

## “GENDER EQUALITY”&”WOMEN EMPOWERMENT” FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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### **Abstract**

Gender Equality is essential for social and institutional transformation that promotes equality. Men and women are treated differently in every area of development. Women’s health & education are the most visible area of inequalities, along with gender stereotype thinking and less involvement in public life and in policy making decision process. In Indian society maternal mortality is the second highest internationally with about approximately 1,25,000 women dies each year due to major complications from pregnancy related disorder. In rural India, 60% of Indian girls marry below age of 18, and majority 60% of married women’s are already having children before the age of 19, which automatically puts them in a difficult situation where babies are born underweight and malnourished. It happens because of hunger, poverty, early marriage. Now the equality in education includes the female literacy rate in India which is very low as compare to male dominant society. 70% of women gets education whereas participation of men is high comparatively 84%.

In agriculture sector contribution of women is yet very much vital for Indian economy equally as men. It is because women make one third participation as well as, many crops rely on their substantial efforts but they earn 30% lower than men. Initiatives are taken by Indian govt to improve the conditions of women formal employment and enhance the lives of self - employment by increase in the no. of participation of labour.

**Key words:** Gender Equality, Gender gap, Empowerment, Indian Society, Gender Awareness.

### **Introduction**

Empowering women economically is necessary to close the gender inequalities. The Government is quite supportive to women issues and has enacted some wonderful policies that empower women. Vice Chairperson of US-India business council CEO of Biocon Kiran Mazumdar- Shaw said “It is true that even today board rooms and senior management positions are still the preserve of men except for a handful of companies. However, it is also true that the situation is changing, albeit slowly. I have seen a positive shift in gender equality in Corporate India. I do believe that women are being provided greater opportunities to participate in strategic areas of management. Indian business women like Indra Nooyi, Chanda Kochhar, Naina Lal Kidwai, Shikha Sharma, Swati Piramal, Anu Agha, Swati Piramal, Sulajja Firodia Motwani and Zia Mody have put India on the global firmament. These women have gained respect and made a big difference to the corporate world by managing the gender bias that exists in our world. These enormously talented women in our country can be role models and drive corporate to realize that gender diversity is of key importance in all Boards. I believe

gender diversity can introduce a balance of views and opinions that allow for more informed decisions" [1]

Rural women and girls perform a variety of roles and have a plethora of obligations. Many works as farmers, caretakers, wage workers and micro business owners are frequently working for long hours in fetching water and collecting firewood. Empowering women is critically important for poverty eradication; reduce hunger, and removing malnutrition from society. The social and economic prosperity of a country depends heavily on gender equality and women's empowerment. Women's empowerment and gender equality goes hand in hand. Millennium development goals talks about the areas which are necessary to be worked upon in the form of development for nation. Gender equality and women empowerment is one of the third most important goals out of eight MDG's goal. Education is essential for eradicating gender inequities at all level. Education should be accessible to everyone, irrespective of any gender. There should be no gender biasness when it comes to educating individual. In developing economy equal participation of women is necessary. Every woman should be financial Independent. Closing the gender gap will be made easier by increasing the representation of women in the Indian parliament. Women safety is the matter of concern in every corner of our country, so in order to reduce the no. of risks and uncertainties towards women it is important for us to have an independent woman as leader in political front. The three major factors which will influence in improving the status of women i.e., Education, Employment & women's Political Participation rate. Equality for women and women's emancipation is the fifth and third most significant SDGs and MDGs, respectively. In addition to being a fundamental human right, gender equality is also necessary for leading a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable life. Domestic abuse and other negative practises affect women more frequently. Due to their lack of access to basic education and healthcare, women and girls live in dangerous environments. In contemporary society, women are viewed as being under-represented. In order to ensure good health and mental wellbeing and to have equal access to health care and services, it is crucial that we attain universal health care coverage. By 2030, all people, regardless of gender, must have equitable access to high-quality primary and secondary education, in accordance with SDGs, resulting in successful learning outcomes.

