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ONE DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR ON

NURTURING NARI SHAKTI: WOMEN AS LEADERS IN VIKSIT BHARAT@2047

Editors – in – Chief

Dr N Prem Anand
Dr D Divya

Organized by

Department of MBA

Sri Ramakrishna College of Arts & Science (Autonomous),
Nava India, Coimbatore.

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EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH DIGITAL LITERACY AND TECHNOLOGY ACCESS

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Introduction

Digital literacy refers to a wide range of skills necessary for individuals to engage meaningfully and effectively in a digitally interconnected world. It goes beyond mere technical proficiency and involves the ability to access, evaluate, comprehend, and create information using digital devices and platforms. At its core, digital literacy enables individuals to navigate the vast digital landscape, discern credible information from misinformation, communicate efficiently through various digital mediums, and leverage technology to solve problems and innovate. It encompasses competencies in utilising digital tools, understanding digital citizenship, practicing online safety and privacy, critically analysing digital content, and adapting to emerging technologies. Digital literacy empowers individuals to participate fully in the digital age. ICT refers to the diverse set of technologies utilised for communication, information processing, and data management. It encompasses hardware, software, networking, and digital platforms that enable the creation, storage, retrieval, transmission, and manipulation of data. This includes devices like computers, smart phones, and tablets, along with software applications, internet services, social media platforms, cloud computing, and communication networks. ICT serves as the foundation for modern-day connectivity, facilitating the exchange of information across the globe and enabling individuals to access, share, and utilise vast amounts of data efficiently. Empowering women through digital literacy and ICT initiatives holds profound significance for fostering gender equality and socio-economic development. Access to technology equips women with the tools to overcome barriers that have historically limited their participation in various spheres. It enables them to acquire essential digital skills, access educational resources, and pursue online learning opportunities, thereby enhancing their employability and economic prospects. Digital literacy allows women to amplify their voices, advocate for their rights, and engage actively in decision-making processes. By bridging the digital divide, empowering women through technology contributes significantly to building inclusive societies and promoting sustainable development.

SIGNIFICANCE OF DIGITAL LITERACY AND ICT FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Digital literacy and ICT proficiency play an important role in the empowerment of women across Tripura, presenting transformative opportunities across various domains. These skills act as powerful tools, transcending geographical limitations and offering women unparalleled access to a vast array of educational resources, online courses, and vocational training. Through digital platforms, women can expand their knowledge, improve their skill sets, and pursue higher education, consequently enhancing their employability prospects across diverse industries. Proficiency in digital skills not only opens doors to employment but also allows women to navigate and thrive in technology-driven sectors such as information technology, digital marketing, data analytics, and remote freelance work. Digital literacy empowers women to explore entrepreneurship and economic self-reliance; access to online marketplaces, social media platforms, and e-commerce tools enables women to initiate and manage businesses from the comfort of their homes or local communities. These digital skills create opportunities for income generation, contribute to local economic growth, and foster a sense of autonomy and financial independence among women. Digital literacy ensures access to critical information and resources for women's overall well-being. Through ICT, women can access healthcare information, legal resources, financial literacy programmes, and government schemes, enabling informed decision-making and improving their quality of life. Additionally, digital platforms serve as spaces for women's voices to be heard, allowing them to engage in online advocacy, raise awareness about social issues, advocate for gender equality, and demand their rights. This inclusion in societal dialogues and online advocacy helps in challenging societal norms and advocating for more equitable conditions for women. Equipping women with digital literacy and ICT skills not only enhances their individual capabilities but also contributes to the creation of more inclusive, equitable, and progressive communities in Tripura. These skills not only empower women to participate more actively in economic activities but also amplify their voices, making them more visible in societal dialogues and movements for positive receive training on using digital tools for market analysis, accessing agricultural information, telemedicine, and showcasing craft products online, thereby enhancing productivity and market reach. Women in remote areas with limited access to physical training centres, mobile apps, and online platforms offering digital skill development have gained prominence. These platforms provide interactive courses, tutorials, and resources covering various aspects of digital literacy and ICT. Some initiatives focus on specific skills like coding, digital marketing, or entrepreneurship, enabling women to learn at their own pace and convenience. These initiatives,

specifically designed to foster women-centric entrepreneurship, leverage digital platforms to train, mentor, and support aspiring female entrepreneurs. These programmes offer guidance in business planning, financial management, and digital marketing strategies. By encouraging women to utilise digital platforms for business growth, they foster economic independence and self-sufficiency.

