplomatic proclamation aiming at reducing the popularity of the Marudhu Pandyan among the people. It stated that Marudhu Pandyan was selfish and was ruling the region ruthlessly. Therefore, the people should relinquish him and should surrender their arms. This proclamation showed the British diplomacy of divide and rule. As a retaliatory measure, Marudhu Pandyan declared twin proclamations. One of them was pasted on the fort of Tiruchirappalli addressing the people of the Peninsula of Jambu Dweepa or South India. Another one was found on the wall of the Great Vaishnava Temple of Srirangam addressing the inhabitants of the Island of Jambu or India. These twin proclamations appealed to the people of South India and India to join in the liberation struggle of India from the yoke of British rule. Indeed, Marudhu Pandyan was the first Indian freedom fighter in calling the people of India

for a war against the British. The proclamations called on all the people of India irrespective of caste, class, and religion for a fight to finish British rule.

In the Third Palayakkar War, Marudhu brothers and Oomathurai sacrificed their lives. Seventy-three other leaders of the Third Palayakkar Movement were ordered for perpetual banishment.

The suppression of the three Palayakkar movements resulted in the liquidation of the influence of the native chieftains of the Tamil region. Under the terms of the Carnatic Treaty of 1801, which was signed between the British and Azim-ud-Doula, the Nawab of Arcot, established their direct rule over Tamil region which became a part of the Madras Presidency that was formed in 1802. The Palayakkar system came to a violent end and in its place, the zamindari system was introduced. However, the discontent with the British rule did not end with the suppression of the Palayakkar uprisings. On 10th July 1806, the Indian sepoy in the British stationed at Vellore showed their loyalty to their old masters especially the Palayakkars in the form of a movement that was considered the precursor of the Sepoy Movement of 1857. This Vellore Mutiny was suppressed by Col. Gillespie. Though the Vellore Movement was suppressed, it spread to Pallikonda, Wallajabad, Arcot, Chicacole, and Hyderabad. Even the Sepoy Movement of 1857 had its impact on the region some places were disturbed by the Movement. The Madras had revolutionary links with other centres in the South like Belgau, Kolhapur, etc. There were signs of protests at Madras, Chengalput, Tanjore, North Arcot, Vellore, Salem and into the interior areas of the Coimbatore in the region.

Had the Marudhu Pandyas defeated the British, the freedom of South India would have been preserved. It is in this sense that they became the torch bearers of the First War of Independence. □

The banner is for the 'AMRIT MAHOTSAV' (75th Independence Day) celebration. It features the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India logo on the top left. The central text reads 'आजादी का AMRIT MAHOTSAV'. Below this, there are several book covers displayed, including 'अजयतनी सैनिक' (Ajayantani Senik), 'कलियुगाला बाज' (Kaliyugala Baj), 'मूर्तिलाल भारद्वाज के स्वतंत्रता संग्राम' (Murtilal Bhargava ke Swatantrata Sangram), 'Women in Satyagraha', and 'REMEMBER US ONCE IN A WHILE...'. The bottom of the banner contains social media links: www.publicationsdivision.nic.in, [@publicationsdivision](https://www.facebook.com/publicationsdivision), [/DPD_India](https://www.twitter.com/DPD_India), [/dpd_India](https://www.instagram.com/dpd_India), and [/businesswng@gmail.com](mailto:businesswng@gmail.com). The 'Up' logo is also visible in the top right corner.

Women in Handloom Sector

Over the centuries, handlooms have come to be associated with excellence in India's artistry in fabrics. Fabrics and designs were influenced by the geographic, religious, and social customs of a region. Different parts of India have produced distinct styles – muslin of Chanderi, Varanasi brocades, Rajasthan and Odisha have given tie and die products, Patola sarees from Patan, Himroo of Hyderabad, phulkari and Khes from Punjab, Daccai and Jamdani from Bengal, traditional designs from Assam and Manipur like the Phenek and Tongam. Indian handloom designs and weaves have been famous world-over and it is important to ensure the sustenance of our cultural heritage.

Women's empowerment through financial independence

Indian handloom sector is ancient and has served the economy well in terms of employment. The sector is very important from the point of view of its size and employment potential.

The relevance of the handloom sector in the agrarian economy is massive because of its linkages with crucial and sensitive sectors

like agriculture. It uses agricultural products as raw materials and, therefore, provides an ever-ready market for agricultural produce. Therefore, in an economy where a majority of people still rely on the agrarian sector for their livelihood, the significance of handloom is well understood. Secondly, it is a

sector that directly addresses women's empowerment. As per the 2019-20 census, the sector engages over 23 lakhs female weavers and allied workers. The handloom sector is largely household-based, carried out with labour contributed by the entire family. Therefore, the engagement of a large number of women (over 70% of all weavers and allied workers are female) in any capacity in this sector has ensured direct remunerations for them, thus, empowering them through financial independence and improved self-worth both within and outside of their homes.

According to the Fourth All India Handloom Census, the total number of households in India engaged in handloom activities (weaving and allied activities) is 31.45 lakhs. This is an increase over the Third census where the count was 27.83 lakhs. A higher number of females

are involved in allied activities related to the handlooms. Female workforce participation rate in allied activities in this sector is twice as much higher than their male counterpart. This trend is true for both

urban and rural areas. About 27.1% of the women engaged as allied workers in this sector have either not received any formal education or have not completed primary level; for male workers, this number is slightly lower, at 20.5%. □

Source: All India Handloom Census 2019-20

Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019-20

Table 7: Number of handloom workers by gender

Gender	Rural	Urban	Total
Male	7,78,772 26%	1,96,961 42%	9,75,733 28%
Female	22,74,516 74.5%	2,71,769 58.0%	25,46,285 72.3%
Transgender	403 0.0%	91 0.0%	494 0.0%
Total	30,53,691	4,68,821	35,22,512

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Making of the Administrators

Amitabh Khare

Civil Servants always perform at the forefront, both at the cutting grassroots levels as well as in the highly complex and impactful policy formulation. With such diverse, onerous and prestigious responsibility on their shoulders, the performance and delivery of civil administrators become extremely critical for efficient administration and India’s rapid growth and development. Their ‘Capacity Building’ thus assumes immense importance for themselves, the government, and the nation.

The Administrative service is responsible for the public administration of the government of the country, except legislative, judiciary, and military. It is composed mainly of career civil servants hired on professional merit rather than appointed or elected, whose institutional tenure typically survives transitions of political leadership. A civil servant is a person employed in the public sector by a government department or agency or public sector undertakings. Civil servants work for central government and state governments. These administrators play a crucial role in the functioning of the governments and the delivery of services to the citizens.

The present system of civil services was created by the British to serve their imperial interests. It was established as the Imperial Civil Service (ICS) to perform regulatory functions like maintaining law and order and generating revenue.

The issue of continuing the Civil Service after independence was hotly debated in the Constituent Assembly and faced considerable opposition, particularly from the provincial governments. However, in its favour, it was argued that when in the democratic set-up the political leadership was likely to change at periodic intervals, bureaucratic continuity and neutrality of civil servants, especially at the highest levels of policy-making and programme formulation, would be essential. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel strongly advocated for continuing the civil service, calling it ‘the steel frame of India’. Constituent Assembly incorporated Article 312 to constitute All India Services (AIS), with recruitment, based on all India competitive examination

and dual control by the centre and the states. Founding fathers of the Indian Constitution envisioned the All India Services (AIS) to operate independently, freely, objectively and fearlessly in the larger national interests and constitutional aspirations.

Significant changes were also visualised in the role of the Administrators. It was no longer seen to be limited to the colonial role of revenue collection and enforcing law and order. Welfare oriented Indian governments used the

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policy formulation and implementation capabilities of these administrators to design and roll out many schemes in all domains of government viz. agriculture, industry, economy, education, health care and other social sectors. The institution of civil services has worked along with the political leadership for the overall socio-economic development of the country. With its national character, it has also been a strong binding force to a Union of States.

