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Changing Equations: Empowerment, Entrepreneurship and the Welfare of Women

By Varsha Raghunandan¹

Abstract

The world is a melange of varied cultures and norms. Some are similar, while others are strikingly different from the rest. However, every society has something in common: suppression of their women although the degree and extent may vary. It is not that women are incapable of playing those roles in society which have been dominated by men, but consistent and strategic oppression of the female sex has led many women to consider themselves as weak, powerless and a step below their male counterparts. The waves of feminism and movements to emancipate women have, to a notable extent, changed this perception. However, the world still associates women with the domestic sphere which includes rearing, nurturing and caring for children. While, this is important, this must seldom be the only role played by women. This paper while highlighting the importance of the role of women in the economic and public sphere, shall also explore the various means and steps that have been taken and further measures that can be taken to empower women and encourage entrepreneurship in developing economies such as India. The capability approach and welfare economics by Amartya Sen shall also be explored to understand how best such approaches could benefit the rural women and their empowerment. Developing economies simply cannot ignore even a fraction of their demography. This paper would thus like to bring to the fore that empowerment of women is as important to an economy as it is for their individual well-being, and ultimately their liberation.

Keywords: Suppression, domestic sphere, empower, entrepreneurship, capability approach, liberation

Introduction

The world has been an unfair place for the so-called “fairer sex” or as Simone de Beauvoir described it, the “second sex”. While battles were fought over differences, there was one thing common to most societies and that was the subordination of women. Sexism is that tool which has enabled subordination. Each society has used this tool in various ways. Some societies have adopted ‘benevolent sexism’ which ‘seems’ to be a gentle means of sexism wherein women are considered as ‘pure creatures that ought to be protected’ (Glick & Fiske, 2001). While others have adopted ‘hostile sexism’, a harsher approach where the society is antagonistic towards women (Glick & Fiske, 2001). However in reality, sexism of either kind (benevolent or hostile) assumes

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inferiority of women (Glick & Fiske, 2001). The difference lies in the fact that the former subtly justifies subordination but the latter does so explicitly (Glick & Fiske, 2001).

Caring, nurturing and balancing practices (often referred to as “multi-tasking”) should not be exclusively confined to women. Women have always contributed to the economy despite being confined to the domestic sphere; without the domestic sphere being smoothly operational, efficient developments in other spheres would have been impossible. This essentially means that “...for the butcher, the baker and the brewer to be able to go to work... their wives, mothers, or sisters had to spend hour after hour, day after day minding the children, cleaning the house, cooking the food, washing the clothes...” (Marcal, 2015). However, whether it has been economics or the society, there has been hardly any recognition for this “behind the scenes economy” or “second economy”; an economy run by the “invisible sex” or the “second sex” (Marcal, 2015). Over time, with growing awareness, women were “allowed” to venture out into the public sphere. But, they are under incentivised and own very few assets in comparison to their male counterparts. The Global Wage Report 2016-2017 published by the International Labour Organization points out the parity in wages between men and women. According to this report, the Gender Pay Gap in India is 30 percent which is higher than that of most other countries (International Labour Organization, 2016). Further, a world-wide survey conducted by the Accenture group recently reported that women in India earn 67 percent lesser than their male counterparts (Accenture, 2017).

Deep rooted sexism negatively influences the socio-economic, political and individual progression of women. It also ensures that women remain the “second sex” and though the means and times may have changed, “strategic oppression” still continues. This must change. We must empower women and as Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations says, “There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women”. In this paper, the author shall explore various factors which still hinder the growth and individual development of thousands of women across developing countries, specifically in India. Further, an attempt will be made to give solutions or approaches to tackle the factors that hamper empowerment of women. This is a secondary research and the author has relied on existing data for the same.

Factors Hindering Growth

Strategic Oppression

The social construction of gender specific roles and behavioural attributes is and has been a weapon through which women have been strategically oppressed. Across geographical boundaries, women and men have been subjected to various standards of expectations with regard to their behaviours and attributes. These are shaped by culture, tradition and history which can be collectively termed as ‘socio-environmental forces’ (Powell, 2011). These socio-environmental forces reward boys and girls when they engage in “right behaviours” and punish them when they engage in “wrong behaviours” (Powell, 2011). Women, being subordinate to men, have faced the brunt of such a social construction and suffer from the negatives of it in their everyday lives. Let us examine this from the Indian perspective.

