

Role of Jharcraft' in Transforming The Rural women Talent and Women Empowerment

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Abstract - Empowerment of women is a major social phenomenon which requires an understanding of its multi-dimensional influence, including our family structures. Women must be economically and socially empowered through focused efforts. Women's concerns have to be kept at the center of public policy, developmental planning and governance, with recognition of their role as critical growth agents and as ambassadors of social change. Major attributes that contribute to women empowerment are education, social equity and status, improved health, economic or financial stability and political participation. It is important to realize that there is significant variation in the degree of socio-economic development among Indian states. Hence it is not feasible to develop a single model for empowering Indian women as a single blueprint of state policies. Women have the power to give a life and 'Jharcraft' a strong backbone of the Jharkhand state, believes that she is naturally empowered to change lives as well as play important roles in family. She forms a better half of the society. The golden history of the nation points to the fact that the future of the nation can't be directed towards glory without women participation. Women employment is a matter of major concern of the organization so as to make them self-dependent. Jharcraft enables women to look after their family well, educates their family and society. This paper explores the avenues available for the rural women talent in Jharkhand through Jharcraft for promoting women empowerment. Jharcraft was established in 2006 to develop, support and manage rural talent, sericulture farmers, weavers and artisans. With the mission of creating opportunities and changing lives, Jharcraft aims to strengthen the rural cottage industry and providing market access to the artisans and weavers in the rural areas. It aims also to support nature by preserving the natural wealth. Jharcraft opens up new opportunities of employment by utilization of the available resources, The organization pays major attention that the local artisans and unprivileged section of the state get maximum benefit through Jharcraft. Through Jharcraft each woman earns around Rs. 4000/- to Rs. 5000/- per month which enables them to look well after their family, educate their children, and contribute to the betterment of the family and society. Through maximum utilization of natural resources and labour power available in the rural areas of the state, Jharcraft aims to provide each hand its value and add to employment and income generation.

Key Words : Jharcraft, Women Empowerment, Self Dependence, Financial Stability, Growth Agents, Women Employment.

Introduction

"You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women"

- Jawaharlal Nehru.

Indian women have travelled with the times for centuries and have proved to the world that the hand that rocks the cradle can rule the world.

In a fast-developing country like India, the forces of commercialization, modernization and industrialization are actively operating and transforming the traditional modes of production into modern capitalistic enterprises. Women are the most preponderant segment of the society. In order to improve the status and position of women at home and in the society at large, it is necessary to achieve economic independence for women.

Ancient Indian scriptures show that women enjoyed a respectable position during that time and many ancient texts also talk about women scholars and sages. But gradually the patriarchy tightened its grip over the society and women were subjugated by men and their subjugation continues even today. It is precisely this subordinate position that necessitates women's empowerment so that a change can be brought about in their socio —economic condition. In rural India there is more need for empowerment and economic independence is a vital aspect of empowerment. For this, linking Self Help Group movement with micro-credit facility will help reduce poverty and empower them. Our policies and programs should be designed with a focus on women's needs and concerns. Women should be supported to set up their own business with support of self-help groups and the availability of credit facilities. These steps will help women achieve economic independence and contribute to their empowerment. It should be our objective to give women opportunities to work and to create a social environment in which women can live with respect and dignity and can play a role in nation building. According to the UN report women receive 25 per cent less wages than men in spite of the law of equal wages for equal work. Time has come for women to come out of the drudgery

of housework and give vent to their creativity and entrepreneurship. Political developments in India have also been responsible for determining the role of women in a changing society. It is an accepted fact that the role of women in national development is a crucial one. Women have an important role to play in synthesizing social progress with economic growth of developing countries. Non-aligned and other developing countries have attached a great importance to ensure that women play their full role in the development process. The specific role of women in the economic effort has not yet been clearly defined but the need for "integration of women into development" is being particularly felt by women themselves. With the increase in the number of women getting educated, there is considerable awareness among women to be self-employed and gradually the role of women is changing in the society. Such an effort has been made by Jharcraft in Jharkhand to transform the rural women talent so that they can be empowered and be a part of the mainstream productive resource. For a woman, an opportunity to productive work is not merely a means to higher income but it is a means to self-respect, to the development of her personality and a sense of participation in the common purpose of the society.

