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Role of information technology in the development of social consciousness in rural women (A sociological study)

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Abstract: *The advent and expansion of information technology has revolutionised the life of mankind. Internet proves to be a boon for mankind. It gives people access to information at their finger tips. But this boon has not completely reached in the life of women especially the women of rural areas. As seen in rural areas the access of education is not that well developed. It is generally found that if family can afford education of a child they usually prefer to educate their male child in comparison to female one. This thing creates a gap in their overall growth which make their life limited to the household duties and rearing their children. In all these they become unaware to their rights. Access of information technology in their life develop social consciousness in them. Social consciousness in women comprises of economic opportunity, educational equality, social equality and personal rights. Social consciousness enhances their ability to make right decision so that women can easily take decision confidently without any hesitation about their life in any field due to prior knowledge and awareness in their life. The data used in this study is based on secondary data sources which includes books, journals and online sources.*

Key Words: : Information technology, rural women, social consciousness, economic opportunity, educational equality,

Information technology (IT) is a generic term that covers the acquisition, storage, processing and dissemination of information. The two main component of information technology (IT) revolution are the evolution of the computer and the internet. These two evolution brought the evolution in the modern society. After the invention of computer and later internet the world has changed a lot.

The twenty-first century is known as the age of information technology. It has evolved tremendously in the recent decades and had revolutionary effect all over the world. Everything from computer and the internet to e-commerce and cell phones are the result of information technology. In past people used and trained pigeons to deliver their letter from one place to another, later on postman started to deliver the letter to people but as the time passed decades by decades things got changed a lot. Now days people can communicate and talk to their dear ones in any part of the world in a second and not only talk they can also see them through the video conferencing by pressing a single button on a computer or cell phone. Earlier information technology was only limited to the banking sector, engineering occupation, computer society but today it has taken place in all the field of human life, whether it is the fields of education, health, industries, defence, governance, commerce etc.

Social consciousness- "Social consciousness of women" is a new phrase in the vocabulary of gender literature. Social consciousness refers to increasing and improving the social, economic, political and legal strength of women, to ensure equal rights for them and to make them confident enough to claim their rights, such as the right to freely live their lives with a sense of self worth, respect and dignity.

Naila Kabir's (1989) interpretation - Kabir interprets it as redistribution of power relations between women and men " so that women have greater social consciousness in their own lives and men have less power over women's lives". According to Awasthi and Srivastava, "Social consciousness of the women" means empowering women socially, economically and politically so that they can break away from male domination and claim equality with them.

Women constitute half of the population of the country, so in order to make this country a fully powerful country, social consciousness among them is very necessary. It is empowering women to understand their rights to be independent in every area for their proper growth and development. Women give birth to the baby which is the future of the nation, so only they can better involve themselves in making the bright future of the nation through the proper growth and development of the children.

Need of social consciousness of women of rural women- The most famous saying by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is "to awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened." "Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves." So to empower the women it is very important to develop their social consciousness. The social consciousness of women involves many parameters like Economic opportunity, social equality and personal rights. When we look at the Indian scenario, women are deprived of these human rights, often as a matter of tradition. This situation is more critical in rural areas where women are generally not perceived to have any meaningful source of income generation. They are



relegated mainly to household duties and cheap labour. Without the power to work and earn a good income, their voices are silenced.

India is a country where men control the destiny of women, how it is possible to raise the social consciousness of women? Only encouraging women to resist the wishes of men would not only fail but also create mistrust of any goodwill attempts from "the outside" to help rural communities. Women will gain power only when both men and women begin to respect and accept the contribution of the women. Developing women's capacity for the income generation without threatening men is the key. A large group of working women in India are in the rural and unorganised sector. Socially, the majority of Indian women are still tradition-bound and in a disadvantageous position. It is a common belief that women are less engaged with information technology than men, but information technology needs not to be restricted to one segment society but has to freely flow to all segments of the female population of the country.

Impact of Information Technology- The percentage of illiterate population in India is mostly covered by women. The real meaning of social consciousness is to make people well educated and knowledgeable so that they can become capable of taking their own decision in any field. Here information technology is proven boon to the development of social consciousness in rural women. Information technology has left tremendous impact on their lives. Women get connected to the main stream of the society.

Information technology (IT) comprises electronic items such as computer, internet, cell phone, television and radio etc. By access of all these gadgets to the rural areas women get aware day by day of their rights. IT also plays an important role to enhance their skills. Women are learning a lot through information technology. There are many programmes run by government and private agencies on radio and television through different channels such as health, agriculture, education, commerce, dance, art, music etc. Learning, listening and watching these programmes increases the social consciousness in rural women, whether they are literate, illiterate or highly literate. IT also helps to generate self-employment in them like they can sell online handmade items for earning. The demand of handmade items is high and costly which help them to earn enough by selling their items. Besides art and craft they can sell eatable items like pickles, papad, cookies etc. and woven items which also have high value in market. The educated women get double benefit if they are not interested in selling handmade items, they can do jobs in IT sector as per their qualification and skill. All these things boost social consciousness in them and make them empowered. Not only they learn from social media but also teach others and give tough competition to urban people. Many of rural women started their own YouTube channels in which they teach about cooking dishes, stitching, crafting and so on. Also many of them started their own daily vlogging channels and showed about their daily lifestyles in villages and household chores and are earning well. All these are result of information technology. These earnings and knowledge help to make them mentally and economically strong, bring confidence in them and provide so much knowledge and awareness to the various aspects of their life.

Conclusion- Today is the era of information technology. World's each and every country uses IT tools for the development of their human resources and economic growth. IT tools are used to educate and inform rural people. Women in rural areas are suffering from various types of problems like illiteracy, health problem and agriculture related problems. IT tools provide an opportunity to overcome some of these key barriers. Rural women face more problems in comparison to urban women because of the presence of illiteracy, superstitions and conservative mind of village people. All these factors and male domination in society bring inequality between men and women in every field of life. Social consciousness in rural women through access to information is a critical requirement. IT is used in empowering rural women, it offers the opportunities for direct, interactive communication even to those who lack skills, who are illiterate, lack mobility and have little self-confidence.

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