The modern Indian man has very contradicting views with regard to the role and behaviour of their women. *The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES)* conducted by the International Center for Research on Women confirms this. They found that the Indian man’s view on gender equality was complex and at times contradictory. While Indian men support policies that promote equal opportunities for women, they also feel that they “lose out” if women are afforded more rights (Gaynair, 2011). The study also found that Indian men were least supportive

of equitable relationships and roles between men and women. This is primarily because of the patriarchal structure that is inherent in the Indian society (Gaynair, 2011). The same survey found that more than 80 % of Indian men felt that changing diapers and feeding children were the mother's responsibility (Gaynair, 2011). Women are also viewed as subservient to men (Gaynair, 2011).

It is not just the existence of patriarchy that leads to a social construction that is detrimental to women and their liberties, but it is also the internalisation of such practices and roles by women themselves. This is more harmful than the mere existence of patriarchy. Mothers to daughters, friends to fellow female friends and a colleague to her fellow colleague often without realising preach certain values or behavioural attributes which they feel are appropriate to women. For instance, a woman who is strongly opinionated, confident and not domesticated is often considered as a woman who has strayed away. Even the media has caught on to this internalised misogyny and often portrays the career woman with a screaming baby in her briefcase to be selfish, irresponsible and a bad woman (Marcal, 2015). Thus, there is an underlying assumption regarding the qualities a woman must have. These are the very qualities which are gender specific and those that conform to the social construction based on and beneficial for patriarchy to survive.

The result of this strategically oppressive social construction of gender specific behaviour and internalised misogyny by women themselves leads to a few fundamental problems that hinder development of women. She has no say in the decision making process whether it is a decision which concerns her or any other major decision. She becomes dependent on the male members of her family to make those decisions. This is partially because she is expected to listen to them and partially because she lacks confidence in her own decision-making abilities.

Lack of Education

We have always looked at lack of education as the major factor which leads to the underdevelopment of women (OECD, 2017). There are three aspects I would like to highlight: first, there exists a disparity between literacy and employability. Many policies and programmes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan, National Scheme of Incentives to girls for Secondary Education, Udaan and Mahila Samakhya programme have been formulated to educate the girl child. However, when looked into deeply, we find that though these policies are doing their bit by educating as many girls and women as possible, they hardly live up to expected quality standards. A study conducted by Yes Bank with the National Skill Development Corporation shows that the policies and programmes have most definitely increased the number of educational institutions and enrolment rates but owing to the quality of education, a large percentage of people are non-employable (Yes Bank, 2014). This was not a gender specific study, but when educational policies are more quantitative than qualitative in addition to the various factors which keep women away from receiving education, the effect is counterproductive. The more women see their fellow literate women unemployed, the more they are discouraged to spend their time or limited resources on getting an education.

Secondly, studies have shown that there is a U-shaped relationship that exists between education and labour force participation. With increasing education, labour force participation rates for women first start to decline and then pick up among highly-educated women who experience a pull factor of higher paying white collar jobs. This U-shaped relationship explored earlier by Goldin in 1995 suggests that rising household incomes decrease the female labour force participation (Das, Jain-Chandra, Kochhar & Kumar, 2015). This means that even if women are educated, they withdraw from participation in the labour force if the total income of the family

increases. Another study by Bhalla and Kaur, suggests that a higher education of the male spouse has a negative impact on the female labour force participation (Bhalla & Kaur, 2011). So, an additional year of education by the male means a decrease in the female labour force participation by one percentage point (Das, Jain-Chandra, Kochhar & Kumar, 2015).

Political Leadership: Real or Merely Representative?

Leadership and participation of women in the politics of a country is a sign of a progressive democracy (Nelson & Chowdhury, 1994). In today's world, where most States are moving towards democratic principles that promise equality to all their citizens, proportional electoral representation and participation of women is essential to achieve equality and to uphold the fundamental tenets of democracy. However, political representation has a larger role to play than just achievement of democratic goals. Women were not allowed to venture out into the public sphere at all but even if they did politics was hardly the domain they would or were allowed to enter. Let alone electoral participation, women weren't even given the right to vote until the early 1900's. This is most detrimental to women's cries for liberty, equality and autonomy.