The low status of women in large segments of Indian Society cannot be raised without opening up of opportunities of independent employment and income generation.

Condition of the Rural Women in Jharkhand

The condition of the rural women in Jharkhand is appalling. While the sex ratio does not indicate alarming figures, yet this does not tell the entire tale of deprivation and vulnerabilities of women. Social exclusion, food scarcity, economic poverty and indebtedness affect women most severely. They are saddled with the additional burden of supplementing family incomes and looking after the household as men leave home for long periods. The women, belonging to backward communities bear the perils of marriage at childhood and early motherhood and are restricted to take part in economic activities. Domestic violence is common and occurrence of dowry deaths is not unusual. Tribal women, as a matter of course, are not restricted in social and economic domains and even remarriage is allowed (following divorce or death of husband) as per tribal customs. Yet, the woman in tribal communities is not allowed to inherit lands either from father or from husband. The diabolical practice of ostracizing (and even killing) single women / widows as "Dain" continues as part of the nexus to alienate her from land assets.

Status of Women: There are gender disparities in Jharkhand in respect of several human development indicators. As per the Gender Development Index (GDI) ranking, Jharkhand

stands 29th out of 35 states and union territories together. Jharkhand is a state where 72% women suffer from anemia and 41% suffer from malnutrition. This in itself is a testimony to the pitiable condition of the health care system in the state. Illiteracy is the greatest patron of all social evils. The abysmally low literacy level of women in the state and the resultant lack of awareness of their rights have made them all the more vulnerable to atrocities. One of the most inhuman and shameful forms of atrocity prevalent in the state, declaring a woman as a witch aid then throwing her out of the society, essentially thrives on illiteracy and ignorance. Participation of women in the formal, organized sector is extremely poor, as most of them are compelled to work in the unorganized sector where they are ruthlessly exploited. Existing laws permit female marriage at the age of 18 years, but generally in Jharkhand, it is performed at lower age. Women in Jharkhand tend to marry at an early age. Thirty-eight percent of women age 15 to 19 are already married, including 3 percent who are married but for whom gauna (leaving her parental home to stay with husband/in-laws) as per gender profile of Jharkhand. Early marriage of girls is one of the factors contributing not only to high fertility, high maternal, infant and child morbidity and mortality, pregnancy loss, still births and abortions. Further, early age at marriage associated with young age of mother increases reproductive loss. The condition of the rural women in Jharkhand needs attention.

Hence, it is very important to uplift the situation of rural women in Jharkhand, and Jharcraft is doing a wonderful job in this respect.

Mission and Vision of Jharcraft

Mission- "Creating Opportunities changing lives"

Jharcraft was established with a mission to change lives through creation of new opportunities that would effectively, efficiently, and positively affect the lives of a large number of people across the state. Majority of the population of the state lives below the poverty line. Cottage and household industries have the potential to become an important source of livelihood. In such a scenario Jharcraft provides them not only employment but also an opportunity to rise and grow. Jharcraft opens up new opportunities of employment by utilization of the available resources. The organization pays major attention that the local artisans and unprivileged section of the state get maximum benefit through Jharcraft.

Vision - "Jharcraft: a strong backbone of The Jharkhand State."

With the mission of "creating opportunities and changing lives", Jharcraft is viewed as the supporting unit to the state,

contributing maximum to its social economic and cultural upliftment, rise and growth.

Jharcraft Vision Associated with Women Empowerment

Women have the power to give life and Jharcraft believes that she is naturally empowered to change lives as well. Playing important roles in a family, she forms a better half of the society. The Golden history of the nation points to the fact that the future of the nation cannot be directed towards Glory without women participation. The women employment is a matter of major concern of the organization so as to make them self-dependent. Through Jharcraft each woman earns around Rs 4000 to Rs 5000 per month which enables them to look well after the family. Jharcraft provides support to promote handicraft, handloom and tassar silk production, woodcrafts, bamboo works, dokra art, terracotta products, lac bangles, appliqué work, and various other forms of human art have gained new horizons through Jharcraft and has played a pivotal role in promoting and transforming the rural human talent.