Important Role of Civil Services

The importance of the Civil Services stems from:

- Service presence throughout the country and strong binding character,
- The administrative and managerial capacity of the services,
- Effective policy-making and regulation,
- Effective coordination between institutions of governance,
- Leadership at different levels of administration,
- Service delivery at the cutting edge level,
- Providing 'continuity and change' to the administration.

Training of Administrators

Civil Servants always perform at the forefront, both at the cutting

grassroots levels, as well as in the highly complex and impactful policy formulation. With such diverse, onerous and prestigious responsibility on their shoulders, the performance and delivery of civil administrators become extremely critical for efficient administration and India's rapid growth and development. Their 'Capacity Building' thus assumes immense importance for themselves, the government and the nation.

Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) was established in Mussoorie in 1959 as the apex institute for training of higher civil services. Newly recruited civil servants receive their initial Induction-level training in this institute. The Academy also imparts continuing professional training through in-service courses to the officers of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) including middle to senior-level officers through Mid Career Training Programmes (MCTPs) at periodic intervals of their career. In addition, the Academy conducts training courses for officers promoted to IAS from state civil services.

The institution of civil services has worked along with the political leadership for the overall socio-economic development of the country. With its national character, it has also been a strong binding force to a Union of States.

Entry-Level Induction Training

The two-year induction training programme begins with the four-month Common Foundation Course. It is aimed at providing the newly recruited civil servants, known as Officer Trainees (OTs), a profoundly enriching and fulfilling experience and equipping them with the requisite domain knowledge, skill sets and



attitudes that would stand them in good stead in the first decade of their career – as Sub Divisional Officer, Project Officer, District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Chief Executive Officer of Zilla Parishad, Municipal Commissioner, District Collector and sometimes in the State Directorates, Public Sector Undertakings and the Secretariat. Objectives of the Foundation Course are to orient OTs to the administrative, managerial, socio-economic and political environment of the country, make them aware of the challenges and opportunities within the civil services, to promote their overall personality development through participation in sports and extracurricular activities and to inculcate among them the appropriate values, ethical standards, norms of behaviour and personal conduct, befitting of a Civil Servant.

After the Common Foundation Course, the training of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) Officers continues at LBSNAA, while the OTs of other services go to their respective training institutes. Foundation Course is followed by Phase-1 Training, State and District Training and Phase-2 Training.

Phase-1 Training comprises of two components of Winter Study Tour (WST) or Bharat Darshan and the Academic Module.

WST is of about six weeks' duration and is designed to impart experiential learning to OTs through travels across the country and attachments with different institutions:

- To enable OTs to appreciate the linguistic, historical, ecological and cultural diversity and heritage of the country,
- To expose them to the functioning of different agencies and institutions in the country,

- To enable them to develop a pan-Indian perspective and understand the role of the IAS in the governance and development of India.

WST also includes key attachments with Defence services (Army, Navy and Air Force), Law and Order and Insurgency related agencies, Public, Private, Cooperative sector institutions, non-governmental organisations, urban local bodies, large infrastructure projects and visits to borders, rural, tribal areas, islands and North East.

Academic Module is of three months and imparts rigorous training to the OTs in a wide range of subjects to enable them to handle varied assignments that the officer typically holds in the first decade of service. Subjects broadly covered in this module are Law, Public Administration, Political Science & Constitution, Management and Behavioural Sciences, Basic Economics for Administrators, Languages and Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

State and District Training is of approximately one year duration. It exposes the OTs to the ground realities and provides them with the opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the Professional

With such diverse, onerous and prestigious responsibility on their shoulders, the performance and delivery of civil administrators become extremely critical for efficient administration and India's rapid growth and development. Their 'Capacity Building' thus assumes immense importance for themselves, the government and the nation.

Course to field situations. They get a feel of the socio-economic conditions of the rural/ tribal populations, study the efforts of government and non-government agencies and the process of development in action. They learn about the administrative set up in a particular district by being a part of it and get first-hand exposure to various aspects of grassroots governance and functions such as holding revenue courts, rural development and poverty alleviation schemes, MGNREGA, Panchayati Raj institutions, cooperatives, education, healthcare and so on.

The IAS Professional Course Phase-2 is of approximately one and a half months duration, including a one-month academic component to provide the OTs with an opportunity to reflect on and synthesise the knowledge and skills acquired during Phase-1 and the experiential learning of District Training. Special sessions are organized with distinguished subject matter experts from all walks of life. This phase also comprises a one-week foreign training module in Singapore, South Korea or the United Kingdom and one week, the OTs visit the Parliament and call on the President, Prime Minister and other dignitaries.

Assistant Secretary-ship

After this training, IAS probationers are sent on a three-month central deputation to various ministries and departments for Vertical Integration. They are designated as Assistant Secretaries and are assigned important Desks on Desk office pattern and report to the respective Joint Secretaries. This provides them an exposure to the functioning of Govt. of India at the early stages of their careers. It helps them in acquiring

Objectives of the Foundation Course are to orient OTs to the administrative, managerial, socio-economic and political environment of the country, make them aware of the challenges and opportunities within the civil services, to promote their overall personality development through participation in sports and extracurricular activities and to inculcate among them the appropriate values, ethical standards, norms of behaviour and personal conduct, befitting of a Civil Servant.

a national perspective and sensitises them to larger perspectives of various policies and programmes.

The IAS training experience is a profoundly enriching one. The programme modules such as Bharat Darshan and District Training provide on-field learning opportunities to the IAS probationers while the academic sessions conducted at the LBSNAA prepare them with sound theoretical background for challenges awaiting them in the working career ahead. An integrated and distinct focus on co-curricular and extracurricular activities enables the OTs to learn how to balance work with overall personality development.

Mid-Career Training Programmes (MCTPs)

The present system of training of IAS officers spans their entire careers.

They are imparted three-phase Mid Career Training Programmes (MCTPs) between 7-9 years, 14-16 years and 26-28 years respectively. These are mandatory training programmes for promotions and career progression and are accordingly focussed on next-level competencies.

Such a comprehensive and career-spanning training model is perhaps the best one in India. Imparted to a handful of brilliant minds, hailing from across all academic backgrounds and recruited through a very rigorous, perhaps the toughest selection process, it is expected to bring out the best in them, individually and collectively and forge them into highly competent and effective administrators. They are trained in terms of knowledge of the surrounding environment as well as of specific functional domains, necessary administrative skills and a confident, progressive, proactive and resilient leadership mindset to deliver the best possible governance.

The present system of the training of civil servants is very comprehensive, relevant and career-spanning. Yet, fact remains that it was designed decades ago and continues to foster the same mindsets, which were plagued by the shadows of colonial mistrust. These mindsets are apprehensive of change. The world has changed dramatically beyond recognition. The urgency for reforms in civil services is dictated as much by the imperatives of global developments as by the forces of new technology and communication which are shrinking distance and commerce, rendering conventional approaches and practices of administration obsolete

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and dysfunctional. ‘Several forward-looking governments have focussed on progress, both in the inside (culture and process change) as well as outside (outcomes and user satisfaction in the realm of public goods and services)’ and are continually changing and updating their processes and rules with the dynamic changes in time and technology. Such a change in outlook and performance of administrators can come only by a transformation in their attitudes and mindsets from that of a ruler to a leader, collaborator and facilitator; from the regulator to enabler of enterprise and innovation, from mistrust to trust, from a focus on the process to outcome, from hesitant and reactive to eager, proactive and ready to embrace the change. If the external environment is becoming more and more difficult and is exerting increasing pressures, then instead of cowing down in desperation, it is even more important than the strong value system, the courage of conviction and positive outlook is deeply entrenched in the civil servants to cope with these pressures. This again leads to the question of altering and improving the intangible attitudes and mindsets of trainee civil servants. Whether the training apparatus of civil servants, in the first place, is ready and capable to pass this baptism of its own transformation first.