In the Indian scenario, the 73rd and the 74th Constitutional amendment was a major change with respect to the political representation of women at grassroots levels. These amendments allowed for 33 percent reservation of women in rural and urban local self-governing bodies. They have managed to ensure non exclusion of women and fight gender disparities in public offices at grass root levels. However, when we look at the bigger picture, there is seldom any such reservation for women at the state and national levels. The bill demanding reservation for women has been pending for ever so long. The lack of critical and quality representation of women in key decision-making positions results in women's agenda not getting reflected and addressed in public policies (as cited in Rai, 2017). The lack of adequate female representation also results in reduced negotiating and bargaining powers when key cabinet positions are being allotted and ministries like finance, defence and health are usually given to men as they are considered heavyweight ministries (Rai, 2017). Women as a result are given mainly 'feminine' portfolios such as childcare, social welfare, information and culture which are considered to have lesser importance, fewer resources and outreach among citizens (Rai, 2017).

What we come to understand from this is that there is a clear lack of representation of women and even with the minimal representation at the state and national levels, they are seldom given any real power which defeats the purpose of their representation at these bodies.

Solutions

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is one of the key solutions to empower women and to give them a sense of independence. It is also a means to drive more women into the labour force. However, statistics reveal that India lags far behind in women entrepreneurial activities. The Female Entrepreneurship Index by the Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute has ranked India as low as 70 among 77 countries (Female Entrepreneurship Index 2015, 2015) and according to a recent study by Mastercard, India ranks 49 among 54 economies in the Women Business Ownership Index (Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs, 2017). This is actually very disheartening considering the fact that India had powerful women entrepreneurs as early as the 1950's.

Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad is one of earliest examples of a successful entrepreneurship venture by Women. It was a simple business which started out 1959. Their

product was “papads” which are lentil or rice crisps. 7 women, started this business of rolling out papad and drying them on the terrace of their old South Mumbai residential building. Lakshmidasbhai started a business of selling papads but he was running at a loss of Rs. 80. These 7 women took over the business of Lakshmidasbhai. They hadn’t invested any money because all the raw materials required are usually found in most household kitchens. They were soon able to make up for the losses incurred by Lakshmidasbhai. Sales increased and so did their production. Three months later, there were 25 women who were working together to make this work. Two years later there were 150 women. As the number of women increased the terrace was insufficient to roll out papads and so every morning the kneaded dough would be distributed to these women who would take it back to their houses, roll them out, dry them and bring the dried papads at the end of the day. This is a body registered under the Society’s Registration Act as well as the Mumbai Public Trusts Act. There are only women who work as ‘member sisters’. Member sisters are not employees. Profits are shared equally among them. This venture promotes self-working from home and is an organisation that has survived even till date with approximately 43000 member sisters across India. Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad is not merely an entrepreneurial venture but is a ‘symbol of women’s strength’.

Having looked at successful ventures such as this, it is pertinent to ask ourselves two fundamental questions. Firstly, why are there so few women entrepreneurs in India and secondly, why do we need entrepreneurship to empower women.

The MasterCard Index of Women Entrepreneurs has come out with extensive statistics and as stated above has ranked India as low as 49 among 54 economies (Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs, 2017). The same study has highlighted six barriers to women business owners’ progress. They include: Lack of financial funding or venture capital, regulatory restrictions and institutional inefficiencies, lack of belief in self and entrepreneurial drive, fear of failure, socio-cultural restrictions and lack of training and education (Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs, 2017).

Entrepreneurship is a powerful tool to empower women because it gives them a sense of independence. An article in the Harvard Business Review addressed the issue of “Off ramps and On ramps” of women conducted a study in which nearly half (46%) of the women cite “having their own independent source of income” as an important propelling factor that drive them back to their careers (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). These women spoke about their discomfort with “dependence” (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). It was further found that, “however good their marriages were, many disliked needing to ask for money” (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). Thus, we come to realise that this sense of independence is very important for women and their overall development. Economic freedom aids in boosting the self-esteem of women. A happier and independent woman will have a greater positive impact on her family and surrounding society (Sen, 2000). Entrepreneurship is also a journey which will probably help women discover their self-worth and potential. This in turn drives more women to participate the labour force. A higher level of female entrepreneurial activity has been associated with stronger economic growth. A study by Esteve-Volart, (as cited in Das, Jain-Chandra, Kochhar & Kumar, 2015) uses panel data on Indian States to show that the ratio of female is to male workers (and managers) is positively correlated with both growth and living standards (Das, Jain-Chandra, Kochhar & Kumar, 2015). Thus entrepreneurial activity not only benefits women but also the economy on the whole.