Increase in the number of youths and adults with having relevant skills including technical and vocational courses skill for better employment opportunities and to have a decent work culture with some talented Entrepreneurs. Promoting higher education with the necessary skills required for job including for the child who are differently abled must be benefited. Eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, including trafficking and exploitation of women, in both public and private domains will empower all girls and women. The empowerment of women will be promoted by increasing the use of valuable technology, particularly information and communication technology. We urgently need easy access to technology so that it would be simple to find every woman in our nation when she is in trouble. Improving everyone's physical, mental, and overall welfare requires achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. [2]

The principle of Gender equality is already consisting with the Indian constitution which offers equality on gender basis and help to empower all the people of state to formulate favourable actions in the favour of women. The various steps taken by the Indian government is to ensure

the empowerment of women through their social, educational, political uplifting through various schematic ways. In Rural India, women perform variety of roles and can have their own plethora obligations because they are involved in household works spending numerous hours in fetching water, gathering for woods, collect grasses, for cooking, bathing, taking care of her family, taking care of her animals for this she must walk several miles. Women in rural area are too hard working, they match their male folk in everything and if anyhow she fails to do such work their husband often feels it is their right to beat her. All of these have become challenging for every woman but they are still fighting for their rights and to bring equality regarding every aspect of life. Covid-19 pandemic has caused a disaster of unprecedented dimensions wreaking havoc on people lives and livelihood worldwide. Many socio-economic lives of human have affected due to corona virus disease including health and employment areas worldwide. The major issue faced in every sector is wage inequality and the burden of non-paid care has pushed more women out of employment into poverty. Job loss were seen as severe and rapid in most industries which were dominated by women, like hospitality, education, healthcare, aviation's, textile industries and many more. Recent report released by centre for sustainable employment shows during first lockdown 2020, approximately 47% of women lost their job as compare to men which were 71%. Result came shocking in informal sector where more no. of women faced unemployment as men. The 73rd and 74th amendments to India's Constitution seek to strengthen the representation of minorities and women, and female voter turnout has gone up as a result. With the right to one-third of the seats in local government, women can now participate more and feel more empowered.

There were several changes observed where demographic and socio-economic attributes full account for the fall in the female labour participations. Demographic attributes include women's educational level and socio-economic attributes includes household incomes. To bridge the gender gap, Indian government must provide consistent structural support towards the women community. Some of the systematic measures that can be taken regarding women empowerments are by enhancing the enrolment and successful completion of education of every girl child and to provide them proper Social Security for unorganised and organised sector. Increasing the participation of female in political decision-making policy will decrease the rate of violence against women, by reducing gender disparity between men and women. Due to an inadequate emphasis on inclusive growth and unequal gender relations, women continue to be marginalised in social, economic, and political sectors.

Legislation and policy: In India, the Constitution forbids differentiation on the basis of gender. The equal remuneration act of 1976 assures equal pay and equal work for women; nonetheless, huge impediments remain between policy and practise, as well as between policy and implementation. A few of the organisations created to enhance the welfare of women are the National Commission for Women, the Department of Women & Child Development, and the Parliamentary Committee on Women's Empowerment, which has reviewed and recommended changes to many laws. The National Policy for Women's Empowerment (2001) aims is to combat all types of violence against women, including physical, psychological, and customary and traditional forms.

The Gender Gap Index measures a country's ability to distribute resources and opportunity equally access its male and female populations, India ranked 140th among 156 countries in

world economic forums Global Gender gap report, 2021. Evaluation of gender disparity between men and women world economic forum created the global gender gap Index in 4 Major Areas.