A plethora of research and literature on training, and successful empirical examples in some of the leading organisations in the world have amply demonstrated that effective training impacts all the three variables of Knowledge, Skill and Attitudes (KSA). Knowledge and skill are much more concrete and can be addressed rather easily. And these are being addressed, to a large extent, in the present training system as well. It is the area of attitudes, which is much more challenging and hard to be crystallised in simplistic determinants. The task of the hour for the planners and administrators of civil service training is to focus on transforming the attitudes and mindsets of administrators to inculcate the resilience and competencies compatible with the requirements of the 21st century in them. For this, the veiled feeling of elitist supremacy, which often inhibits the recognition of the merits, worth and potential of genuine academicians, domain experts and technology stalwarts to help design solutions would need to be acknowledged and overcome.

Recent Reforms in the Training of Administrators

In recent years, there has been some serious rethinking on these issues and many initiatives have been taken to improve the efficacy of the training of administrators.

The present system of the training of civil servants is very comprehensive, relevant and career-spanning. Yet fact remains that it was designed decades ago and continues to foster the same mindsets, which were plagued by the shadows of colonial mistrust. These mindsets are apprehensive of change. The world, on the other hand, has changed dramatically beyond recognition.

Mission Karmayogi

The Union Cabinet has approved the adoption of the New National Architecture for Civil Services Capacity Building called “Mission Karmayogi” in September 2020. It is a competency focussed training of officials using digital platforms that aims to transform the capacity building apparatus at the individual, institutional, and process levels. It is so designed that it remains entrenched in Indian culture and sensibilities while drawing learning resources from the best institutions and practices from across the world. The Programme will be delivered by

setting up an Integrated Government Online Training-iGOT Karmayogi Platform.

Aarambh

‘Aarambh’ is an initiative to bring all the probationers of All India Service, Group-A Central Services and Foreign Service together for a Common Foundation Course (CFC) to break the silos of services and departments from the very beginning of the career of a civil servant. It aims at making the civil servants capable of leading the transformation and work seamlessly across departments and fields.

Under this initiative, more than 800 officers belonging to different civil services have been imparted training, with the help of technology-driven learning pedagogy.

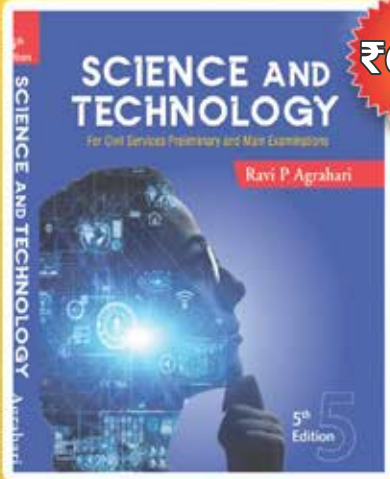
Common Mid-Career Training Programme (CMCTP)

Pursuing the initiative of ‘Aarambh’ a similar scheme has been envisaged to break the silos among different civil services at the mid-career level in the form of the Common Mid-Career Training Programme (CMCTP). This programme aims at providing a common learning platform for officers belonging to different civil services. It will focus on the development of behavioural, functional, and domain level competencies.

It is heartening to see that the government is focussing on the training and capacity building of public administrators holistically, identifying and addressing the real issues affecting the efficacy of existing training apparatus, and in turn affecting the performance and delivery of administrators. It is hoped that such initiatives toward transforming civil services training are followed through, in real spirit, to help the administrators rising to the aspirations of the resurgent, Aatmanirbhar Bharat. □

CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION

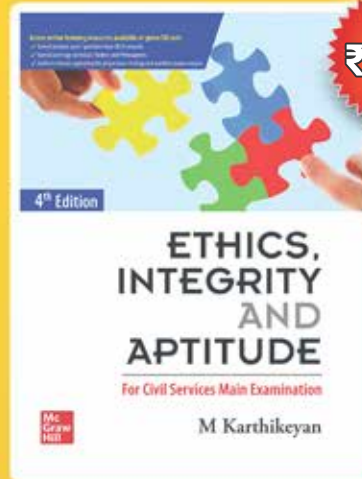
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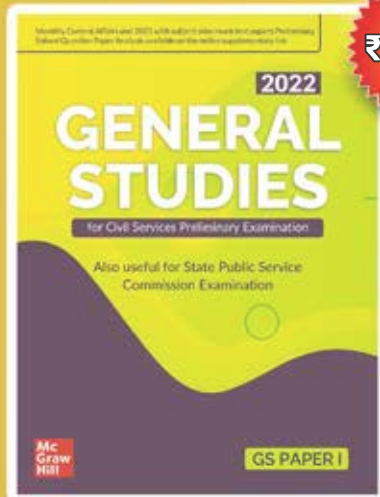
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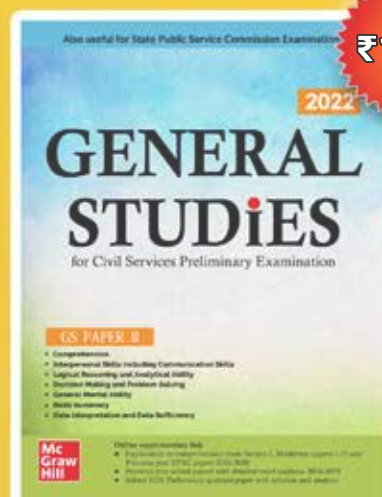
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Gender Justice

Dr Subhash Sharma

In the mid-twentieth century, when the French social philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) wrote the magnum opus ‘Second Sex’, (1949) she elaborated the secondary position of the women, more or less, all over the world because of social-cultural factors: ‘one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.’ Thus, due to societal customs, norms, institutional behaviour laws, restrictions etc, the ‘sex’ (biological difference between male and female in terms of chromosomes, genitals, etc.) in the course of time becomes ‘gender’ (a socio-cultural construct) due to primary (family peer groups, community) and secondary (school, college, club, public library, offices, sports, etc.) socialisation.

In India, Mahadevi Varma raised the issue in the 1930s in her articles, and later published in her book ‘Shrinkhala ki Kadiyan’ (1942). She pointed out the contradictions in Indian traditions where a woman is worshipped on one hand, and lives as a prisoner in the home (subordinate to a man in all respects without rights to education, health, livelihood, hygiene and sanitation, sports, etc.) on the other. She found two types of women in Indian society—first, those who are not aware that they are human beings with independent personalities; second, those who equal to men, see the world from the viewpoint of men. Thus, women somehow reduced their personalities and social existence. Mahatma Gandhi brought women into the mainstream freedom struggle, and held men responsible for their ways of exploitative customs.

