Role of Media in Women Empowerment

Dr. Jai Kiran

Associate Professor,
Department of Sociology, Govt. P.G. College Chharra, Aligarh

ABSTRACT
This paper attempts to analyse the status of Women Empowerment in India and highlights the Issues and Challenges of Women Empowerment in using social media. Over the years, social media has proven to be a powerful vehicle in terms of raising awareness and mobilising campaigns on a variety of issues since – beyond its use as a social networking tool – it allows any individual to share content and opinions to a global audience immediately. This new type of social media use by women brings along great opportunities with regard to gender equality and women"s rights. However, it remains unclear to which extent social media can actually advance these issues in terms of influencing politics and decision-making processes. In contrast, many women, particularly in developing countries, still do not have access to these information technologies due to economic and political reasons such as infrastructure, lack of money and oppression.
KEYWORDS: *Women Empowerment, Social Media, Women's Rights, Gender Inequalities, Hashtag Activism*

I.   INTRODUCTION

Over the years, social media has proven to be a powerful vehicle in terms of raising awareness and mobilising campaigns on a variety of issues since – beyond its use as a social networking tool – it allows any individual to share content and opinions to a global audience immediately. This new type of social media used by women brings along great opportunities with regard to gender equality and women"s rights. Women Empowerment is the vital instrument to expand women"s ability to have resources and to make strategic life choices.

Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. However, it remains unclear to which extent social media can actually advance these issues in terms of influencing politics and decision-making processes. In contrast, many women, particularly in developing countries, still do not have access to these information technologies due to economic and political reasons such as infrastructure, lack of money and oppression. Women"s rights activists have been quick to acknowledge this importance, which is why in recent times social media has more specifically demonstrated its potential for drawing attention to women"s empowerment and women"s rights issues such as discrimination, gender inequalities and negative stereotypes.

One sort of social media activism that has seen a lot of attention and should be discussed in this context is hashtag activism. Interesting aspect of gender equality and social media as a tool to reach it. It is fascinating to know about how social media plays a large part in politics and decision making processes. Empowerment is exactly what today"s young women want. Revealed in the first-ever global survey on women"s empowerment, millennial women"s greatest wish and deepest desire is empowerment. They seek skills and training to become agents of change in their own lives and their society.

On the basis of the review it can be concluded that meaning, self- determination, self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-esteem are the major contributors in empowerment. "Women empowerment" is a very commonly used phrase in developing countries. Issues related to women are very emergent in India. Women empowerment has five components:

1. Women"s sense of self-worth.
2. Their right to have and determine choices.
3. Their right to have opportunities and resources.
4. Their right to have the power to control their own lives both within and outside the house.
5. Their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

Women who were the most dormant segment of India population have now become active participants in all walks of life. Till now, they were only unit of the family organization. Now, women are becoming not only a significant unit of the society but also influencing the course of social change in society.

Hindrances of Women Empowerment:
The focal Snags that were tackled by women in past days and still today up to some magnitude are:
1. Gender discrimination
2. Lack of Education
3. Female Infanticide
4. Financial Constraints
5. Family Responsibility
6. Low Mobility
7. Low ability to bear Risk
8. Low need for achievement
9. Absence of ambition for the achievement Social status Dowry Marriage in same caste and child marriage (still existing), Atrocities on Women (Raped, Kicked, Killed, Subdued, humiliated almost daily).

Why Need of Women Empowerment?
Reflecting into the " Vedas Purana" of Indian culture, women is being worshiped such as LAXMI MAA, goddess of wealth; SARSWATI MAA, for wisdom; DURGA MAA for power. The status of women in India particularly in rural areas needs to address the issue of empowering women. About 66% of the female population in rural area is unutilized. This is mainly due to existing social customs. In agriculture and Animal care the women contribute 90% of the total workforce. Women constitute almost half of the population, perform nearly 2/3 of its work hours, receive 1/10th of the world"s income
and own less than 1/ 100th the world property. Need for WomenEmpowerment is because Women need
• Decision Making Power
• Freedom of Movement
• Access to Education
• Access to Employment
• Exposure to Media
• No Domestic Violence

Ways to Empower Women
Today, technology directly impacts women"s development and has enabled their voice to reach out and be viewed globally. Self help groups providing minimum needs like Nutrition, Health, Sanitation, and Housing. Other than this society should change the mentality towards the word women. Encouraging women to develop in their fields they are good at and make a career by:
1. Changes in women"s mobility and social interaction
2. Changes in women"s labour patterns
3. Changes in women"s access to and control over resources and
4. Changes in women"s control over Decision making
5. Providing education & Self employment