Role Of Jharcraft and Tribal Paintings Of Jharkhand

There are four varieties of tribal paintings in the state- Sohrai and Kohber paintings of Hazaribagh districts, Paytkar painting of East Singhbhum and Jadopatia art of Dumka district. The Jadopatia and payatker paintings were in the phase of extermination though the Sohrai and Kohber were preserved by a few artists. Jharcraft has contributed to develop the Sohrai and Kohber paintings and has revived the Jadopatia and Paytkar Paintings. Inspirations and motives from these tribal paintings are used to develop new designs for products and appeals. These paintings are generally undertaken by the women of farming communities. So by uplifting this tribal form of paintings Jharcraft has stepped ahead in the process of women empowerment.

Jharcraft Plan Skill Training for Victims of Human Trafficking

Having provided direct or indirect employment to more than three lakh people, Jharcraft is set to work towards the skill development and rehabilitation of trafficking victims. The move came after the state-run undertaking was contacted by Delhi based NGO Shakti "Vahini." Victims were provided with skill development training. These girls were trained in their areas of interest be it be bamboo art, terracotta, weaving, silk etc. Then they were linked Jharcraft production clusters which were nearest to villages, where they were trained to produce various kinds of products. In the beginning the products were bought by Jharcraft itself, irrespective of what

they made. When the girls gained expertise in one of the skills, they can become independent entrepreneurs.

This explains one of the ways of women empowerment and talent development as this paves them the way to be a part of the mainstream after their trauma. This initiative will definitely bring a change and can be an eye opener for other departments of the state government. This will also strengthen the PM's vision of skill development.

Jharkhand Silk Textile & Handicraft Development Corporation Limited

Jharkhand Silk Textile and Handicraft Development Corporation is an agency Government of Jharkhand established in 2006 with the objective to develop and support sericulture farmers, weavers and artisans of Jharkhand. It is also known as Jharcraft.

The organization implement the Government funded schemes to promote Tassar Silk, handloom and handicraft of the state. Its area of concern is Handloom, Handicraft and Sericulture sector. The activities are based in the interior areas of the state and the organization works basically on the SHG, NGO and Project modules. Work-sheds are built within the villages with all necessary facilities for the artisans and weavers to work at the nearest place from their houses. It benefits the women folk as they need not to go far from their houses and they can manage their household as well. This has increased their involvement. Other facilities including training, raw materials etc. are also provided to them in these work-sheds for uninterrupted work. These artisans are supervised by the master trainers and qualified cluster managers & project managers throughout. This is to check the quality standards of the commodities produced. This step of Jharcraft has increased the women participation and they have come out as independent entrepreneurs.

JHARCRAFT is a nodal agency for marketing products of SHGs in twenty four districts of the state and promotes self-dependence, self-development and engagement in skill upgradation of poor weavers and artisans and contribute to National Institute of Fashion, National Institute of Design, who in turn provide a strong backbone to the weavers and artisans associated with majority of entrepreneurship, women empowerment and creation of opportunity for the under privileged section of the society. Jharcraft gives training to the self-help groups of poor women in the premises with the help of funds provided by sponsor organizations, initiates the process with identification and making of SHGs from different area after conducting survey. They mainly focus the women, ST, SC, OBCs and unprivileged groups. When in

2006 Dhriendra Kumar an IFS officer, took charge as Special Secretary in the Department of Industries in charge of sericulture, handlooms, handicrafts khadi, he found all four sectors in doldrums.

Silk production was floundering because of insufficient supply of cocoons and poor marketing. Handloom cooperatives, some created back in 1940s, had become defunct.

Across in India, the handloom sector had been displaced by powerlooms and textile factories. Kumar also found that other crafts of the region were dying out due to lack of support. With the creation of Jharcraft and assuming charge as Managing Director, Kumar's first task was to revive the silk sector. One major breakthrough was to localize the entire chain of silk production from the elite seeds to commercial cocoons, yarn production, and cloth-making, within Jharkhand. Over 1.25 lakh farmers (mostly adivasi) are now engaged in sericulture, their incomes having multiplied several folds. Villagers were trained to master the full chain, more productive (but not labour-displacing) technologies were introduced (such as solar-powered yarn machines), new product designs were brought in, and marketing links provided. Surpassing Kumar's own targets, Jharcraft jumped from just 90 metric tons annual production in 2006 to 1025 tons in five years. In the cotton handloom sector, 120 cooperative societies were revived, and elsewhere, self-help groups were created. Weavers were given new looms or credit to repair old ones, access to good quality raw material, technical innovations to produce finer yarn for saris and shirts, designs for new products to supplement traditional ones, and access to marketing. Over 40,000 weavers are now engaged in cotton, Silk and wool work, with incomes having doubled or tripled on average among which many are women.