Recent Judicial Orders

- a. The Supreme Court, in *Air India v Nargesh Meerza*, found that Air India imposed three discriminatory restrictions and disabilities on women employees (air hostesses): (i) they were not allowed to marry within four years from the date of entry into service; (ii) their services were terminated on their first pregnancy; and (iii) age of retirement of hostesses was just 35 years, extendable to 45 years at the discretion of their Managing Director as against other govt. servants at 55/58 years. The Supreme Court upheld the first condition (i) in view of both parties’ difficulties but struck down others as unreasonable and arbitrary.
- b. In IFS Services Rules, the permission of Govt. was required before the marriage of women officers, and married women were not allowed to join IFS. Hence, the Supreme Court quashed it outright.
- c. In *Joseph Shine v Union of India*, Supreme Court. (Dipak Misra, AM Khanwilkar RF Nariman, DY Chandrachud, & Indu Malhotra), decided in 2018 that ‘the essentiality of the rights of women gets the real requisite space in the living room of individual dignity, rather than the space in an annexe to the main building.... Any system treating a woman with indignity, inequity and inequality, or discrimination invites the wrath of the Constitution... and it is time to say that husband is not the master’. The Court directed the State to take a minimalist approach in the criminalisation of offences as individuals have personal choices: ‘The right to live with dignity includes the right not to be subjected to public censure and punishment by the state’. Hence Section 497 of IPC (punishment for adultery) was struck down as unconstitutional, being violative of Articles 14, 15, and 21 and Section 497 which was based on gender stereotypes on the role of women.
- d. In *Shayara Bano v Union of India & others*, Muslim women’s quest for equality v *Jamiat Ulema-I Hind*, *Aafreen Rehman v Union of India & others*, *Gulshan Parveen v Union of India & Others*, *Ishrat Jahan v Union of India & others*, and

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Atiya Sabri v Union of India & others, Supreme Court (head by J.S. Khehar) by majority view, declared Talaq-e-biddat' (triple talaq at the same time) unconstitutional & arbitrary (violative of fundamental right to equality), and injuncted Muslim husbands from pronouncing it and directed the State to legislate on this issue within six months. This was a landmark judgement in favour of Muslim women of India who had been suffering from it for centuries, though many Muslim countries had already abolished triple talaq.

The Fifth National Family Health Survey (2019-20) talks of the following factors for the empowerment of women:

- a. ownership of physical assets-mobile phones, bank accounts, land & housing;
- b. access to menstrual hygiene products (sanitary napkins etc);
- c. participation in household decisions (healthcare for herself, household purchases, visits to family/relatives);
- d. employment status;
- e. gender violence;
- f. marriage under the age of 18 years; and
- g. educational attainment of more than 10 years.

But Sustainable Development Goals also take into account the time spent on domestic or unpaid work decisions; (ii) decision on reproductive health; and (iii) incidence of female genital mutilation. In the above-mentioned areas, the progress of Indian women is as follows as per NFHS (2019-2020):

- a. Share of women with more than ten years of schooling increased 5.5 per centage points during 2015-2020, the gender gap in this regard decreased from 11.5% to 8% in 2015-2020.
- b. Sex ratio at birth in 2020 increased to 942, though SDG is 954 females for every 1000 males by 2030 but only 928 in urban areas (against 947 in rural areas) due to sex determination tests.
- c. Share of women using hygienic methods increased from 60% to 78% (2015-2020).
- d. Due to PM Jan Dhan Yojana, women's bank accounts increased by 28 per centage points (2015-2020).

- e. Women's mobile phone ownership increased by 10 per centage points (2015-2020).
- f. Share of married women employed and getting paid increased by 2% points to 28% during 2015-2020.
- g. Participation in household decision making increased marginally to 85%.
- h. In 11 out of 22 states, covered land or house ownership by women reduced in 2020.
- i. Share of women marrying before 18 years is about 30% (both in 2015 and 2020).
- j. Domestic violence stagnating-one in three women experience physical or sexual violence from their husbands, but during the Covid-19 lockdown it surged to 60%.
- k. There is an increase in the use of family planning methods but its burden is still largely on women-female sterilisation accounting for 60% of total contraception usage. Himachal Pradesh has the highest contraceptives prevalence rate; unmet needs were declined to less than 10% in most states except Meghalaya and Mizoram.
- l. Worsening trends due to complex interplay of policy, socio-cultural and political factors.
- m. Share of Union Budget spent on women-related schemes has stagnated at about 5.5% since 2009, and less than 30% of which is being spent on 100% women-focused schemes.
- n. Spending of budget of Ministry of Women and Child Development on women empowerment decreased from Rs. 640 crores in 2018-2019 to Rs 310 crores in 2019-2020.
- o. Low conviction rate for early marriage-23.8% in 2018 and 84% cases pending in courts. In Tripura, child marriage increased from 33% to 40% in 2015-2020, in Manipur from 13.7% to 16.3%, and in Assam from 30.8% to 31.8%.

- p. Stunting of children rose in 11 states; wasting increased in 14 states; neo-natal mortality, IMR, and under 5 mortality rate increased in Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands; Bihar has the highest prevalence of NMR (34), IMR (47), and under 5 MR (56) across 22 states/UTs surveyed. Kerala has the lowest rates matching many developed countries- due to better allocation of the social sector. SDG 3 calls for an end of preventable deaths of newborn and children up to 5 years by 2030 to

The level of progress and quality of democracy of any country may be assessed by knowing the contemporary status of women, as redistributive justice and participatory governance must ensure gender justice substantially.

Table 1: Dimensions of Holistic Empowerment through Capability Expansion

Sl. No.	Dimensions\ Capability	Low capability	Medium Capability	High Capability
1.	Silence Vs speaking out	as speaking out individually	speaking out collectively	speaking out collectively and forcefully
2.	Mobility for discussion and action	within village	outside village-up to district level	state/national level
3.	Purpose	awareness-generation	to get benefits of govt. programmes	demanding and realising participation
4.	Idea of change	faint idea of incremental change (through microfinance etc)	fair idea of change due to taking benefits from govt. schemes/ programmes	transformative action by revising schemes/launching new ones as per need
5.	Narrative of change	the receiver of a given narrative of change 'from above'	receiving of and reacting to a given narrative of change-'from above' but suggesting revision	Proactive own narrative of change 'from below' (bottom-up)
6	Use of public sphere	micro (local) public sphere	meso public sphere	macro public sphere
7.	Development-empowerment synergy	more for development, very little idea of empowerment	more for development, less for empowerment	development and empowerment synergy

reduce NMR to 12 per 1000 live births, and under-5 mortality to 25 per 1000 live births. IMR in India is 32 (36 in rural areas and 23 in urban areas), much higher than that in developed countries.

- q. Spouse violence increased in 5 states-Sikkim, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Assam and Karnataka-the last has the maximum increase from 20.6% to 44.4% during 2015-2020.
- r. Total Fertility Rate (TFR) declined in most of the states-'replacement level' (2.1) achieved in 19 out of 22 states/UTs surveyed; only states like Manipur (2.2), Meghalaya (2.9), Bihar (3.2), and UP (2.9) have higher TFR than replacement level; still average TFR in India is 2.2 per woman.
- s. More than 2/3rds of children below 5 years are immunised fully in all states, except Meghalaya, Nagaland and Assam.
- t. 80% of pregnant women delivered in institutions in 19 states/UTs, and 90% did in 14 states/UTs. Unfortunately, 2/3rds of deliveries in private hospitals is C-section (caesarian), while only 30% in govt. hospitals. As per the medical norm, it is only 15%. C-section on an average shows the commercialisation in private hospitals, though some women prefer it due to less pain.

Sometimes economic development leads to gender equality but other times, empowerment (especially in decision-making) leads to gender equality, hence both are necessary. However, as the Nobel Laureate Esther Dufflo rightly points out, there should be a continuous policy commitment to equality for its own sake Hence, multi-dimensional efforts are needed. Various dimensions of holistic empowerment through capability expansion may be seen in Table 1.