Hashtag Activism Women Empowerment The modern society has started recognizing the individual identity of women. She is believed to have her aspiration, abilities and qualities as a man does have and itis also agreed that she should have the opportunities to develop her faculties and to express them according to her own choice. Women"s interest and participation in social life is increasing. This development is also the result of women"s education and secularization of social values. Women are participating in social organizations and are developing taste for leading a life of social involvement. Their interest in social and cultural activities is increasing. They have growinginterest in social media platform using Hashtag Activism.

The way to communicate women's issues has changed. Movements can spread to millions in seconds and campaigns can hit the ground running – with smart social media planning, vast email databases and viral videos all playing their part. Digital power is driving a new, stronger wave of awareness about feminism. The pound sign or hashtag is visually represented by the symbol „#‟, and by placing the symbol in front of a word (or series of words) on a social network, it will turn that word into a metadata tag. In simple English, the # symbol turns the word(s) immediately following it into a searchable term that can be used on that website or social network, which is activated by someone clicking on that hashtag.

According to a report by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co- operation and Development) Development Centre hashtag activism has helped to bring forth women"s issues to the forefront of political agendas. Through increased visibility successful has htags such as Bring Back Our Girls and He or She has brought not only large audiences online but also the attention of decision makers. Activism through Social Media helps grass-roots movements to call for gender equality through public accountability, and through using Social Media tools the possibility of tackling and raising awareness about issues such as violence and

harassment against women can help grass-roots organizations show through campaigns how big the scale of the problem is. The OECD launched its own Wikigender online platform seven years ago to encourage debate on gender equality and women"s rights. It now attracts an average of 40,000 unique monthly users. Online platforms were absent 20 years ago when leaders at the fourth world conference on women held in Beijing agreed to increase women"s representation in decision-making at all levels, and their access to the media and new technologies. The Beijing outcome document also called for steps to be taken to promote a balanced portrayal of women in the media. Hashtag activism is a term coined by media outlets which refers to the use of Twitter's hashtags for internet activism. Here are some examples of Hashtag activism:

- **Yes All Women**

YesAllWomen is a Twitter hashtag and social media campaign in which users share examples or stories of misogyny and violence against women. #Yes All Women was created in reaction to another hashtag #Not All Men, to express that all women are affected by sexism and harassment, even though not all men are sexist. The

hashtag quickly became used by women throughout social media to share their experiences of misogyny.

- **Delhi GangRape**

Following the 2012 gang rape of a young woman in Delhi, the #DelhiGangRape hashtag campaign brought the scale of gender-based violence in India into the spotlight. The hashtag campaign supported public street mobilisation which saw the government introduce specific anti-rape provisions in the Criminal code. Public accountability towards gender equality: Social media has been increasingly used by women"s grassroots organisations to call for greater public accountability towards gender equality.

- **Bring Back Our Girls**

The BringBackOurGirls campaign reached over 1 million tweets, helping to raise awareness of both national and international actors of the need to help rescue the abducted Nigerian schoolgirls (Tomchak, 2014). Before the hashtag campaign"s success, the case received little media attention (Dewey, 2014).

- **He For She**

UN Women"s successful and high-profile #HeForShe campaign further highlights the potential of social media to attract new and larger audiences: the campaign engaged with more than 1.2 billion people, putting the global spotlight on the need to engage men and boys to achieve gender equality.

- **StrengthtoSay No**

In India, women and girls continue to be sold as chattels, married off as young as 10, burnt alive as a result of dowry-related disputes, and exploited and abused as domestic slave labour. Indian protesters are taking to Twitter to share the #Strength to SayNo hashtag as part of a campaign to crack down on child marriage. It was launched by Penguin Books in association with news website Better India, the initiative seeks to bring awareness to forced underage marriage, in a country where one in five brides is under the age of 15. The hashtag was inspired by an Indian girl called Rekha Kalindi, now 18, who refused an arranged marriage at the age of just 11 and was allegedly beaten and starved by her own mother for doing so. Strength to Say No has since attracted input from Tweeters about other social issues in India; among them homophobia, mental illness stigmas, and honour killings.