1. The impacts of economic opportunity and involvement on earnings, increase participation rates, will access to high-skilled employment.
2. Educational Achievement, which determines eligibility for elementary and secondary education.
3. Political emancipation is the product of participation in decision-making structures.
4. Including life expectancy and the sex ratio, health and survival.
  - The gender literacy gap as well as the gender enrolment rates in primary, secondary, and postsecondary education are used to evaluate education levels.
  - The percentage of men and women working in paid occupations, excluding agriculture, and the wage gap between men and women are used to measure economic participation.
  - The proportion of women in professional, technical, managerial, and administrative roles, as well as the number of female lawmakers and decision-making cabinet positions, are all indicators of empowerment.

To bring women in the main stream of Political leadership at the grass root level the government has reserved 33% of the seats in Panchayati raj Institution for women. Capacity building of Panchayati stakeholder women Representatives includes is ensured with the view to empowering women to participate effectively in governance programmes.

Numerous articles of India’s Constitution see to eliminate the gender pay. Additionally, Specific legislation addresses the gender pay discrepancy. The following constitutions article are;

1. Article 14: Equality of men and women in political, economic, and social realm
2. Article 15(1): Case of race, caste, sex, place of birth, religion all are prohibited
3. Article 15(3): Affirmative steps is allowed in favour of women is allowed
4. Article 16: Chances related to Employment must be for all citizen in public posts.
5. Article 39(a): Equal pay for equal labour.
6. Article 42: The state must ensure reasonable working conditions & Maternity leave

Using information from a voluntary online survey with 16,500 online observations that was done by payday India, the gender gap in India was analysed. The result suggested a wider gender pay difference. In most circumstances, as one’s educational level grows, the gender wage disparity widens. Women & Men with comparable work experience are not compensated similarly, according to data. The Magnitude of gender pay varies by occupation, by State, Industries, Experience, and Skill.

In political context India’s Political structure is federal with the central government sharing authority with other states. India’s Constitution sought is to boost minority group and female representation and female voter participation has also increased women representation by 14.44% of the total member of the Lok Sabha but reason why still lacking behind is Gender Stereotyping, Competitions, Lack of political education, work and responsibility, social conditioning, unfriendly Environment.

### **Gender disparities in a few Indian Industries**

The topics have been covered in relation to the gender inequalities in the economic, health, and educational sectors

Sector of Education: In India, the literacy rates for men and women differ significantly in 2011, men had an effective literacy rate of 82.14%, while women had an effective literacy rate of 65.46%. The census showed that throughout the decadal periods of 2001–2011, female literacy rates (11.8 percent) rose noticeably more quickly than male literacy rates (6.9 percent).

### **School attendance of children**

- In the age range of 6 to 17, only two thirds of females and three quarters of boys attend school. 889 girls out of every 1,000 boys in school-age youngsters are female.
- In terms of attendance in school, there is parity between men and women in metropolitan areas, but in rural areas, women have considerable educational disadvantages that worsen with age.
- Attending school at the proper age is the lowest for both girls and boys. However, it is approximately equally probable for both boys and girls in school to be enrolled in subjects that are too advanced for them.

• School leaver is a significant issue both girls and boys after primary school.

- Adult literacy and educational achievement

The literacy gap between men and women is far worse in rural than in urban areas, and it rapidly closes as household wealth increases.

• Educational attainment remains low: low rate of participation seen in education sector where 84.4% of male population are engaged more than women which is 71.5%.

The gender ratio in India's health industry is skewed, with 943 women for every 1,000 men, demonstrating that discrimination against women starts early (Census 2011). This is attributed to a cultural bias favouring male children, which causes female pregnancies to be aborted. Another factor includes social neglect of women and girls, as evidenced by decreased access to nourishment & healthcare, as well as a high rate of maternal death. India has the second-highest maternal death rate globally at 385-487 per 100,000 live births. Pregnancy and illnesses associated with pregnancy result in the deaths of about 125,000 people annually. 60% of women in rural regions marry before they become 18 and 60% of married women have children before they turn 19. Every one-third of babies are born with abnormally low birth weights, which can be attributed to a variety of conditions, including poverty, early marriage, hunger, and a lack of prenatal care.