While lack of education and aspects related to the care economy can encourage entrepreneurial activity, they shall be addressed separately. The author in this segment would like to concentrate on one of the major reasons which keep women away from entrepreneurial activity:

inaccessibility to adequate resources. Women have been the disadvantaged lot with regard to financial and other assets such as property. How then are we going to tackle the problem of inadequate resources to back entrepreneurial activity?

One of the basic requirements for entrepreneurial activity is finance and one of the better solutions to financing small business ventures by women especially from an impoverished background is microfinance. Microfinance is often considered as an instrument for empowerment (OECD, 2017). While there are many positives to microfinance, there are a lot of criticisms to this approach as well. Often, when these ventures fail, they lead to reinforcement of debt and further exclusion if such ventures are not well structured (OECD, 2017). However, as in every business venture, there is a risk factor that goes hand in hand even with entrepreneurial activities by women. This does not mean we discourage entrepreneurial activity altogether nor can we disregard the huge relief microfinance can provide to women seeking aid. The trick to tackling this risk factor is to try and mitigate it to the best possible extent. When microfinance organisations lend money they must also look into what venture this will be financing. A very relevant step before borrowing any credit is to do adequate research and understand the environment in which the business will operate (Kumar, 2015). This is tedious and not cost effective for women from impoverished backgrounds. The author suggests that, women are to be made aware of the market and related risks so as to ensure that the plausible risks are evaluated before investing in the ventures. Microfinance Institutions must also ensure they educate their borrowers about the concept of microfinance, importance of repayment and using the finance towards productive ends (Kumar, 2015). It is impossible to completely determine and evaluate every risk, but those risks that are foreseeable with access to certain market information and awareness which impoverished women may seldom have access to can be mitigated to a certain extent.

Capital Sisters International is an organisation that helps impoverished women by providing them with microfinance to support entrepreneurial activity. They have been recognised for their unique strategy and vision of “financial inclusion for marginalised women entrepreneurs in the informal sector” (Capital Sisters, 2017). This organisation facilitates interested individuals to provide “loans” instead of “donations” to aid entrepreneurship ventures. Investors can purchase bonds and this investment will be directed towards ten micro enterprises. The same will be returned with zero interest rate within one, two, three or five years. This can be reinvested or taken back. They also engage in creating awareness which has a wide outreach.

The story of Capital Sisters International is an example of how we could make microfinance an effective means to encourage women entrepreneurial ventures. The author does not suggest that this is the only model that should be adopted, but merely implying that there are means to make microfinance an effective tool to encourage women enterprises.

Women work better in environments where there are other fellow women. This is mainly because they believe that it is their fellow women who will understand their needs and problems more effectively. Hence employing more women in microfinance bodies who will deal with transactions providing micro loans to women may also positively impact microfinance.

The final aspect under this segment is encouraging financial services which are based on values that women can relate to. Audur Capital, an Icelandic financial services organisation based on “feminine” values has changed the traditional patterns of investments. It was founded by two Icelandic women in the year 2007, a year before the big financial meltdown. While Iceland was severely hit, they got through the meltdown without any direct losses to their equity or the funds of their clients. The Feminine Values they have adopted include: Risk awareness, straight talking, emotional capital (they believe that emotional due diligence is as important as financial due

diligence), profit with principles (they care as to how they make profits by looking into the social and environmental benefits when they invest). Halla Tomasdottir, co-founder says that the female trend is the “sustainable trend”. She says, “...the idea is not that women are better than men but that they are different from men”. Further, “Bringing different values to the table means you get better decision making and less herd behaviour and both of those hit your bottom line with positive results”.

Thus financial organisations with a different set of values that women can relate to could drive more women towards entrepreneurial activity.

The Care Economy

Women have been socialized to be caring and nurturing, and because of this they have been associated with responsibilities such as running the household, nurturing children, caring for the elderly and just about anything that keeps the domestic sphere on its wheels. Although this contributes to the smooth functioning of the economy, it is not valued monetarily. It continues to exist as a “behind the scenes economy”. The first problem with this is that it takes up a lot of resources and time but is not viewed as “real” work. On the contrary studies have shown that if care work was assigned monetary value, it would constitute 10% to 39% of the GDP (OECD, 2017). The second problem with regard to the care economy arises when this is entirely left to women and considered as their responsibility alone. Most women let go of their careers and economic goals in order to fulfil these responsibilities. Female labour supply then reduces which is detrimental to the individual woman’s economic freedom which in turn reinforces her dependency and reduces the human capital stock of the economy.