- **AintNoCinderella**

According to Buzzfeed, it all started last week when 29-year-old Varnika Kundu accused two men of stalking and attempting to kidnap her in Chandigarh, India. In a viral Facebook post about the incident, Kundu said it happened shortly after midnight. One of the men Kundu accused is Vikas Barala, son of Subhash Barala, president of the Haryana BJP (an Indian political party). The already controversial case caused even more outrage on Monday, when Haryana BJP Vice President Ramveer Bhatti chastised Kurdu for her decision to stay out late. The comments angered many Indian women, who took to Twitter to declare they Aint No Cinderella, and don't have to be home by midnight. Overnight, women used the hashtag to proudly post selfies and group photos of themselves out and about late at night. Some pointed to a quote from Gandhi, who famously said, "The day a woman can walk freely on the roads at night, that day we can say that India has achieved independence."

- World's biggest democracy, second most populated and seventh largest country to be defended by a woman. #womenempowerment #NewIndia. Nirmala ji – Defence, Sushma ji - Ministry of External Affairs Smriti ji - I&B Ministry. This is called as true #WomenEmpowerment or #Womenpower. Latest hashtag hit the twitter.

II. CONCLUSION

It is not easy to be a free thinking woman in a patriarchal society. If we have to step out of the house, it means being prepared for potential molesters, stalkers, harassers and moral policing because such behaviour is constantly normalised. For example, through phrases like "boys will be boys", "you can"t beat nature", "why did you provoke him" among others. Women face such instances everywhere, from homes to public spaces.

Digital Hifazat campaign will be an eye opener for all, as women and minorities face this form of violence that is not taken as seriously on the assumption that no physical harm has been done. But that is far

from the truth. The Union Woman and Child Development (WCD) Ministry on Friday conducted a meeting with Twitter India officials in order to discuss the abuse and harassment faced by women and children online. WCD Minister Maneka Gandhi attended the meeting, as did Mahima Kaul, head of public policy at Twitter India. According to a statement released by the WCD Ministry, they decided at the meeting that any abuse faced by women and children on social media platforms should be reported to the ministry.

This, apparently, is in light of the complaints the WCD Ministry is already receiving following the introduction of the hash tag Iam Trolled Help a couple of days ago. Women and children being subjected to abuse or harassment online are now sending in these complaints ever since the ministry started this hashtag. Women and children who face such problems on social media platforms are to continue reporting them to the WCD Ministry using the hashtag, while those facing these problems on Twitter can directly address Twitter India. Incidentally, Twitter has its own mechanism to help its users report such abuse.

As Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi said, "Please use your liberty to promote ours." Yes it"s 2017, the time to use our liberty to empower our most powerful force for change - the next generation of empowered women who will transform our world.

The study concludes by an observation that access to Education, Employment and Change in Social Structure are only the enabling factors to Women Empowerment. One thing that"s for sure though when it comes to social media and women"s rights is that every single one us can get involved. But what can we really do as a means to amplify women"s voices successfully and achieve equality? We can

1. Train and inspire other women to utilise social media in order to mobilise public attention on women"s rights and enhance the visibility of issues that often get lost in the mainstream media.
2. Take part in conversations on women"s rights issues and/or raise such discussions yourself because I truly believe that the more we talk about what gender inequality means and why it is important to approach this issue, the more it gets noticed and the harder it is toignore.
3. Don"t just limit your involvement to digital activism and participatein real-life campaigns, too.

REFERENCES

[1].   https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/role-social-media-womens- empowerment-julia-tatai, Published on October 10, 2016, 09:30 PM, 03/09/2017
[2].   http://wpmu.mah.se/nmict171group7/2017/03/10/social-media-women-empowerment/ March 10, 2017, 09:45 PM, 03/09/2017
[3].   https://www.theguardian.com/global- development/2015/mar/19/womens-rights-social-media-get-their- message-out, 09:50 PM, 03/09/2017
[4].   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hashtag_activism
[5].   http://www.blackseer.com/world/213909-rekha-kalindi-inspires-   child-marriage-protest-with-strengthtosayno-twitter-hashtag.html, 10:20 PM, 03/09/2017.
[6].   http://aplus.com/a/india-women-selfies-aint-no-cinderella?no_monetization=true
[7].   http://www.ibtimes.co.in/maneka-gandhi-twitter-reveal-their-plans- empower-women-children-social-media-685970