



Empowering Women: A Keystone For India's Development

By

Dr. Divya Maheshwari

Associate Professor, Tolani Commerce College, Adipur

“A WOMAN IS THE FULL CIRCLE. WITHIN HER IS THE POWER TO CREATE, NURTURE AND TRANSFORM”.

DIANE MARIECHILD

India has a rich history of outstanding women who have made momentous contributions to numerous arenas such as family, education, sports, politics, media, military, culture, service sectors, science and technology, etc. These empowered women have contributed to India's history and continue to inspire generations. They have contributed a lot by performing their roles with dedication in various fields. From respectable mothers, wonderful wives to corporate CEOs, they are carrying out their level best duties qualitatively. However, there still is a sizable gap between the two genders and we need to bridge it through education and knowledge. The present paper emphasizes on an idea, through presenting the reality of contribution of empowered women who can create many hopes for the developed India. If majority of women become self-empowered, our nation can really become the ‘Developed One’. Therefore, the paper presenter wants to reveal that if India really needs to be transformed into ‘Developed Bharat’, it must encourage its half population, known as unaware women for the right kind of education, leading to Self-empowerment and thereby making their worth contribution for the Developed Bharat! The presenter has surveyed different fields where women have really empowered. They are specially illustrated here just to strengthen the idea that these are a very few and still the nation needs many miles to go to earn the recognition as the empowered one in a real sense.

The other objectives of the present paper are to observe and analyse the contemporary scenario of those Indian women who are well educated as well as empowered and are really making their efforts in making Bharat, the developed one and their desire to uplift the other females for the sake of strengthening the ‘Shakti’(Power) of the nation. On the other hand, the paper presenter also believes to display the suppressed potentials of such other half of the population, if utilized strategically, can really prove to be the wonderful strength as the ‘Panch Pran’ for a Developed Bharat!

“Empowerment” of women would mean encouraging the women for self-reliance, economic independence, have positive self-esteem, generating the self- confidence to face any difficult situation and enflame active participation in various social-political development endeavours. It refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of the women and ensure their equal-right. Only empowered women can play a vital role in fulfilling the ‘Panch Pran’ for a Developed Bharat. Indeed, such woman excels in every field of life but some succeed exceptionally. That is why, the paper presenter has tried to show with illustrations that India has really remained developed where women are actively participating and contributing.

Breaking the stereotypes, India's self-dependent women often remind us that any stream of study is not dependent on the gender. From building smartphones to developing software, flying in Space to challenging the depths of the ocean, Indian women in the 21st century of digital life have been successfully progressing to challenge the challenges and rise above in every walk of life.



Here, the presenter celebrates the accomplishments of some Indian women or roles of empowered women in developing Bharat, the roles which are automatically proving the 'Panch Pran' in their personalities! Even though there are numerous women deserving the honour in their field of excellence, we name a few famous Indian women here who have made a lasting impression on the world.

Let us have a glance at the Inspiring Indian women in different strata and their contribution in making India Proud.

Role of women in ancient india

Ancient Indian culture has proved its greatness. Indian ancient times, i.e., earlier yugas Kaliyuga, Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga and Dwapara Yuga, our Rishis(Scholars) and our ancestors as those emphasized on the reputation of women by reserving their rights with respectable positions in life. In Vedic literature, Lopamudra, Gargi, Maitreyi were honoured as great natural philosophers, renowned expounders of the Vedas, acquired knowledge of the Vedas and scriptures and became renowned for their proficiency in these fields of philosophy which is still at the top of study for understanding the life. They contributed to develop India in the field of Philosophy. Mathematical Legend Shakuntala Devi, popular as 'Human Computer', of recent years, who mesmerized the entire world with her numbers belongs to India.

Role of women in freedom struggle

Indian women's roles for a Developed Bharat can be justified with a sense, 'If a challenge is not faced, how can the strength be gained? If strength is gained, it can be applied for progress!'. The entire history of the freedom movement is replete with the saga of bravery, sacrifice and political sagacity of thousands of women in our country. Their participation in India's freedom struggle began as early as 1817 when Bhima Bai Holkar fought bravely against the British colonel Malcolm and defeated him in guerilla warfare. Many women including Rani Chennamma of Kittur, and Rani Begam Hazrat Mahal of Avadh fought against the British East India Company in the 19th century, 30 years before the "First War of Independence" in 1857. Some names are: Savitribai Phule, Kasturba Gandhi, Kamla Nehru, Vijay Laxmi Pandit, Aruna Asaf Ali, Madam Bhikaji Cama, Kamla Chattopadhyay, Sucheta Kriplani, Annie Besant, Usha Mehta, Lakshmi Sahgal etc., Rani Lakshmi Bai, Maharani Tarabai, Rani Kittur Chennamma and Captain Lakshmi Sehgal are the famous female freedom fighters of India.

Of course, the most influential factor in development is education and empowerment. One can perform their roles only with right kind of education and empowerment. So, the women who really play the role in educating and empowering the self and the others are equally important contributors in development of the nation. Few examples are below mentioned.

