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Ranjit Singha
CHRIST (Deemed to be University)

Yogesh Kanna S
CHRIST (Deemed to be University)

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Women's Empowerment, Mindfulness, and Role of Women in Eradicating Alcohol and Drug Addiction from Indian Society

By Ranjit Singha¹ and Yogesh Kanna S²

Abstract

Women's empowerment and self-help groups are functional and successful in India in most instances; it is possible to improve them further by incorporating quality parameters in the various training programs. Most of the locally organized skill-training by different empowerment cells operates effectively. Training and operating procedures must be devised to ensure that self-help groups meet international standards for their products. The training is often held in remote locations, making it difficult for the facilitator to visit and provide instruction. There must be established criteria for selecting trainers and a planned curriculum for training. There is a social impediment in the overall empowerment process; one of the social evils is drug and alcohol addiction and specific cultural and societal norms. Women can help to curtail such societal problems, and the Naga Mothers' Association has made an impact in reducing addiction in Indian society. The Naga Mother's Association is doing an excellent job of reducing addiction; however, their work needs to be supported by legislative provisions. Similar to the Naga Mothers' Association, the women's wing of the Koch Rajbongshi student union has been able to mobilize and disseminate information about the ill effects of addiction among its community members. This paper argues that mindfulness, a concept of Buddhist origin, is necessary to effect revolutionary change. Mindfulness and compassion are the keys to resolving the issue, but reflection is also an essential component of the practice of mindfulness and compassion. The leaders of these women's associations are playing a pivotal role in helping to eradicate social evils and addiction from Indian society. One of the most critical components is mindfulness of the current situation and circumstances and making decisions accordingly.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Drug and Alcohol Addiction, Self-Help Groups, Skill-Training, Community-Based Approach, Mother's Associations

¹ Ranjit Singha is a Doctoral Research Fellow at CHRIST (Deemed to be University). His research interests include women's studies, high-risk behaviour, mindfulness, cognitive science, psychology, computer science, and data science. He has articles published in the USA, China, India, Bulgaria, and Turkey. Email: ranjit.singha@res.christuniversity.in.

² Yogesh Kanna S is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at CHRIST (Deemed to be University) with a PhD in Neuroscience. His primary research pursuits are cerebrovascular pathology, vascular insufficiency, neurodegeneration, mitochondrial biology, and dementia. He has also contributed to research and development and authored several well-referenced books and scholarly articles. Email: yogesh.kanna@christuniversity.in.

Introduction

There are many sectors in which women are working to bring about positive change in society, and one such organization is the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA), which lobbies for drug prohibition. The NMA, the foremost women's organization in the province, has requested the provincial administration to reconsider and firmly implement a prohibition on alcohol in the region enacted thirty years ago. In the proposition, the NMA raised questions about the widespread accessibility of illegal alcohol in contravention of the Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition (NLTP) Act of 1989, claiming that alcohol addiction has resulted in the deaths of numerous inhabitants. In addition to using alcohol, adolescents consume tobacco, cigarettes, and other addictive substances, which is a cause for concern among many mothers and particularly the members of the Naga Mothers' Association. Mothers often possess an impulse to protect their children from harm, and are compelled to introspection upon seeing the negative impact of addiction on their children's lives. It is a well-known adage that "It takes a village to raise a child." The NMA implored the state government to include the Church in the review process for the NLTP Act. It stated that the NMA had backed the Nagaland Baptist Churches Council (NBCC) in its efforts to implement the NLTP Act in the 1980s. The Naga Mothers Association's anti-drug and anti-alcohol movement is one of India's most powerful women's movements; they are respected in Naga society and well-known in the northeastern part of India. They have the capacity and potential to make effective change. The involvement of priests and the Church in bringing about revolution is quite evident, like that of the NLTP Act of the 1980s, where the Nagaland Baptist Churches Council (NBCC) played an active role.

In Northeast India, in the state of Assam, there are groups among the Koch Rajbongshi tribe known as *Modashi*. The word *modashi* translates as those that make alcohol; the women's association of the Koch Rajbongshi Student wing has been fighting to remove alcohol from the Koch Rajbongshi community. They have been successful in eradicating the alcohol-brewing culture within the Koch Rajbongshi community to a great extent; however, the term *Modashi* is attached to certain families and society. Although they successfully removed the alcohol-making culture from the community, they could still not remove the tendency towards alcohol and tobacco addiction. During the Koch Rajbongshi community's traditional celebration, certain community members offer wine to their various gods and goddesses along with other sacrificial rituals. Similar to the Naga Mothers Association, the Women Student Wings of Koch Rajbongshi were interested in eradicating alcohol, narcotics, tobacco and cigarettes from the Koch Rajbongshi people to improve the quality of life in the community.