The level of progress and quality of democracy of any country may be assessed by knowing the contemporary status of women, as redistributive justice and participatory governance must ensure gender justice substantially. The Govt. of India has rightly enhanced the maternity period to 26 weeks to benefit 18 lakh women workers in the organised sector-this will ensure breastfeeding for at least six months initially, as well as pay for this period, will ensure nutritious food. Democracy is a holistic way of life, ensuring diversity and pluralism in all respects including gender. The 'Me Too' movement all over the world portrays sexual offences against women. As post-feminists rightly remark, for women, 'personal is political', hence, let us empower them in both public and personal arenas of life, along with genuine development. □

Girl Child Protection

Deepshikha Singh

Child protection is a human rights issue, and it comes under the purview of the legislative framework. In 1989, an international agreement, ‘The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child’ (UNCRC) was adopted, with 54 articles, that legally binds the governments of 196 countries to set out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of every child. UNCRC proclaims that all children must be protected against kidnapping, violence, harmful work, sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking. On 11 December 1992, India ratified UNCRC, and it was a landmark encouragement for the Indian government to develop progressive legislation to safeguard child rights.



As a result of the UNCRC framework, India formulated fair comprehensive legislation and policies covering different dimensions of child rights from birth to age 18. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012, is a landmark legislation that protects children from sexual assault, sexual harassment, and the use of pornographic material for sexual offences against children. Under the Act, special courts have been established to deal with these offences. This Act has been amended on 6 August 2019, and the Central Government framed POCSO Rules, 2020. Another important legislation is the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000. The Act seeks to safeguard the rights of children in conflict with the law, and those in need of care and protection. The Act is amended in 2015 and came into force on 15 January 2016, with a key provision on new offences committed against children, punishment, rehabilitation, social integration, regulation of childcare institutions, adoption processes, and State accountability. In 2009, the government launched a pioneer Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) to build a protective environment for children in difficult circumstances through Government and Civil Society Partnership. ICPS seeks the prevention of child rights violations, enhanced infrastructure and capacities, institutionalising essential services, and strengthening structures. A National Tracking System for Missing and Vulnerable Children, State Child Protection Societies,

District Child Protection Units, Juvenile Justice Boards, Special Courts, and Childcare Institutions (CCIs) are established across all States/UTs.

The other prominent laws and policies specific to children are Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 (Amendment Act, 2016); the Child Marriage Prohibition Act, 2006; Juvenile Justice System 2019; and the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act 1994. On 22 January 2015, the *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* Scheme was launched to tackle the declining sex ratio at birth, and to empower the girl child through education. In 2020, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights launched Standard Operating Procedure for Care and Protection of Children in Street Situations.

Crime against Girls

Despite promising legal frameworks, violence against children is rampant. The National Crime Record Bureau reported that in the year 2019 about 33.2 per cent of the total crime (IPC + SLL) was committed against children. Among all heads of crime, the crime rate is highest under POCSO Act, with more than 95 per cent of child victims (sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography) were girls. The data indicate that 78 per cent of the total child victims of kidnapping and abduction were girls. In 2019, about 15649 cases were reported where minor girls were kidnapped and abducted to compel for marriage; 3117 cases for procurement of minor girls; 4977 cases

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of child rape, and 1113 children reported victims of human trafficking. The magnitude and intensity of crime against children are much higher than official figures due to underreporting. Sexual violence against minor girls has become a never-ending phenomenon witnessed across States/UTs. In Kerala, one of the leading States on the SDG Index, the latest data from the Social Welfare Department reported 627 cases of child rape between January 1 to May 31, 2021. Heinous crime against minor girls, many in their early childhood, is a most disturbing reality. Lack of administrative will, political interests, inadequate prevention, poor capacities of human resource, and lack of public awareness is accountable for weak legal enforcement.

Intersection of Vulnerabilities

The life experiences of girls vary tremendously. The social experiences of girls are not homogenous rather distinct, complex, and overlapped—due to a combination of factors including age, stage of life, caste, ethnicity, minority status, ability, health, and economic status. These factors play out an issue around violence against girls.

Multidimensional poverty poses a direct threat, putting cracks on girls' safety in three major forms: discriminatory attitudes resulting in poor nutrition and health care; housework and care burden; and exposure to violence. Gender power relations endorse female victimisation and domestic violence which often takes the chronic and severe form of battering and withholding essential care. Son preference, i.e., favouring boys' social, intellectual, and physical (including nutrition) well-being over that of girls, is widespread. Studies have shown that girls in families with son preference are relatively more likely to be neglected, and exert hours for housework (Lin, & Adserà, 2013¹). According to the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, around 40 per cent of all girls aged 15-18 years were out of school, and 65 per cent were engaged in household work in 2018. Studies have shown that girls in the poorest wealth quintile are at greater risk of child marriage and trafficking.

Girls in street situations, orphans, abandoned, and child labours are at high risk of exploitation, sexual abuse, and trafficking. The girl child of commercial sex workers, prisoners, and those in shelter homes is another group at the receiving end of violence in a threatened environment. Girls with disabilities are more likely to face sexual exploitation, particularly if they are visually impaired or having mental conditions. The nature and types of violence experienced by girls also depend on their stage of life. Early childhood is the most sensitive period of human development where human beings are most vulnerable and need adequate care and protection. Exposure to a

risky environment in the early years will have long-lasting negative impacts on a child's physical and mental health. A young girl child of migrant and informal workers is double disadvantaged and susceptible to harm, neglect, and abuse. The absence of quality childcare, public health services, and poor integration of migrants with the community create multiple stressors for the child and the caregiver.

Covid-19 and Girls

Worldwide, children have suffered the devastating impacts of Covid-19, and further, the impacts are and will continue to vary by gender. Socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 are gendered, evident in the form of educational inequality, sexual violence, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and increased household burden.

According to UN Women, a “shadow pandemic” of gender-based violence surfaced due to lockdown, stay-home orders, and other Covid related restrictions (UN Women, 2020)². A Lancet study shows that women's and girls' access to time-sensitive and potential lifesaving services as well as their access to reproductive healthcare, police, justice, and social support services are restricted as Covid-19 pandemic accelerates (Cousins, 2020³). In India, the National Commission for Women reported 2.5 times increase in domestic violence during the initial months of nationwide lockdown. Childline India Helpline indicated an increased vulnerability of children to sexual abuse.

Covid-19 has worsened the risk of girls being trafficked for sexual exploitation. According to a research brief launched by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the socio-economic consequences of Covid-19 have increased migrant smuggling and cross-border trafficking. The India Child Protection Fund Report (2020) shows that during Covid-19, the consumption of Child Sexual Abuse Material has spiked in India by 95 per cent increasing the risk of paedophilia, child rape, and trafficking. Girls are at risk of online sexual exploitation and other cyber crimes due to the proliferated use of digital technology during the pandemic.

UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2021), throws light on increased educational inequalities for adolescent girls during the Covid-19 crisis. UNESCO estimates that around 11 million girls may not return to school and those aged 12-17 are at particular risk of dropping out of school. School closure has led to increased household and childcare responsibilities, which is likely to disadvantage girls more particularly in poor household contexts. The digital gender gap deters girls' remote education and access to information. According to the Mobile Gender Gap Report (2020), girls in LMICs are less likely than boys, to own a mobile phone and to use the internet (GSMA, 2020⁴).

Climate Change Impact

Very recently, in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report ‘Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science’, scientists have warned about the increase in monsoon precipitation extremities and drought across India and South Asia. Such climate change events impact women and girls disproportionately, posing a hindrance to India’s SDG achievements specific to poverty, hunger, health and wellbeing, water, and sanitation. The recent events of extreme rainfall, floods, landslide, and cyclones in India have already ravaged the lives of many women and girls – disrupted ecosystem-based livelihood, food insecurity, migration to cities, dilapidated housing, health, and WASH crisis, violence, and poor access to emergency healthcare and psychosocial support.

Way Forward

Ensuring a gender-responsive child protection system amid crisis is paramount. The process of decision-making, governance, and community actions must prioritise the issues around girl child protection.