Jharcraft's Urban Haat in Hazaribagh, craftspeople are provided onsite training and production facilities. Over 10,000 women have been trained in kantha embroidery. A special focus is on the dokra metalwork that has 4000 years of history in this region (but dwindling of late); over 400 artisans now make a living from it. Women have trained in the wax designing that gives the final product its distinctive pattern, earlier a male prerogative. Jharcraft products are sold across India and artisans are facilitated to sell directly at fairs. According to Kumar, some 80 to 85 percent of sale price would go back to the producer, and 15-20 percent that Jharcraft keeps, goes back into further development of the sector. This is possible partly due to state and central government's support, which shows the crucial importance of public sector in facilitating rural livelihoods. Over 2.5 lakh families are already benefiting from various Jharcraft activities. As Jharcraft moves towards becoming bigger (its aim is to reach Rs 1000 crore turnover by

2017), it will need to ensure that every artisan is involved and benefiting equitably. These will be the formidable difficulties to overcome. Jharcraft has innovatively used various State and central schemes and partnered with several institutions for technological, design, marketing and other inputs.

Management Development Program For Jharcraft

To support business partners Jharcraft is developing its organization, "Women on Wings" which is working as a management development program for the direct reports Jharcraft's managing director. "Women on Wings" experts are working with the management on issues like teamwork, communication, ownership and cooperating in a supply chain. Since 2011, Jharcraft, an undertaking of the Government of Jharkhand, and "Women on Wings" collaborate in creating employment opportunities for women in rural India. Since the start of the collaboration, the business of Jharcraft shows significant growth and over 100,000 women have found new employment opportunities. Jharcraft sells products in 31 crafts in its own retail and in shop-in-shop outlets. It also sees its wholesale expanding. The ambition and potential of Jharcraft in Ranchi is overwhelming. In order to keep up the pace, dedicated women on wings team including co-founder Ellen Tacoma and expert Ronald Van Het Hof is keeping its finger on the pulse.

Conclusion

The development of an innovative and diversified microfinance sector which makes a real contribution to women's empowerment will require much more commitment from donors than has been the case to date. In spite of impediments, skill development training by Jharcraft ushered positive impact on the women their community as a whole. Women who once hesitated to come out were able to build a positive self-image. Successful accomplishment of completion of training increased their self-confidence and enhanced their self-esteem. Male folk of community also gained trust and confidence on their women counterpart. The women are in process of developing ability to think independently & make decisions of their own. Ability to make correct choices on their own boosted their self-image & confidence. A major outcome of this project was of the formation of various SHGs of rural women which in the process enabled the women of the area to make decisions on their own, express their opinion and views on various aspects of rural development. Effort has also been taken to make women self-reliant through various short term income generation programs. Women's entrepreneurship is both about women's position in society and about the role of entrepreneurship in the same society. Women entrepreneurs faced many obstacles specifically in

marketing their product (including family responsibilities) that have to be overcome in order to give them access to the same opportunities as men. In addition, in some countries, women may experience obstacles with respect to holding property and entering contracts. Increased participation of women in the labour force is a prerequisite for improving the position of women in society and self-employed women. Particularly the entry of rural women in micro enterprises through Jharcraft will be encouraged and aggravated. Rural women can do wonders by effectual and competent involvement in entrepreneurial activities. The rural women are having basic indigenous knowledge, skill potential and resources to establish and manage enterprise. Now, what is the need is the knowledge regarding accessibility to various funding agencies, procedure regarding certification, awareness on government welfare programs, motivation, technical skill and support from family, government and other organizations. More over formation and strengthening of rural women Entrepreneurs' network must be encouraged. Women Entrepreneur networks are major sources of knowledge about women's entrepreneurship and they are increasingly recognized as a valuable tool for its development and promotion. This will motivate other rural women to engage in micro entrepreneurship with the right assistance and they can strengthen their capacities besides adding to the family income and national productivity.

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