The Koch Rajbongshi community is socially, culturally, and politically divided, resulting in a struggle for the Koch Rajbongshi student body to work as a single unit. The origin of the community is Koch, and its original language is Koch; however, due to social, political, and cultural divisions, the Koch language has become extinct. In Meghalaya, the same community is known as Koch, a scheduled tribe; in Assam, they are known as Koch Rajbongshi and Other Backward Class as a caste; in West Bengal, the same community is known as Rajbanshi, and they are Schedule caste. A large community was isolated into diversified geographical regions with little contact between them. The majority-dominant group took advantage and forced their language on them through the entire education process for approximately four decades, resulting in the Assam and West Bengal regions losing their Koch language completely. In contrast, in the Meghalaya and Assam Border area, only a few people

can speak Koch language; this matter is reported in India's Parliamentary commission report of 1997.

There are many active women's empowerment initiatives in India, such as livelihood training for new self-help organizations. However, women's empowerment is very low in the Andaman and Nicobar region (A&N) of India; there is hardly any tribal representation in the A&N region, the dropout rate for women in secondary education is very high, and the average age of marriage for women in A&N is 20. There are places in Andaman & Nicobar, North East region, and A&I region (All India Island including Andaman and Nicobar) without electricity or internet access or poor bandwidth and access. Internet bandwidth is also lower in A&I and N&E (North East region of India). Most students from the A&I region and the N&E region encountered significant difficulties with online exams and online education during the COVID-19 pandemic because they were forced to return to their hometowns from Indian universities and colleges during the lockdown. Due to the lack of internet connectivity, they could not enroll in online courses or take online access exams. Although the government has a solar subsidy scheme, it has been reported by the locals and solar panel shops from the Assam region of the North East that banks do not promote the subsidy scheme because it adds to their existing workload. Electricity supply is one of the major problems in the Northeast region, particularly in remote locations. Although the government has programmes to provide laptops and tablet computers for students, they do not function as they are supposed to because many Northeast areas do not have access to electricity. The bank's non-cooperation in the solar panel subsidy is affecting girls' education in the remote regions of the North East of India, especially in Assam. Since men hold the majority of top leadership positions in banks, the issue of the inability of women to pursue higher education owing to the bank's lack of support for solar subsidy schemes is consistently disregarded and sidelined. The safety and security of women are seriously threatened by the increased uses of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco in rural areas. The lack of electricity, CCTV cameras, street lights, and solar lights makes the problem of women's safety more acute. The non-availability of electric power also indirectly affects the entire operation of women's empowerment and women's self-help groups. However, in the other regions of India, other than N&E, A&I or A&N, there are a few successful women's self-help groups such as Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad and several others that are equally successful.

Culture, tradition, and history all play important roles in the process of empowerment and self-help. Mindfulness has always been associated with creativity, innovation, and sound decision-making, and it is possible to use mindfulness in the de-addiction process as well as in business ventures. Mindfulness is of Buddhist origin, and today in the modern world, it is known by various names.

The Role of Women in Buddhism

In the practice of Buddhism in ancient India, women faced prejudice in Buddhist society (Yuichi, 1982). Women have always played a minor role in Buddhism (Horner, 1938) There are 331 commandments for nuns (*bhikkhunis*) as opposed to 227 for monks (*bhikkhus*) because, while everyone must control their impulses, women must also avoid "arousing the desires of males" (Yuichi, 1982). Gautama hesitated to admit women to the Order, not because women could not attain enlightenment, but because he was concerned about potential conflicts

between the monks' and nuns' orders and the Buddhist Order and the lay population. Buddha decided to allow women to join the Order of nuns. He provided them with eight *garudhammas*, which translates to "principal rules." Buddha's first council drafted the Vinaya Piṭaka, a book of law for monks and nuns (Pokharel, 2018); the first council was constituted by senior monks, and no nuns participated. Thomson (2006) mentions that the Tipitaka Canon is misogynistic and makes life hard for women.