A study by Becker says that female labour supply which is often modelled using the framework of the time allocation model (as cited in Das, Jain-Chandra, Kochhar & Kumar, 2015) which states that women make labour supply decisions not only considering leisure and labour tradeoffs, but also home- based production of goods and services (including caring for children) (Das, Jain-Chandra, Kochhar & Kumar, 2015). Further, another study by Jaumotte (as cited in Das, Jain-Chandra, Kochhar & Kumar, 2015) shows that working for a wage is chosen by women only if earnings make up for the lost home production (and associated costs) (Das, Jain-Chandra, Kochhar & Kumar, 2015).

Women do care about the care economy but not at the cost of their own development and the overall economy. So what can we do to make this easier for her? Reducing and redistributing women’s unpaid work by improving access to infrastructure and technology is only one aspect of the solution (OECD, 2017). Sensitization of the society to understand that caring and nurturing is not necessarily the responsibility of women is very important. Accepting that the care economy is a joint responsibility of men as much as it is of women is critical to resolving the disproportionate burden of responsibilities which are automatically vested upon women. Awareness drives and the role of the media play a key role in the process of sensitization.

Organisational policies that provide for flexibility during the day or those that provide for reduced work hours will definitely help women balance work and home. It is not only for women but such policies also allow men to share responsibilities equally.

Corporate companies in some parts of the world have adopted such organisational policies. The Johnson and Johnson family of companies has seen increased loyalty and productivity because of flexible work hour policies (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). Ernst and Young in the mid 1990’s noticed that although the turnover of women entrepreneurs were high only a small percentage of women

became partners and so they adopted a policy of flexibility to ensure that more women made it to partnership (Hewlett & Luce, 2005).

This however, is not very popular among corporate organisations in India. A cross industry study of the barriers to flexible working for Indian women, has found three main barriers that hinder effective adoption of “Flexible Working Arrangements” (FWA). Firstly, there are cultural barriers to flexible working and those surveyed stated that “it was the lack of successful women role models who worked their way up flexibly that stopped them from embracing this culture of work”(Rajesh & Rakesh, 2014). Secondly, there is a lack of infrastructural support which is essential to back flexible working. Thirdly, attitudinal barriers are discussed as a constraint. Employees who prefer conventional work (full time work) view part time or flexible work as underperformance. While FWA has proven to be an effective solution to help women balance work and home, India still needs to tackle these barriers.

Quality Education

Effectively channelizing policy funds towards bettering education is the need of the hour. The National Policy on Education, 1986 was successful in addressing the issue of women empowerment through education. It stated that: “*Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of woman. In order to neutralise the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The National Education System will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, the training and orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators, and the active involvement of educational institutions. This will be an act of faith and social engineering*” (Department of School Education and Literacy).

A number of Government programmes have been adopted in pursuance of the above objective. Let us take a brief look at a few of these programmes/schemes:

- Sarva Shisha Abhiyan: It is a programme that aims at Universalization of Elementary Education which targets the age group of 6-14 years. This is adopted in order to ensure that the Fundamental Right to Education provided for under Article 21 A of the Indian Constitution is enforced.
- National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education: The aim of this scheme is to ensure enrolment of girl child to secondary educational institutions. They target the age group of 14-18 years.
- Udaan: This is a program by the Central Board of Secondary Education which addresses the low enrolment rates of girl students to engineering colleges. They aim to do so by bridging the gap between school education and engineering entrance exams.
- MahilaSamakhya programme: In consonance to the idea of women empowerment through education laid down in the National Policy on Education, 1986/92

Although these are very effective policies quantitatively, none of them specifically concentrate on qualitative education. Thus, achieving high enrolment rates in educational institutions is no guarantee of a bright future to these young or older women. Literacy levels increase but they most definitely do not address employability.

Qualitative policies that address the “employability” factor need to be introduced at the earliest. Further, sensitization of policy makers towards gender specific needs which embrace the difference while striving to achieve equality would be beneficial in order to frame effective policies. Reducing the gap between male and female higher education would also help tackle the issue of declining labour force participation among educated women (Das, Jain-Chandra, Kochhar & Kumar, 2015). Another effective means to tackle this would be to have Non-government Organisations or Non Profit Bodies have training programmes that allow women to equip themselves with necessary skills required for the job market.