Famous female educators

Famous female educators in history have had a profound impact on millions of people worldwide. These Indian female educationalists, not only impacted women's education in India but also on the country as a whole. Women's education in India has been a challenge over the years. Savitribai Phule was the first female teacher in India. She dismantled all the barriers and fought for women's education in India. She did it by deed rather than speech. Begum Zafar Ali (Kashmir's first female matriculate (1930) promoted empowerment among females in her school by urging them to pursue education. Durgabai Deshmukh (1909–1981) founded schools to employ women in weaving and spinning. Mahadevi Verma was freedom warrior, and educationist. Chandraprabha Saikiani tells a remarkable story of how she overcame all obstacles to complete her education. These women educators did a lot as active motivator even in the fields of technology and science.



Indian women in technology and science

In the last decade, women are slowly but surely gaining more and more in the field of technology. Among the growing numbers of women in tech, there are many women pioneering in multiple industries and creating awesome products. Indian women have also tried to bring laurels to India in the field of science and technology through which India has earned name and fame. These space engineers, scientists and technocrats have been contributing a lot in the development of India in various ways.

Kalpna Chawla: (2003) was the first Indian-American astronaut and first Indian woman in space. She first flew on Space Shuttle Columbia in 1997 as a mission specialist and primary robotic arm operator. For two years, Minal Sampath, a systems engineer working on India's mission to Mars, worked flat out in a windowless room, often for 18 hours a day, to be ready for the country's most ambitious space project to date. Before the propulsion of India's Mangalyan in space, Mrs Sampath and all the researchers with her had abstained from taking any leaves, that too for over two years. Ritu Karidhal, the Deputy Operations Director of the Mars Orbiter Mission. Moumita Dutta, one of the top ISRO scientists, part of a team that worked on India's acclaimed Mars Orbiter Mission. Today, she is heading a team to make indigenous progress in optical sciences as a part of 'Make in India' initiative. Tessy Thomas: first woman engineers to head a missile project in India and the Project Director for Agni-IV missile is known as the 'Missile Woman' of India. She works for the DRDO and not ISRO. There are still many more!

A recent study by Open University in partnership with Indian IT trade association firm NASSCOM found that India tops the list in terms of women in IT with a higher percentage of women in tech (35%), far more than their female counterparts in the UK (17%) and the US (20%). The scorecard also states that India's IT sector is recruiting and retaining more women and assigning them more leadership roles. NASSCOM estimates that nearly 60 percent of Indian IT firms have 20 percent, women, at the C-Suite level. Companies reported a 4.5 percent higher proportion of young women aged between 30 and 35 in C-Suite roles than men in the same age group. Of course, it's fascinating to see India's progress in empowering women in IT.

The present paper names top seven famous Indian women in IT sector.

- Sandhya Devanathan, Head, Meta India.
- Reema Jain, Chief Information & Digital Officer, Hero MotoCorp.
- Irina Ghose, COO, Microsoft.
- Mira Murati, chief technology officer (CTO) at OpenAI.
- Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Chairperson of HCL Technologies.
- Debjani is a veteran of the technology industry, the first woman to lead Intel India, Manufacturers' Association for Information Technology (MAIT). Now leads NASSCOM. Such empowered women really prove to be the empowered entrepreneurs.

Women entrepreneurs

According to the research by the International Labour Organization, advancing women's equality in business would increase the global GDP by \$5.8 trillion by 2025. Few countries, because of their size and population, are poised to benefit from equality, especially India, where currently only 25 percent of the labour force is female. However, their contribution to domestic GDP is only 17 percent, less than half the global average. According to the World Bank doubling the percentage of women in the workforce would boost India's growth rate from 7.5 to 9% and raise the country's GDP to US\$700 billion by 2025.

With so much opportunity, it is clear that women business owners represent the most promising engine of the next phase of India's remarkable growth and that an investment in India's women entrepreneurs is not only an investment in the country's economic future, but also its collective betterment. At the last count,



only two percent of all Indian CEOs were women, and head hunters too glossed over women candidates when scouting for leadership roles. Recent research showed India has the third-lowest global representation of women. just 8% in management roles, 9 % in business management roles, and minuscule 2% in CEO positions. An Indian-American economist, Gita Gopinath: the Fiscal Scholar, became the First Woman Chief Economist at the IMF (International Monetary Fund). Radhika Ghai is an Internet entrepreneur and India's first woman to enter the Unicorn Club. She is the co-founder of online marketplace ShopClues, in silicon valley. Falguni Nayar, a graduate of IIM, Ahmedabad, worked almost two decades as an investment banker and broker with the Kotak Mahindra Group. Mother of Indian Venture Capitalism - Vani Kola is an entrepreneur in the start-up ecosystem, the founder and Managing Director of Kalaari Capital when the entrepreneurial landscape was still in its infancy. Some illustrations represent many empowered women's contributions in the field of Banking, Finance, Health and Medicine sectors.