As the writings were all written by male monks for other monks, the typical perception of the feminine was quite misogynistic because a woman was the "forbidden other" (Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, 2015). Some Buddhist stories say that women can not be leaders because they can not reach enlightenment, a limitation of their gender. These stories say that women can only reach enlightenment if they have good karma and are born as men first. Others say that as women get closer to enlightenment, they will naturally change into men as a requirement for full awakening. Buddhism has a generally unfavorable attitude towards women, making it difficult for women in a specific practice tradition to pursue higher education and achieve their full potential. To be clear, there are several exceptions to this generalization (Starkey, 2021). In contrast to ordained British men, women who have acquired Buddhist ordination in Britain have received less scholarly attention and are underestimated by sociologists who specialize in Buddhism (Starkey, 2021).

But things are evolving quite a bit in the last several decades. Increasing numbers of women are attending college and becoming highly educated, just like men. They are performing more powerful spiritual rituals and long-term retreats, as well as recognizing their potential in every aspect so that it is now the nuns rising higher in the religious hierarchy (Sirimanne, 2016). Despite Buddha's endorsement of a female monastic order and his categorical statement that men and women are equal in intellectual and spiritual capabilities, when it comes to obtaining the highest spiritual goals, Buddhist culture still sees women unfavorably (Gyal, 2016).

In the Buddhist pantheon, *Tara* is a powerful feminine force in Tibetan Buddhism; in Sanskrit she is known as *Tara*, and in Tibetan, she is known as *Dol-ma*, which means female liberator (*Dol* means to liberate; *ma* means female or mother). From a young age, Buddhists are taught not to create negative views or impure visions of their mothers even in their metaphors. In Tibetan society, it is common for mothers to breastfeed their children, sometimes up to four years, which helps children connect their mothers to divine forces; all mothers are considered Tara and every woman embodies a distinct component of Tara (Beliaeva-Saczuk, 2020). In the Okian Region, the Republic of Buryatia, and the Russian Federation, there are statues of White Tara and Green Tara. The locals valued her care for families, especially children, women who want to have children, and pregnant women. In the Okian Region, there is a big tree called the Mother Tree (*Ezhy Modon*) and a mountain called the Mother Mountain (*Ezhy Khad*). These days, people pray to Tara that the Mother Tree and Mother Mountain will continue to grow (Gyal, 2016; Khandro, 2017).

It is noteworthy that different schools of Tibetan Buddhism hold opposing opinions on the importance of women. In Tibetan Buddhist tradition, there are fourteen different vows that yogis and yoginis need to follow, and one of them says: "you cannot do, you cannot talk, you cannot even think negatively towards a female." Yet young monks are taught that all women are ugly, dirty, and dangerous by older monks. These ideas are mental indoctrination for monks

to reduce their biological drive to seek female beauty or the pleasure of physical intimacy. There are different traditions and practices, and to some extent, Buddhist practice is affected by the local culture and traditions. Consequently, the general public must realize that this definition of female is not an essential part of Buddhism. There are many different schools of Buddhism, and each has its own set of rules and regulations for monks and nuns to follow. However, in the yogi tradition, both genders are equally involved in studying Buddhism, its practice, and its transmission. Yogis and yoginis are not precisely nuns or monks but lay people practicing within the Tibetan Buddhist framework.

Tibetan Buddhism respects women, but there is still a problematic "secret consort" (*gsang yum*) practice³ (Gayley, 2018). Secret consort (*gsang yum*, which means secret mother in Tibetan) involves female students undergoing heterosexual sexual activities under Buddhist tantra in the name of religious ritual, practice or learning the tantra. A secret consort is someone who engages in physical (or mental energetic) union with a Buddhist teacher, concentrating on visualizations, breathing, and yoga exercises for enlightenment without excessive attachment or wants. The male practitioner may benefit from having a spiritual partner to refresh and lengthen his life, remove impediments (particularly his health), and get more support in his enlightened deeds. In 2013, a group of four Buddhist teachers from several traditions in California weighed in on the systematic elements that contribute to sexual misbehavior in Buddhism as it has evolved outside of Asia. Their observations highlight the current ambiguity regarding the teacher-student relationship, top-down arrangements in which those closest to the teacher hold control, and an idealization of the teacher puts them above standard rules of behavior. Buddhist professors, practitioners, and teachers challenge secret consort practice, as there is a high likelihood of abuse and the risk of exploitation of female trainees (View on Buddhism, 1993; The Meridian Trust, 2022).

Today, people of all genders can practice mindfulness and compassion, a meditation discipline initially intended for monks and monastic life but one that has been adapted for the modern populace. Mindfulness and compassion practices have been secularized and made available to all people globally. It is possible to gain meaning from suffering through mindfulness practice, which may lead to compassion. Therefore, true liberation from suffering consists of deriving meaning from suffering and transforming it into a compassionate act of being. Mindfulness and compassion practices are considered safe for all genders.