- **Educate families** about the detrimental impacts of the household burden on young girls. Enable families to empower their daughters through education and household decision-making.
- **Overcome gender bias in education** – gender-neutral school curriculum, pedagogy, and environment. Challenge the gender discriminatory attitudes of students and present role models. Ensure safe and gender-responsive reopening of schools to meet the needs of most marginalised girls.
- **Launch stringent measures to eliminate child marriage** (considering the rise in Covid-19 context). Engage more boys and girls to voice and act against child marriage in the community.
- **Ensure that girl safety is a collective responsibility.** Build a safe environment for girls through promoting child safeguarding practices in community, neighbourhood, family, and school – enhance systems for reporting violence. Form community networks of whistle-blowers.
- **Educate and Empower girl child on their rights.** Develop knowledge and skills of young girls on self-care, defence, sex education, and abuse reporting. Encourage more girls to become an agent of change against patriarchal attitudes- be a leader and mobiliser for social behaviour change.
- **Prioritise early childhood period.** Focus on quality childcare and holistic ECD for girl children aged 0-8. Ensure full immunisation, health check-

up, breastfeeding, adequate nutrition, hygiene and sanitation, treatment of illnesses, responsive care, early learning stimulation, and protection.

- **Lead advocacy, campaigns, and activism to echo girl child protection.** Zero tolerance for heinous crimes against minor girl child (voice for robust State protection net, rapid response, public awareness, explicit safety protocols, and dealing victim-blaming attitudes). Prevention is to be prioritised in legal frameworks and not merely relief and compensation.
- **Strong protection net for most vulnerable**– safety of orphaned, abandoned girl child, girls living in street situations, those in institutions with girl child of prisoners, and commercial sex workers to be prioritised.
- **Promote safe adoption practices** amid Covid crisis. Effective dealing with growing malpractices of fake adoptions and ensure verified adoption process during Covid-19.
- **Develop capacities of human resources and systems** for child-care protection. Focus on prohibition, prevention, regulation, rehabilitation, and restoration services. Gender-responsive training of police and other duty bearers.
- **Educate girls about cyber safety** particularly adolescent girls. Spread awareness on measures to stay safe on social media platforms and prompt reporting of potential threats.
- **A gendered approach to disaster risk mitigation.** Identify gendered vulnerabilities and gender-responsive mitigation strategies in events of disasters, emergencies, and humanitarian crises.
- **Empower young girls to act on climate change.** Encourage young girls to take environmental issues to Bal Panchayats and other platforms. Prioritise climate change in school curriculum and pedagogy to encourage girls to be the leaders of tomorrow for climate action and community resilience, emphasising SDG Goal 13: *Climate action*. □


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Gender Diversity in PSUs

*Trishaljit Sethi
Priyanka Singh*

Gender diversity continues to be low in the Central Public Sector Undertakings. Recent data indicates that even in Maharatna PSUs, which are considered the best entities among public sector organisations, the strength of women employees is very low, only 5% to 9% of the total employees. With the global focus on understanding the linkage between gender and corruption, and how the gender dimension can be included in the anti-corruption policies, this is the right time for other PSUs to think along these lines.

 study “Corporate India: Women on boards” by Institutional Investor Advisory Services (IiAS) and SBI Mutual Fund (2020) evaluated the board composition of NIFTY 500 companies. Women Directors accounted for 17 per cent (777) of the total directors (4,657) on NIFTY 500 companies’ boards. Multinationals have a higher representation of women at 19 per cent, while PSUs trail behind at 11 per cent. It noted that among all the different types of firms, (MNCs, institutionally owned, promoter owned, etc.) PSUs continue to follow the gender diversity agenda. In the 4,657 firms in NIFTY 500, 13 companies did not have any women directors. Of those, 12 are PSUs. Overall, just 8 of the 71 PSUs have boards that comprise more than 20 per cent of women.¹ The study finds that despite improvements in the form of retention, maternity benefits, safety, and security at the workplace for women in PSUs, there is a lack of focus on developing a female talent pipeline. This state of affairs is despite the regulatory push provided by The Companies Act, 2013 which made it mandatory to have at least one woman director on boards with effect from 2014. Data reveals that the number of women at below board level is also far from equitable.

The G-20 Anti-corruption Working Group has included for its 2019-2021 Action Plan, taking concrete actions to deepen its understanding of the linkages between gender and corruption. It is in this context the Central Vigilance Commission strongly feels that this gap needs to be narrowed by taking affirmative action.

Committee On Women Empowerment in PSUs

A committee was constituted in NTPC Ltd, (one of the Schedule ‘A’ Maharatna CPSEs²) wherein concrete recommendations were sought on increasing the intake of women in PSUs, Equal Employment Opportunity Policy for improving working conditions, and other parameters to bring about a conducive environment for effective functioning of women, work-life balance, sensitivity to their value as an employee, putting in place proper Grievance Redressal System, institutional support system and basic facilities, gender-sensitive administrative measures concerning transfer/posting/training/career management, etc.

Discussion on Committee’s report

In August 2017, Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) (an apex body of 201 PSUs representing mainly Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) in India) in collaboration with the Bureau for Employers’ Activities (ACT/EMP) of the International Labour Organization, conducted a study on Women in Leadership and Management in Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in India. Its main findings were that the number of women applicants and/or recruits at the entry-level is skewed as compared to men. This gets reflected at a higher level i.e. if fewer women are applying and entering an organisation, the number of women to choose from at a higher level is likely to be lower.

Another prominent stereotype that emerged from this study was that men perceive women to be less

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Name of Maharatnas PSU	Percentage of Women Employees		
	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018
Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL)	5.9%	5.8%	5.7%
Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL)	6.5%	6.3%	6.1%
Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL)	8.7%	8.6%	8.4%
Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)	7.3%	7.0%	6.7%
Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)	5.9%	5.7%	5.7%
Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL)	9.2%	9.4%	9.2%
Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL)	9.5%	9.5%	9.3%
Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL)	7.5%	7.4%	7.4%
NTPC Limited (NTPC)	7.0%	6.2%	6.3%

enthusiastic to take up transfer postings, or serve long at field site locations due to family responsibilities. Men also felt that women are likely to lag in knowledge or skill development due to career breaks for maternity or child care.

In PSUs, promotions at higher levels are not time-bound; at higher levels, employees apply for promotions against vacancies. These vacancies are usually of sites or field offices generally located in remote areas. For women employees, such far-off postings may come at a time when they are making critical life cycle choices (such as getting married, pregnancy, giving birth, raising a child, and so on), and hence they forgo promotions. Women also feel that they may get left out despite being meritorious as they do not socialise informally with seniors in the organisation. This cultural facet perhaps plays a role in their being ignored for key positions where selection is based not on seniority alone.

Women who participated in the Scope survey found discourses on “biases-stereotypes” that relegate women to a disadvantageous position to be outdated. There is a need for bringing out a change in these stereotypes in both genders. It was also seen that whenever a training is titled “Women Empowerment” or has a subject line that includes women, organisations straightaway recommend women employees as participants.

Women who were surveyed believed that the two most influential factors that stand out in women’s career advancement include: ‘women’s confidence and self-belief’, and ‘organisational opportunities’ supporting women in their professional development and career growth. They also wanted to take up challenges and opportunities to broaden their horizon.

It appears from the above that there is potential among women that needs to be harnessed by providing them opportunity. Gender diversity is perhaps not being given due importance in PSUs, and to address this, structural changes will be required to be made.

To ensure that there is a representation of women executives at the Director and other higher levels, the catchment area will have to be increased.

Inter PSU Meet and Analysis of Data

The committee constituted in NTPC to look into ‘Gender empowerment in PSUs’ met representatives from some other PSUs in an online Inter PSU meet to seek inputs from other similarly placed organisations. During this meeting, brainstorming on the subject was done and best practices were shared. The committee also collected statistical data on the number of women employees in these PSUs to ascertain the factual position, and analyse the existing demographic profile.