Women in banking and finance

Archana Bhargava : Chairman and Managing Director, United Bank of India, Arundhati Bhattacharya, Chairperson, State Bank of India ,Bala Deshpande, MD, New Enterprise Associates India, Chanda Kochhar, ICICI Bank, Former MD and CEO, Chitra Ramkrishna, Former Managing Director and CEO, National Stock Exchange of India, Renuka Ramnath, founder of Multiples Alternate Asset Management, Snehlata Shrivastava, Executive Director, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, Usha Sangwan, Managing Director, Life Insurance Corporation of India, Dr Chandrakanta K Mature, President Woman Chamber of Commerce, Indra Nooyi Former Chairman and CEO of PepsiCo. Priya Paul chairperson of Apeejay Surendra Park Hotels.

Health and medicine sectors

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw (born 1953), Chairman and Managing Director of Biocon, Swati Piramal, Vice Chairperson, Piramal Enterprises, Preetha Reddy, Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals Group, Ameera Shah, CEO and Managing Director, Metropolis Healthcare, Namita Thapar, Executive Director, Emcure Pharmaceuticals Limited. Really these women's contributions have made India proud.

Indian women in air force and army

Stunning is the casual sensation for woman if she is given or takes a chance for it. Avani Chaturvedi, Flight Lieutenant, a young Indian Air Force officer to fly the 'MiG-21 Bison' solo. The MiG-21 Bison is known for its highest take-off and landing speed in the world at 340 kmph.

Captain Shiva Chauhan has become the first Indian Army woman officer to be posted at a frontline post on the Siachen Glacier, at Siachen's Kumar Post, located at an altitude of around 15,600 feet in Siachen, the world's highest battlefield where temperature drops to up to -50°C.

Indian women at olympics

Several Indian women have participated in the Olympics over the years. Seven women from India have won an Olympic medal so far. They are Karnam Malleswari, Mary Kom, Saina Nehwal, P. V. Sindhu (twice), Sakshi Malik, Saikhom Mirabai Chanu and Lovlina Borgohain. Dutee Chand, sprinter and national 100m champion, Manasi Joshi, para-badminton world champion, Mary Kom, Olympic boxer, Vinesh Phogat, freestyle wrestler, P T Usha has been associated with Indian athletics since 1979. She has won 4 Asian gold medals and 7 Silver medals. She is often associated as the "Queen of Indian



track and field". The Indian women's national cricket team, also known as Women in Blue represents India in women's international cricket. Apart from these fields, Indian women have shone out in the field of politics too !

Indian women in high ranked political positions

Indian women have conquered many a male bastion, but still have a long way to go when it comes to breaking the glass ceiling – across occupations and professions.

As compared to the women in the developed world, very few Indian women are in leadership positions. Female political leaders in India through history have made considerable contributions towards the development of the country including pre-independent times.

Women presidents in india

The 12th president, Pratibha Devisingh Patil, is the first woman to hold the office, elected in 2007. On 25 July 2022, Draupadi Murmu took office as the 15th president of India.

Late Smt. Indira Gandhi was an Indian politician and stateswoman who served as the first female prime minister of India from 1966 to 1977 and again from 1980 to 1984.

Indian women in cabinet

In 1947, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was the only female cabinet minister in the government headed by first Prime Minister Jawaharlal. There are eleven women ministers in Indian Cabinet at present. Nirmala Sitharaman, Smriti Irani (both Cabinet ministers), Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti and Renuka Singh Saruta are already part of the Union council of ministers.

Women governors in india

From Smt. Sarojini Naidu to Baby Rani Maurya, twenty-seven women have successfully played their roles as the state governors in India.

WOMEN CHIEF MINISTERS IN INDIA Since 1963, India has had 16 female chief ministers from Sucheta Kripalani (U.P) till Mamta Banerji (2023).

All these women, and many more, have broken stereotypes and have stood up for their rights.

The world has entered into the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to make the earth a better place to live by 2030. Gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls is one of key SDGs as well. Sustainable future has a lot to do with the involvement of women in critical areas with a special emphasis on those coming from vulnerable and marginalized sections of society. What makes them real role models for us is the fact they overcome all hurdles in their pursuits to achieve excellence, recognition and respect. Their innate leadership qualities make them an asset for any society. Let us implement the idea by Brigham Young, famous American religious leader, rightly said that “when you educate a man, you educate a man. When you educate a woman, you educate a generation.”



References :

- Google.com/inspirational quotes for women
- Floweraura.com/blog/nine-roles-woman
- globalvolunteers.org/global-role-of-woman
- netexplanations.com/role-of-woman
- How women business owners could lead India's economic growth, Elizabeth Vazquez (2021), Weconnectinternational.
- Women in leadership roles: A glimpse into the current scenario (Nov. 30 ,21) ETHERworld ,Sakshi Bhatt
- <https://hr.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/trends/leadership/women-in-leadership-roles-a-glimpse-into-the-current-scenario/87993939>