INITIATIVES TO EMPOWER WOMEN THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions:

1. Community-Based Digital Literacy Programs

Organizations and governments can establish local centres where women can learn digital skills in a safe and supportive environment. Programs tailored to specific needs, such as financial literacy or online safety, can encourage participation.

2. Affordable Access to Devices and Internet

Subsidizing smart phones, tablets, and data plans for women can reduce economic barriers. Public-private partnerships can play a significant role in making technology affordable and accessible.

3. Promoting Online Safety

Teaching women how to protect their privacy online and addressing issues of cyber bullying and harassment are crucial. Platforms can also implement stricter measures to ensure safety.

4. Role Models and Mentorship

Highlighting successful women in technology can inspire others. Mentorship programs can provide guidance and support for women starting their journey in the digital space.

5. Inclusion in Policymaking

Governments and tech companies should involve women in the design and implementation of digital policies to ensure their needs are addressed.

CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING DIGITAL INCLUSION

Despite its potential, digital inclusion remains a challenge. The gender digital divide is stark: according to global statistics, women are 18% less likely than men to own a smart phone and 25% less likely to know how to use the internet effectively. This gap is even wider in rural and low-income areas.

Key barriers include:

1. **Affordability**: Many women cannot afford devices or data plans.
2. **Infrastructure**: Lack of reliable internet connectivity, especially in rural areas.
3. **Cultural Norms**: Societal attitudes often discourage women from engaging with technology.
4. **Safety Concerns**: Online harassment and cyber threats disproportionately affect women.

IMPACT OF EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH DIGITAL LITERACY AND ICT

Empowering women through digital literacy and ICT has had significant positive impacts on their lives and society. Tripura, a north eastern state in India, has witnessed positive impacts from initiatives aimed at empowering women through digital literacy and ICT. The Tripura State Rural Livelihood Mission (TSRLM) has facilitated digital literacy programmes for women in rural areas. Through various training sessions and workshops, women have gained skills in using computers, accessing the internet, leveraging digital tools for entrepreneurship, and accessing government schemes. TSRLM aims to reduce poverty by empowering rural communities, especially women, through various interventions and programs. TSRLM is about the empowerment of women in rural areas and the mission to recognise the pivotal role women play in rural economies and society. It seeks to enhance livelihood opportunities by providing training, resources, and support for sustainable income-generating activities. TSRLM conducts digital literacy programmes targeted at women in rural areas. These programmes equip women with basic computer skills, internet usage, and knowledge of digital tools. It offers training and support for women entrepreneurs. This includes mentoring, access to resources, and guidance on leveraging digital platforms for business growth. Women are educated and guided on accessing various government schemes related to financial inclusion, healthcare, education, and other social welfare programs through digital platforms. TSRLM focuses on building the capacity and skills of women to enhance their participation in the economy, including sectors such as

agriculture, handicrafts, and small-scale industries. Women participating in TSRLM's initiatives have reported increased confidence, improved access to information, better economic opportunities, and a more active role in decision making processes within their families and communities. Through digital literacy and ICT training, women have been able to access online resources for education, healthcare information, financial transactions, and market linkages, thereby enhancing their overall quality of life. The Tripura State Rural Livelihood Mission, through its emphasis on women's empowerment and digital literacy, has been instrumental in uplifting rural women in Tripura, fostering their economic practices that confine them to traditional roles within families and communities. Gender-based discrimination and stereotypes continue to impede women's access to opportunities and decision-making roles. The efforts taken by the government and NGOs have led to improvements in the educational landscape, significantly increasing female literacy rates and facilitating access to schooling. However, high dropout rates, particularly at secondary and higher education levels, and limited access to quality education in rural areas persist as obstacles to sustained educational progress for girls. While women's participation in the workforce has increased, underrepresentation in leadership roles and certain industries remains due to societal and cultural barriers, unequal pay, limited access to resources, and expectations concerning familial responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

Empowering women through digital literacy and technology access is a transformative step towards achieving gender equality and driving inclusive socioeconomic development. By equipping women with the skills and tools needed to navigate the digital world, we enable them to unlock opportunities in education, employment, healthcare, and entrepreneurship. Beyond individual benefits, this empowerment fosters stronger, more equitable communities and contributes to broader societal progress. To fully realize this vision, a collaborative effort involving governments, communities, and private sectors is essential. Investment in accessible digital infrastructure, targeted training programs, and community engagement can bridge the digital divide and overcome cultural barriers. As women become active participants in the digital economy and empowered agents of change, their contributions will ripple across generations, shaping a future marked by equality, innovation, and resilience.

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