Objectives and Research Methodology

The objectives of the study are 1) to understand the narratives of the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA), and 2) to perform a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of livelihood training. The data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. To conduct the SWOT analysis, officials involved in livelihood training for women's empowerment were interviewed.

³ On the journey to spirituality, consorts are viewed as crucial to the detection and decoding of concealed treasures.

Narratives of the Naga Mothers' Association (NMA)

Naga Mother's Association⁴ was founded in 1984 in India, in the Province of Nagaland,⁵ in response to drugs and alcohol. It is still fighting to eliminate drugs from society today. As expressed by the NMA members, "the reason mothers move strongly against the sale of liquor is that we live with the everyday reality of domestic violence due to alcohol and poverty because of hard-earned money being spent on liquor; looking into the grim reality, reviewing the existing Act should be the priority of the state government" (Press Trust of India, 2020).

Interviews with the NMA were conducted in Kohima, Naga Land, India by Shrinivasan for *Times of India*. "Every Naga tribe⁶ had a women's wing; women were strong in the church activities. But with NMA, they come together in an organized manner," says Sano Vamuzo, one of the network's founders who at age 80 is still an active advisor of NMA (Shrinivasan, 2013). Another interview subject was Abei-U Meru, also a founder and now NMA president. Meru recalled: "In the beginning, the biggest issue affecting homes was drug addiction... Daily gun battles⁷ would see two or three boys shot dead outside our homes. We would bring the shrouds for them." NMA made "Shed No More Blood" its motto (Shrinivasan, 2013). Sarah Nuh, NMA's vice-president, mentioned that "Customary law⁸ says Nagas can't buy and sell land. Does anybody follow that?" "Culture is not static. It has to change," agrees Lochumbeni Humtsoe, the network's secretary (Shrinivasan, 2013). "The mothers came together because it was hurting every home," recalls founder, member, and former president Neidonuo Angami. They visited the HIV-affected in Manipur Jail. "Food was thrown at them; such was the stigma. We were the first to go in and shake the patients' hands" (Shrinivasan, 2013).

Based on the above narratives of the different members of NMA, it is evident that there is an element of physical violence and emotional abuse that women and mothers have suffered in society, and they formed an organization to work toward a solution; they had identified the addiction, alcohol, drugs, tobacco consumption, smoking tobacco and other drugs, chewing beetle nuts and beetle leaves⁹ with tobacco, as the primary cause of health-related issues, which also cause a financial burden for the family, as the addicts need money to purchase the addictive substance. Alcohol is one of the causes of crime, physical violence, emotional abuse, financial abuse, and family strife (Thonger & Rajbar, 2019; Kizhakumpurath, 2012). The NMA emerged as one of the most influential groups of women in society, bringing justice, peace, harmony, and anti-addiction measures.

⁴ Indian citizens have the right to form an association or union or co-operative society under clause (4) of Article 19 of the Constitution of India.

⁵ Nagaland is a state of India, located in the northeastern part of India.

⁶ Naga tribe are a group of different ethnic tribes that reside in Nagaland.

⁷ Nagaland is declared as a disturbed area by the government of India under Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) 1958. There are many insurgent groups and there are constant encounters; however ceasefire agreements are being signed between insurgent groups and the government of India.

⁸ Nagaland is protected under the six-schedule area of the constitution of India. They can make their own customary laws which are valid within their territory and community, and those laws are legally valid if signed by the Governor of the state. However certain customary laws are followed within each community even if they are not officially sanctioned.

⁹ Beetle nuts are a kind of nut that are consumed with beetle leaves, lime powder or lime stone, and tobacco. The concoction is addictive by nature.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis of the Livelihood Training

Various NGOs have conducted women's empowerment training in different parts of India to equip women for a better life. SWOT analysis of livelihood training is presented here.

Strengths

- Participants are willing to take the skill training.
- There are 2% Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds available from all the companies for the welfare of society.
- India is a large market due to its large population.
- India has excellent trade and commerce relations with most foreign countries; thus, exports and imports are possible.
- India has a good network of Indian postal services; therefore, delivery of an item is possible across India.
- Skill trainers are available in many parts of India.
- Books and training materials are readily available in all parts of India; if not they can be easily sent from any location.
- Most of the provinces in India have skill development institutions.
- There are numerous government scholarships available to upgrade skills.
- There are many government welfare schemes to start a new company or farm products companies.
- Bank loans are available for start-ups.