- Female births rate are underrepresented, but female deaths are overrepresented.
- Sex ratios at birth fall as wealth increases, showing that sex selection of kids is more common in wealthier households than in poorer ones.
- Ultrasound tests are often used for gender selection, and such selections are more prevalent among the wealthiest women than in the other due to low socio- economic qualities.
- Couples frequently stop having children after they reach the desired number of sons, as seen by the sex % of all recent births.
- For every 1,000 children approaching at the age of one, there are 61% deaths among children seen under the age of 4 among girls other than among boys, according to the child mortality rate.

Financial Industry

India's economy must more effectively integrate women, who make up half of the nation's human resources, in order to maximise the country's long-term competitive potential. A range of tasks, including those performed by women to support their families, gathering water, fuel, or fodder, taking care of hens, or working on family land are wrongly counted in the census. Other home-based businesses run by women include weaving, making bangles, rolling agarbatti, and making bidi. They are paid very little for their informal work and are not covered by social security. One third of agricultural population are women but their salaries are paid typically 30% less than those of men. Due to their inability to provide collateral, women frequently encounter difficulty getting credit from banks. They have significantly better payback records than men while receiving far lower loan amounts. Land and other property rights for women are insecure. Even though laws have been passed to guarantee that women receive an equal share of family wealth, poor women may not have the resources necessary to enforce their rights in a patriarchal society.

- Compared to men in the same age range, women had a roughly 50% lower employment rate.
- Men are less likely to be employed than women in metropolitan regions, but the opposite is true for women in rural areas.
- According to the relationship between women's wealth and employment, many women's jobs are frequently a response to their desire for money. It shows their socio-economic conditions.
- The chance of employment is negatively correlated with marriage for women, but positively correlated with marriage for men.
- The majority of women who work far for someone else, away from home, and throughout the year; there are only around one-third of them get paid in cash or receive at least some of it in kind.
- Only 7% of female gender have professional, technical, or managerial roles; the bulk work as farm labourers.

To promote equality and empower women a number of the government schemes & provisions related to Education, Health & Nutrition, Political participation, Economic have been discussed by government.

According to the Indian constitution, gender discrimination is a penal offence. To achieve gender equality, parents and teachers must teach their children to be sensitive to the other gender. Discrimination based on gender is a breach of civil human rights and may lead to increased sexual harassment, ill-treatment of women, gender-based sex selection practises, unequal remuneration for women, bias in education, and lack of independence. Gender awareness is much more critical and analytical since it sheds light on issues related to gender disparity, men's, and women's roles in society, and it is necessary for us to ensure each other about the unbiased participation of both genders.

Women have the power to make a difference. Enhancing decision-making and women's representation in community affairs, expanding access to resources like capital, land, expertise, and technologies, and improving women's well being and burden are three crucial and interconnected dimensions that must be addressed in order to empower poor rural women.

Lack of essential utilities has a higher impact on women than on men because they are typically in charge of more time-consuming domestic tasks. Improved access to electricity, water, and

sanitary facilities may ease the burden of supplying vital household inputs for their families on women, allowing them to devote more time to running their companies.

Pronab Sen, the chairman of the National Statistical Commission, claims that self-help organisations and self-employment are becoming more popular among rural women as seen by the rise in the proportion of women who work for themselves from 56% in 2009–10 to 59% in 2011–12. Additionally, given that their labour is categorised as family and home duties, it is probable that a sizeable portion of rural women are excluded from the WPR's employable workforce.[2]

### **Gender indicators examples**

#### **International warning signs**

##### 1. Objects of (MDGs)

A strategy for integrating gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals: Practitioners and policymakers alike agree that gender equality and women's empowerment are crucial for accomplishing each of the MDGs.