A Comparative Analysis on the per centage of women employees (out of total employees) in these Maharatna PSUs in the last 3 years was done and is tabulated below:

The committee noted that the average per centage of women employees in these Maharatnas in the last 3 years is only 7.4%. The per centage of women in these PSUs ranges from a mere 5.7% to 9.5%.

Name Of Organisation	ED		GM/SGM/ CGM	
	Total	Female	Total	Female
POWERGRID	37	NIL	104	3 (2.8%)
GAIL	30	NIL	87	3 (3.4%)
SAIL	65	2 (3%)	264	6 (2%)
IOCL	96	3 (3%)	2312	148 (6%)
NTPC	44	NIL	430	11 (2.5%)

Current Strength of ED/GMs in prominent PSUs,

Source – NTPC Gender Committee

The number of women Directors was very low in almost all PSUs, and several of them did not have a single woman Director. Going two levels below Director i.e. the usual catchment area for promotion to Director level,



Executive Directors (ED: E9 grade) and General Managers (GM: E8 grade) the data again showed a dismal position.

This gives a picture that women are not able to reach the top rungs of hierarchy in the Public Sector and take up leadership positions. It was seen that the problem lies at the Recruitment / Entry level itself where the per centage of women is very low. Thus, the catchment area of women who opt for engineering or qualify for GATE is already low right at the entry-level. This is a *systemic problem* and needs to be resolved at a societal level.

The committee also studied in great detail the demographic profile of NTPC to see the representation of women employees. It noted that as of 08.11.2020, out of 12087 Executives only 774 (6%) were women, and out of 6391 Workers, only 462 (7%) were women.

Out of these 1200 odd women employees, 71% are posted in projects/stations, and 6% in tough greenfield locations, and only 23% are posted in city-based offices across India. Greenfield postings are those plants that are under construction and are comparatively tougher.

Therefore, while there is a perception that women are reluctant to work in plants/stations, it is seen from the data that despite the hardships, women executives are working in tough assignments and care for their career progression even if it entails postings in remote plants/stations.

The progression (promotion) data of women employees revealed that the per centage of women executives kept dropping at every higher level and a very minuscule number of senior leaders are found at E8 and above levels.

It was observed that most women in their middle age would perhaps face issues related to child education and family. During the mid-career, women are likely to face barriers – related more to their lifecycle choices than company policies. They are likely to have more career breaks owing to their marriage, maternity, or child-care leave and taking care of the elderly in the family. In PSUs where promotions are based on merit, such breaks are sometimes looked upon adversely and have an adverse impact on the promotion of women employees. When they return from these breaks, they often lose the promotion/career progression which they would have gotten otherwise.

This often becomes a critical decision-making factor for women to take a break or opt-out of the main career path for a while, compared to men counterparts. Therefore, the Committee recommended that a system may be developed by organisations wherein no adverse effects are faced by women for their future promotions once they return to the organisation after the ‘break’.

The recruitment data pertaining to recruitment of women (and men) at the entry-level in NTPC was also examined in-depth to analyse the patterns of intake of women employees. It revealed that in the last five years, out of the total men candidates who had applied for NTPC Executive Trainee (ET) recruitment, 1.8% to 3.2% were shortlisted and called for GD/Interview based on merit. Among women, however, this per centage is comparatively low. Out of total women candidates who applied for NTPC ET recruitment, only 0.6% to 1% have been called for

Group Discussion /Interview round based on merit. There is no written examination held before GD/Interview.

The committee noted that while women are doing academically well and get good marks in written exams, it is not reflected in the percentage of women actually recruited. This was perhaps because the recruitment process was giving considerable weightage to the group discussion and interview. The Committee observed that this skewed ratio (of very few women being recruited) could also be due to underlying gender biases in the recruitment committee which evaluated the group discussion/ interviews by giving marks.

The recruitment is based on marks allotted in Group Discussions and Interviews. This lends an element of subjectivity. The committee strongly recommended that the criteria for recruitment in PSUs should be based on marks of written examination preferably an objective type multiple choice questions based exam. This will reduce the element of discretion in the selection process.

Analysis of data relating to promotions also clearly reveals that a lesser percentage of women are promoted at every level as compared to men. This too contributes further to fewer women reaching the top rung of the ladder. Promotions in PSUs are done on merit and not on seniority alone. The committee while fully recognising the importance of merit in promotions felt that improvements can be made in this area, as well as active measures needed to be taken in PSUs to ensure that women are considered for all levels of promotions. The committee recommended that it must be ensured that all promotion committees must have a woman member at a senior level. This will help reduce the element of bias if any in the promotion process. If there are no women officers available in the organisation (at senior level) for being members of the committee, women members for the promotion committee could be co-opted from other PSUs/Govt. Departments, whenever required.

Recommendations

The committee gave its recommendations relating to Recruitment, Promotion, Training, Work and Performance, Gender sensitisation, and for specific Policy Interventions to bring about structural changes in the system:

A. Recruitment

a) The committee took cognizance of the low intake of women employees at various entry levels. The committee suggested the following ways to improve the numbers at the entry-level –

Short Term and Medium Term

- (i) All selection may be purely based on test scores and interviews may be avoided.
- (ii) In case interviews are part of the selection procedure, a woman representative may invariably be a member

of the selection committee.

- (iii) Pre-condition to obtain qualifying marks in the interview may be done away with.
- (iv) Adequate endeavors to hire more women in lateral induction, especially in service functions like HR, Finance, IT, Legal etc. might lead to improved women representation in PSUs.

Long Term

- (v) Efforts can be made to reach a critical level of 30% of women in the total employee strength by affirmative actions.
- (vi) Upper age limit for women employees (to say 40 or 45 yrs) or have fixed-term induction to facilitate more women opting for a career may be considered, to enable women to join after completing their family and responsibility of taking care of small children.

B. Mentoring and Training

Once recruited, the committee noted that specific training interventions may be required for women employees, for capacity building in cases where women employees go for long leave due to family compulsions:

Short Term, Medium Term

- (i) In all training programs conducted by PSEs, a pro-rata percentage of women employees of that PSE may be nominated for equal opportunity.

Long Term

- (ii) For women employees, specific training interventions may be taken up.
- (iii) Mentoring at induction level/mid-career level may be made compulsory in all organisations by seniors.

C. Gender sensitisation

The committee took cognizance of the fact that adequate gender sensitisation exercises are lacking in many institutions. Statutory requirements of POSH Act are not followed in spirit. The committee has suggested the following ways to improve the situation –

- (i) “Gender Sensitisation” may be included in induction and mid-career training as a compulsory module and steps may be taken to impart training on this subject to all employees.
- (ii) Even when there are no women employees in the organisation, steps may be taken to impart training on gender sensitisation to all employees including women external customers and outsourced workers.
- (iii) Internal Complaints Committee must be constituted in any place where there are more than 10 employees, irrespective of their gender. The jurisdiction of the

Complaints Committee is not only for departmental women employees but also in any case reported on the premises of the office/ organisation. It is a statutory requirement as per POSH Act for employers to regularly conduct awareness programmes and gender sensitisation training of all employees.

D. Specific Policy Interventions

The committee noted that while on the job, women employees may require specific policy interventions to retain them for long periods, and re-assure them of the safety measures taken by the organisation for difficult shifts/ postings. The committee suggested that:

Short Term and Medium Term

- (i) In view of the recent amendments in Occupational Health and Safety codes (OHSAS) allowing women employees to be deployed in night shift with their consent, adequate steps may be taken to meet the smooth transition by obtaining one-time consent of employees at the time of induction.
- (ii) Large-scale awareness generation programs may be undertaken to highlight the incentives and safety measures.
- (iii) Extension of basic hygiene facilities like toilets, CCTVs, security guards, commutation of women employees, etc. as laid down in the OHSAS guidelines may be ensured.
- (iv) Efforts to be made to provide transfer postings of spouses within PSUs/ Govt at the same station to enable women employees to discharge their family obligations as well. If both spouses are working within the same PSU or any other CPSE, or with the Central or State government, efforts should be put in by the concerned department(s) to ensure that the spouses are posted together.
- (v) All promotion committees must have a woman member. If a suitable person is not available, she may be co-opted from another organisation/ Govt.