Weaknesses

- Participants must adjust their daily schedule and working hours when the training takes place on weekdays. This is especially difficult for those who care for animals, such as a cow or goats, or who work as agricultural labourers or in animal husbandry. The unorganized sector does not have a leave policy, so they do not get casual leave; in such cases, their pay is cut while they are absent.
- Utilization of available resources and limited technology
- Trainers are unwilling to travel to remote locations. As remote areas lack transportation, the trainer must arrange their transportation.
- There is a lack of industrial competency among local skilled trainers
- Language is one of the significant barriers in India.
- Cultural norms and systems are substantial barriers.

Opportunities

- With the advancement of technology, online training is now possible; however, there are areas in India where the Internet network is limited, such as Andaman and Nicobar, the North-Eastern Part of India, and Jammu and Kashmir; there are also digital divides in India, as many people lack access to technology such as smartphones, laptops, and tablets.

- It is possible to sponsor one person from a remote location who speaks the regional language and train the individual in a professional institute with the sole goal of returning to the specific remote location and providing training regularly.
- Transportation can be arranged by the NGO that is conducting the livelihood training.
- High financial incentives can be offered for the trainer to train in a remote location.
- Incentives can be offered for trainees to participate in training.
- Quality control measures can be implemented to improve the product quality and impart livelihood training.
- Standard operating procedures can be followed while recruiting a candidate for training. (When recruiting a candidate for livelihood training, the recruiter must keep in mind that if the candidate is a student, the earning opportunity may interfere with her education or future growth within specific social circumstances. If she earns more, her family may engage her in business and prevent her from pursuing further education.)
- Mindfulness should be taught to all the members of the women's associations; it may help in decision-making.
- In fact, mindfulness trainers can be produced from within the women's association to create incentives for the de-addiction process; addiction is one cause of many problems in Indian society; thus, eradicating addiction could bring sustainability to more families and small businesses.

Threats

- Social restrictions for women from rural areas to participate in the training
- Religious and cultural taboos that prohibit women from interacting with unknown trainers and enter into business deals with unknown buyers and sellers
- Family commitments and responsibilities
- Lack of proper skill sets and exploitation
- Low pay
- Fraudulent activity by business enterprises, institutions and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) to raise CSR funds in the name of livelihood training for women
- A company's CSR funds are shared with an NGO or an institution; a certain percentage of the CSR fund is used for administrative costs, and only a small portion is used for real-time social activity; further dilution of the fund occurs if it goes to a 2nd or 3rd party NGO to do the groundwork
- Dilution of CSR funds may occur if the Institute where the funding occurs is affiliated with large auditing firms and all audit reports are generated by such large firms
- More auditing, inspection, diagnostic study, and CSR funds will be used for audit and inspection activities. As a result, a small amount of money is used in real-time groundwork for empowerment. In such a case, it will be beneficial if the company runs its own foundation to carry out CSR activity instead of outsourcing the CSR funds to other organizations

Discussion

True empowerment is financial empowerment. Financial leverage is required to sustain any organization as well. An association must sustain itself to function independently rather than rely on crown funding or CSR funding. Receiving financing at the start of an organization is acceptable, but as time passes, it must sustain itself in the long run. With the support of income from the self-help group, an association can do much better work to fulfil the organization's objective, mission and vision. Thus, it is a good idea if a women's association has an income source. However, India has issues (Singha & Sivarethinamohan, 2022). The fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of the United Nations aims to abolish all forms of sexism and violence against women, although gender discrimination still occurs in India. In the context of India, liberalization, privatization, and globalization are limited concepts. Privatization and globalization can only be predicted if the country and the world have a heterogeneous workforce. There are possibilities for a crowdfunding model; starting such an organization from its members is a good idea. All employees should serve voluntarily and not receive a salary from crowdfunding but rather invest in the business. Such an organization must seek appropriate expert advice to sustain itself. Still, they must be careful not to seek advice from their competitors, as they risk receiving incorrect information. Such an organization must prioritize product quality. They should focus on developing one vertical, a few products, not more than 5, and providing quality service; instead of focusing on multiple products and multiple verticals, they need substantial leverage in digital marketing to succeed. It is recommended that they seek the support of the industrial sector.