#### **Programs, Mission & Strategies for Empowering Women**

##### **Indian National Mission for Women's Empowerment**

The Mission seeks to advance women's equality on each of these fronts by coordinating the strategies and plans of several Ministries and Departments of the Indian Government as well as state governments. When possible, the Mission works with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to carry out operations and makes use of the structural frameworks already in place within participating Ministries. In honour of its mission and to emphasise a vision for the holistic empowerment of women, the Mission has been given the name Mission Purna Shakti.

##### **Mission areas of focus**

- Water, sanitation, and hygiene access for women.
- Coverage for every girl child from preschool grades to class 12, especially those from marginalised populations
- Women's higher and professional education
- Gender sensitization & information distribution
- Preventing crime against women & establishing conditions that are safe for women.

##### **India's National Policy for Women's Empowerment (2001)**

##### **Goal & Objectives**

This policy aims to empower, advance, and develop women. To guarantee that all stakeholders actively engage in achieving the policy's goals, it will be extensively disseminated. The objectives of this policy are as follows:

- (i) Creating an environment conducive to women's full development through favourable economic and social policies that enables them to reach their full potential
- (ii) Women practising all fundamental freedoms and human rights on an equal basis with men in all spheres of life, including politics, economics, social life, culture, and civil rights
- (iii) Equitable participation and opportunity in the social, political, and economic life of the nation for women.
- (iv) Among other things, women should have equal access to health care, high-quality education at all levels, career and vocational advice, employment, equal pay, workplace health and safety, social security, and public office.

- (v) Enhancing legislative frameworks to eliminate all forms of discrimination towards women.
- (vi) Changing the cultural attitudes and community behaviours through men & women's active participation and involvement.
- (vii) Gender mainstreaming for development process.
- (viii) The elimination of all types of violence and discrimination against women and girls.
- (ix) Establishing and fostering partnerships with civil society organisations, particularly those that speak for women.

### **Provisions made under India's twelfth five-year plan**

#### **Economic Development**

The Twelfth Plan aims to improve the working circumstances for women who are self-employed in order to expand the asset base of women in the formal economy and their employability. Increased employment of women, particularly in secondary and tertiary industries, as well as providing them with rewarding occupations, empowering women in agriculture, fostering financial inclusion, and extending women's land and property rights would be given priority. This will bring economic development.

#### **Skill development**

Lack of skills, particularly in secondary and tertiary industries, greatly hinders women's involvement in the labour. The Twelfth Plan suggests a significant extension of skill development from traditional to emerging capabilities in order to aid women, dispel gender stereotypes, and access jobs demanding higher skill sets. Women will be trained to work in BPOs as electronic technicians, electricians, plumbers, salespeople, vehicle drivers, taxi drivers, and masons in addition to other occupations. The development of new talents would be considered as a method to enhance the lives of everyone, not just women.

The lack of female participation in new roles is arguably the biggest barrier to closing the economic gender gap. Women are notably underrepresented in the majority of emerging occupations, according to a new analysis done. In "cloud computing" job cluster, where women make up to 13% of all professionals, this disparity is especially glaring.

According to findings, this reality provides two significant obstacles to leaders interested in reducing the gender gap in the future. The first & most obvious complexity is that more has to be done to prepare women for high-demand jobs. Indeed, there is an economic consequence to failing to do so, as skills gap in certain fields stifle economic progress.

The second is a little more challenging. As per secondary data it shows that women are not always equally represented, even when they have a skill set that is in demand. Women have only 25% of the responsibility in data science, but they make up 31% of those with the essential expertise. Similarly, there is no gender disparity in terms of skill sets for digital specialists; yet, women hold only 41% of these positions.

These findings emphasise three key actions that must be taken to hardwire gender equality into future workforces: increasing diversity in recruiting; ensuring that women have access to disruptive technologies; and promoting inclusive work environments.

#### **The Global Gender Gap in 2020**

Three of the four aspects of the gender disparity have improved in the region, but the political empowerment divide has only gotten worse there.