The Capability Approach and Agency

There are differences between men and women and there are differences among women coming from dissimilar socio-political and economic backgrounds. Embracing these differences while ensuring the goals of socio-economic justice are achieved forms the basis of the capability approach (Sen, 2000). This approach deals with the idea of comparative justice by essentially allowing women to achieve goals within their social, political and economic boundaries (Sen, 2000). Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad is a good example in this context as well. These women achieved their goal of economic empowerment within their social political and economic boundaries. This approach is especially an important tool to encourage women from rural, impoverished backgrounds to make the best use of their capabilities to work their way towards empowering themselves.

Many a time policies that are introduced are blanket policies that seldom embrace these differences and constraints. Thus, adopting mechanisms within policies, schemes and programmes for women which are accommodative of these differences and the socio-economic and political boundaries may be an effective solution.

The second approach that we shall deal with under this segment is the concept of “agency”. Agency, an approach suggested by Amartya Sen, the well-known Nobel Laureate in Economics, shifts the focus from merely resolving the “ill-being” of women to women becoming active agents of change (Sen, 2000). Sen states we should move away from an approach where women are “passive recipients of welfare enhancing help” towards an approach where women are “the dynamic promoters of social transformations that can alter the lives of both women and men” (Sen, 2000). He later provides reasoning as to why the agency role by women is important. In that context Sen says, “Working outside the home and earning an independent income tend to have a clear impact on enhancing the social standing of a woman in the household and the society. Her contribution to the prosperity of the family is then more visible and she also has more voice because of being less dependent on others” (Sen, 2000).

This is essentially an approach wherein women help themselves and encourage their fellow women to do the same. An interesting means to help women help themselves while contributing to social transformations is through partnerships. These partnerships can be of two kinds:

- Among women where they pool in their resources and help one another to establish enterprises which empower them
- Partnerships that seek institutional support either from the private sector or the government

The Kerala Government under the State Poverty Eradication Mission, implemented a programme called ‘Kudumbashree’ (which in Malayalam means ‘prosperity of the family’) to

eradicate poverty and empower women. This programme has a unique three tier system with Neighbourhood Groups at the lowest level followed by the Area Development Societies at the intermediate level and Community Development Societies at the local government level. This programme allows for women within their neighbourhoods and communities to support their fellow women. This programme supports micro enterprises, livestock farming, microfinance, collective farming. They also have rehabilitation programmes for destitute women. Their programmes specific to women empowerment consists of a Gender Self Learning Programme and Programmes for Elimination of Violence against Women. These women empowerment programmes aim at “transforming the community network into an agency of women for their overall empowerment and development”. It has positively impacted the lives of so many women. This is a meaningful and effective partnership where the government has provided institutional support to help women organise themselves to achieve empowerment. Encouraging more partnerships on the lines of such a programme is a means to empower many more women.

Conclusion

The story of women and their struggles have been told and re-told on various platforms. Yet, there seems to be a rift between the struggles and change. In order to evolve, we need to voice out the struggles that has suppressed women. The public sphere provides an excellent platform for women to state the struggles they face and put forth their opinions. However, this is the domain where there has been a scarcity in representation of women. Tackling this issue is vital to achieve the end goal of equality. Strategic oppression owing to unfair social constructions, deprivation of education, and lack of ‘real’ representation in the political arena are the major problems that drive women away from the public sphere. A few instances and statistical data have been provided throughout the thesis to highlight the difference that female inclusion can make to the economy and the society as a whole. Entrepreneurship is one such tool that can empower women and allow them to venture into new domains they never imagined to play an active role in. As stated earlier, this aids in boosting the self-confidence and morale of womenfolk that has been suppressed for ages. Women play an important role in running households and therefore easing the care economy creates an optimum environment for women to go beyond their domestic roles. Quality education and viewing women as active agents of change also helps bridge the gap between the subjugation and female inclusion. Facilitating and creating opportunities where women can help themselves is better than merely removing barriers and obstacles that stall her development. To achieve this, a holistic approach to equip women with skills, resources and confidence must be adopted. Further, we must embrace the differences and strive towards meaningful partnerships to build social and economic resilience. This is the only way we can change equations for all women.

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