Long term

- (vi) The feasibility of relaxation in qualifying requirements for promotions of women employees to higher leadership roles may be explored.

A) General

The committee noted some general issues:

- (i) Basic hygiene facilities like washrooms/restrooms at all work-places irrespective of the fact that women employees are posted at the location or not must be ensured. In fields areas, facilities for change rooms and toilets should be good.
- (ii) Steps may be taken to liaison with concerned

Ministries to appoint women in independent/regular board level positions as per the extant guidelines.

It was decided that NTPC may induct 50 women trainees and also organise for facilitation of their work in night shift on a pilot basis to demonstrate as a Model Employer.

Way Forward

The findings of the committee reveal an immediate need to take affirmative action towards the goal of women empowerment. It has given clear recommendations many of which are already being implemented. NTPC Ltd has already initiated action to recruit 50 women employees in 2021. As of August 2021, 30 women employees have already joined NTPC and 20 more have been given an offer letter. Also for the next round of general recruitment, the interview/group discussion round has been done away with. It is also being ensured that a woman member is part of the promotion committee. It is expected that with these measures, definite progress towards creating more gender diversity is possible.

Women-20 (W-20), an official G-20 engagement group focused on gender equity, also shared four policy actions within the context of deepening our collective understanding and actions on the linkages between gender and corruption. Specifically, W-20 has identified this year the inclusion of women in decision making at all levels of responsibility as the most effective turnkey for equality, for a balanced and equitable public and private sectors performance, and for a just society.

With the global focus on understanding the linkages between gender and corruption and how the gender dimension can be included in the anti-corruption policies, this is the right time for other PSUs to think along these lines. □

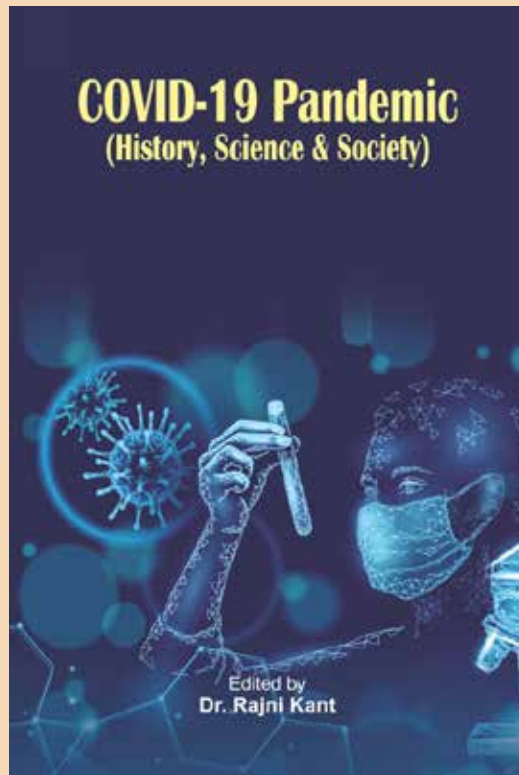
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1. Institutional Investor Advisory Services: Corporate India, Women on Boards 2020, May 2020
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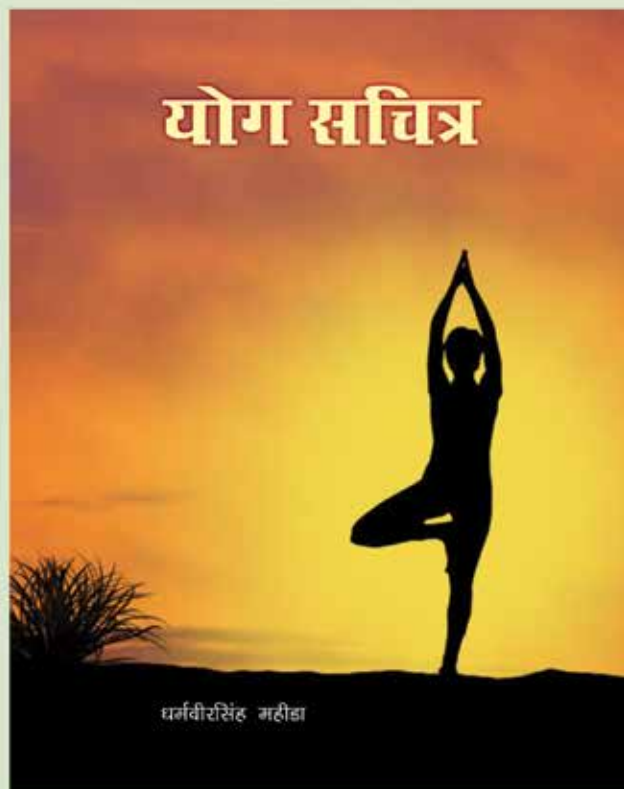
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...Continued from Cover II



of linking your savings accounts with the loan account has also been done away with.

The Prime Minister said there are endless possibilities for women self-help groups in the agriculture and agro-based industry. He said a special fund has been created so that self-help groups can also create these agro-based facilities by taking help from this fund. All the members can take advantage of these facilities, by fixing reasonable rates and can also rent out to others.

He said that now self-help groups can directly purchase from the farmers and direct home delivery of produces like pulses can also be done. Self-help groups have the option whether to sell produces directly from the farm or setting up a food processing unit and sell with great packaging. He suggested that by collaborating with online companies, self-help groups can easily ship their products to cities in

great packaging.

The Prime Minister said that the government is also encouraging toys made in India and also giving all possible help for this. He said there is a lot of potential for SHGs in tribal areas. He urged the SHGs to raise awareness about single-use plastic and work for its alternative. He also urged the self-help groups to take full advantage of the online Government e-marketplace.

The Prime Minister urged the self-help group to link their efforts of nation-building with Amrit Mahotsav also. He asked them to think about how they can cooperate with the spirit of service. He cited examples like running a campaign on nutritional awareness for women, running a campaign to administer Covid-19 vaccines, cleanliness, and water conservation in their villages, etc. □

Source: Press Information Bureau

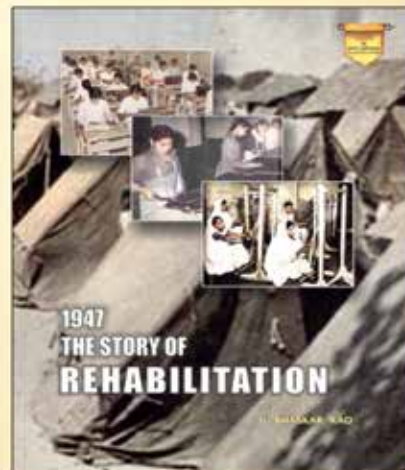
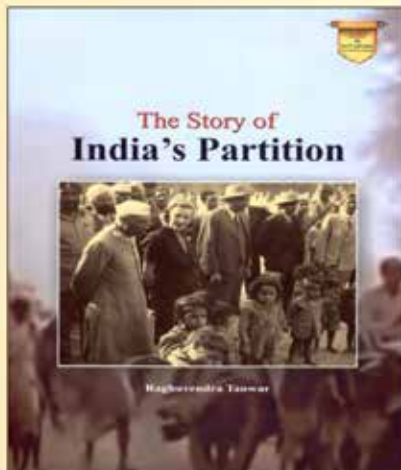




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