Two-thirds of the gender gap in South Asia has been abolished. The second-largest gender gap is found in this area.

The Middle East & North Africa (MENA) area receives the lowest score (61.1 percent), despite a 0.5-point improvement year over year.

The World Economic Forum's flagship publication on the Platform for the Development of the New Economy & Society is the Global Gender Gap Report. The progress of prosperous, inclusive, and equitable economies and society is made possible by the Platform. Its main goal is to collaborate on the development of a new vision in the areas of growth and competitiveness, education, skills, and employment, as well as equality and inclusion.

Observing some suggestions that may need to be made in order to assist and empower women.

1. Gender is frequently a continual process that is overlooked. Frequently, during this, it is revealed that women are still not actively participating and are falling behind in economic activities, and federal state initiatives are made to encourage women to improve engagement in socioeconomic activities. Making people more aware of the importance of bringing about gender equality is the first step in helping them.

2. The average number of hours worked by women is twice that of men, leaving little time for personal growth. They work the hardest and get up early and last, carrying children on their backs while working as workers, carrying water and firewood, pounding grain, weeding crops with hoes held in one hand, and hauling produce to market.

3. Many women remain housebound, unable to move freely or associate with others, unable to learn about their rights, and unable to take action to improve their own and their families' circumstances. Even if they are aware, they lack the cultural aptitude for assertiveness.

4. Under the name of leadership equality, women are prohibited from casting a vote on significant decisions. Women's leadership development can be significantly accelerated through mentoring, creating a constituency of community women, providing leadership training, and creating federations with other women leaders.

5. Powerful grassroots federations, cooperatives, and organisations for women offer platforms for long-term campaigning for women's emancipation.

6. Reducing gender disparities in educational access and attainment are critical components of achieving gender equality and minimising women's disempowerment. Around 245 million Indian women are illiterate, making them the world's largest group of illiterate women.

7. Women need money not only to start or grow their small businesses, but also to deal with the considerable seasonal fluctuations in their family's income. According to numerous studies, when women manage the finances, they spend more on their children's education, health, and nutrition.

8. Women and their children have a fundamental human right to affordable health care.

### **Suggestions**

- A collective approach towards educating all the sections of society.
- Employment generation rate should be increased for women.
- Women's participation and involvement in decision making processes should be expanded at every field of society.

- Enhancement of having a good quality education and learning's for every individual should be easy to access.
- There should be no discrimination made under all the stages of employment and management.
- Universal health care coverage must be adopted in corresponding to gender differences.
- Raise awareness programmes related to gender sensitivity and educate people to stop violence and harmful practices towards women irrespective of any religion.
- Criminal offense being performed towards women must be stop.
- Equal wage for equal work of equal value must be promoted at workplace.
- Create awareness and understandings about gender equality among children and men.
- A comprehensive policy development programme should be implemented for women's lifelong health.

### **Conclusion**

Gender Relation is like talking about all the social relations of our society which are multi-dimensional in nature. They embody with different idea, value, and identities. The division of labour according to skills among various jobs and activities that are governed by various agencies and authorities in terms of decision-making Gender inequalities have a wider concept and it is complicated because it cannot be reduced by just changing sine sets of priorities. In order to bring a wider change in society among individuals to bring equality among genders the concept must be adapted in broader aspect. However, gender-based relations issues are not connected internally closely because it there are some contradictions and imbalances. Gender sensitivity is also a major concern of bringing equality and empowering women. We generally see these changes at broader level whenever there is a change in Socio- economic environment from Government side. Education plays a vital role in reducing disparities among genders. Access to Education should be easy for every individual irrespective of any gender or age. An integrated and interrelated approach must be made to bring equality in society. Discrimination made on the basis of gender, age, race, religion, caste must be prohibited. A collective support from both central and state government is required to achieve a cheerful and sustainable future.

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