Such organizations should not waste money and time on so-called documentation activities or pointless workshops to raise awareness about many aspects of the business but should instead seek one-on-one real-time activities that provide real help. The goal of such an organization should not be profit-making from such workshops or to keep a job for the sake of a salary, but rather to help women.

Any opportunity that comes from such an association should not be directed to specific community groups of women; there should be equal distribution of opportunities. Most disputes arise when such an ample opportunity comes. It often goes to one particular community-based group, and others only get free online awareness workshops after paying the membership fee; they feel cheated. There are biases in the distribution of livelihood projects; certain community-specific associations do not ever get the opportunity to secure projects from many organizations. Discrimination exists when specific geographical locations do not get equal opportunities compared to another geographical area. Frequently, the allocation of projects is concentrated in certain regions, while other regions do not receive an equal amount of projects. The majority of discrimination is based on the project allocation preferences of the leader of the project. Singha & Sivarethinamohan (2021) mention that women face significant challenges in maintaining a healthy workplace climate, including lack of supervisor encouragement and a disparity in rewards and benefits. It was also deduced that women employees shape their attitudes in their personal and professional lives to achieve unique organizational goals. They prioritize their jobs over their personal needs to balance individual and corporate needs; however, they lack teamwork and require a better conflict management system. The fund allocation for any CSR activity is large, but only a tiny amount of money arrives on the ground. To avoid this blunder, the company should build its foundation and

oversee the groundwork rather than outsource all activities. The company is not an expert in CSR activities, but they can hire subject experts and complete the work. The outsourcing model may appear appealing and straightforward, but on the ground, the money allocated for CSR activities is minimal, and thus the possibility of development is also limited (Singha & Singha, 2020). Muga silk from historic Pragjyotishpur and Koch Behar was used in the Bengal, Bhutanese, Tibetan, and Mughal trade during Koch Dynasty (Historic Koch Country). Every girl child in Assam learns the art of weaving from her mother when she is young because the majority of women in the country are weavers. Therefore, if women concentrate on the weaving industry and there is positive technology input, there is potential for them to bring about a commercial revolution in Assam. However, corruption throughout the entire process is inevitable.

In the Northeast region, the Naga Mothers' Association is successfully eradicating drug addiction; however, legislative provisions would help to reduce drugs' prevalence within society. Legislators have heretofore made no efforts to enact such legislation and effect change. Koch Rajbongshi's Women students wings are working hard to make a positive change in the Koch Rajbongshi's community life (The Indian Express, 2020; Biswas, 2020). The mother's association also serves the public, and they have strong public support. They are an example for the world since they continue to work for the public despite the inherent risk in the system. (Haokip, 2020) During COVID-19, the people of India's northeast were subjected to widespread racial attacks in other areas. There is systemic racism in India, where mainstream Indians exert power over the northeastern region's inhabitants. Despite all this, the Mother's Association is actively working for all the communities in the Northeastern region of India.

In all the processes involving women's associations, integrating mindfulness would be helpful for the association members as well as for society (Rema & Kaur, 2020). Mindfulness can help with anxiety, stress, and depression (Lienard, 2018), and mindfulness can help with obesity (Schuman-Olivier et al., 2014; Batra et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2016). Mindfulness is also beneficial in reducing tobacco addiction and other addiction-related symptoms, so it may help lower addiction in society if taught to those who are addicted (Ehrlich, 2015). Mindfulness aids decision-making and fosters creativity (Acar et al., 2019; Fischer et al., 2019). Creativity is essential in any business because it nurtures innovation, which can lead to increased productivity and profit for the company (Irgashev, 2020)..

Conclusion

There are advantages and disadvantages in all aspects of operation; however, the fund designated for CSR activities should be used to the greatest extent possible for its intended purpose. Women's Associations should have their own earning capacity through their cooperative societies. Women's Associations should be able to make money independently through cooperative societies, giving more leverage to grow and become strong. Most of the skill training by various empowerment cells is organized locally. It operates effectively, but training and operating procedures must be devised to ensure that self-help groups meet international standards for their products. The training is held in a remote location, making it difficult for the facilitator to visit and provide instruction. There must be established criteria for selecting trainers and a planned curriculum for training. There is a social impediment in the overall empowerment process; one of the social evils is addiction and specific cultural and

societal norms. Women can curtail such societal problems, and the Naga Mothers' Association has made inroads in curtailing addiction in society. In total, mindfulness throughout the process may be necessary to effect revolutionary change. The Naga Mothers' Association is doing an excellent job of working to prevent addiction; however, they need to be supported by some legislative provisions to eliminate drugs from society.

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