



GENDER EQUITY



PG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
ANNA ADARSH COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

EDITED AND COMPILED BY

Dr. G. Neathravathi,
Head, Department of Social Work

CONTRIBUTORS

Ms. S. Gayathri, Assistant Professor

Ms. R. Leena Roseline, Assistant Professor

Ms. Subhalakshmi.V.S, MSW II yr. Student

Ms. Priyanka.C, MSW II yr. Student

Ms. Varsha.R, MSW II yr. Student

Ms. Gayathri.S, MSW II yr. Student

Ms. Swathi.P, MSW II yr. Student

Ms. Nuzhath Fathima.K, MSW II yr. Student

Ms. Kanaga Priya.T.S, MSW II yr. Student

PREFACE

Equity guarantees a just society in which everyone can participate and thrive. Equitable conditions must be established in order to enable everyone to realize their full potential and development. We live in a “Man’s World” where women are subjected to systematic discrimination which has constrained them from achieving equal participation in all aspects of their life. Women’s limited participation or unfavourable inclusion not only affects their development but the whole society. As women constitute half of the population if they are left behind in the developmental process then half of the nation is under developed. So, to build a strong developed nation it is necessary to build a gender equal society. Bringing gender equality not only improves lives of woman but improves the quality of life for all. With better education, employment and participation in the decision-making, women can provide better education and health care to the family and a tremendous boost to the overall GDP. Hence gender inequality should not be contextualized as a women’s issue, it is a state issue. Recognizing the importance of gender equality in 2015 summit UN has adopted it as one of the key strategies for sustainable development.

Gender equity is the need of the hour. This book has attempted to capture the persistence of various forms of gender inequalities and injustices in Indian society and also the various initiatives taken by the government and social activists to address the issue. This book contains five main chapters which discuss about the gender norms, gender gap dimensions, persisting gender inequality issues, women movements and the best practices to promote gender equity.

This book is the result of a collaborative effort that drew on the knowledge, expertise, and talents of numerous people. We sincerely value their contribution and thank them. We also thank the numerous books and online resources that assisted us in compiling the necessary data for this book.

We thank the staff and students of PG department of Social Work for their constant support and time for the successful completion of the book.

We take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Management, Punjab Association, Dr.R.Shanthi, Principal and Dr.Anita Raman, Vice-Principal for their motivation which helps us to achieve greater heights.

“Achieving gender equality requires the engagement of women and men, girls and boys. It is everyone’s responsibility.” – Ban Ki Moon

- PG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

CONTENTS

Preface		v
Contents		vii
Chapter 1	Understanding Gender	1
Chapter 2	Gender Gap Dimensions	4
Chapter 3	Gender Equality – A Long Way to Go	9
	3.1 Sex Ratio	9
	3.2 Health of Women	14
	3.3 Girl Child Education	22
	3.4 Women Employment	28
	3.6 Crime Against Women	37
Chapter 4	Women Fight for Equality	48
Chapter 5	Best Practices to Promote Gender Equity	55
References		67

UNDERSTANDING GENDER

“A gender-equal society would be one where the word ‘gender’ does not exist: where everyone can be themselves.” — Gloria Steinem

Gender is a social construct of norms, attitude, behaviour of the person and the roles associated with being man or woman. Being a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time. Often people confuse the terms gender with sex. The term sex refers to the biological distinction of being male and female, which is inherited whereas gender is acquired.

Biological Concept of Gender:

In the twentieth century studies were conducted to analyse the biological aspect of gender to understand the gender more than physical and behavioural difference. It was found that the brain functions are significantly different for men and women, both the genes and hormones affect the functioning and development of brain and their behaviour.

Richard J. Haier and colleagues at the universities of New Mexico and California (Irvine) found that men have more than six times the amount of gray matter related to general intelligence used for information processing than women, and women have nearly ten times the amount of white matter related to intelligence used for connections between processing centres than men. Haier states that, “Two different brains have been created with equal intelligence during the human evolution”. Even when men and women do the same chores equally well, they may use different brain circuits to get the same results.

Though there is difference in the intelligence between gender, none is superior or inferior to one another and both are complementary in nature. It is the nature of man to discriminate one to establish power over the other.

Social Concept of Gender:

Gender is a social construct influenced by ethnicity, historic and cultural background, family values and religion. It is used to socially categorize people that lead to prejudice and discrimination against women. The society has many different ways and processes to pass on the expectation associated with being a boy or a girl.

“Two different brains have been created with equal intelligence during the human evolution”.

- Richard J. Haier

From the moment of the birth of the child gender difference is nourished by family and society in a systemic way. Right from the choice of the toys, assigning chores, choice of education, employment and at every step of the life of a young child is created based on their gender. A boy or a girl is expected to follow only the sanctioned behaviour as per their gender specification. In order to reinforce this those who follow will be awarded with positive incentives whereas those who challenge or defy will be awarded with negative incentive or severe punishment. Further it has been imprinted by observing and learning from their adult counterparts.

Another important place apart from their family, media plays an important role in the gender identity education of children. Young children can get easily influenced by what they see as an accepted behaviour in the media. Media constantly depicts the gender stereotype models through advertisements and characterisation in shows. Children interpret these messages as "real life" which shapes their reality, behaviour, and expectations of their gender role. Younger generation learn by modelling and experience and act accordingly.

Cultural and religious beliefs and attitudes have a serious impact on gender identity and in many cases, they promote stereotype beliefs against women and lead to gender discrimination. Though many a times the people know that it is a discriminatory in nature they follow the norms as they want to be accepted as part of the society and doesn't want to be isolated or excluded for non-confirming behaviour. For instance, when a society, due

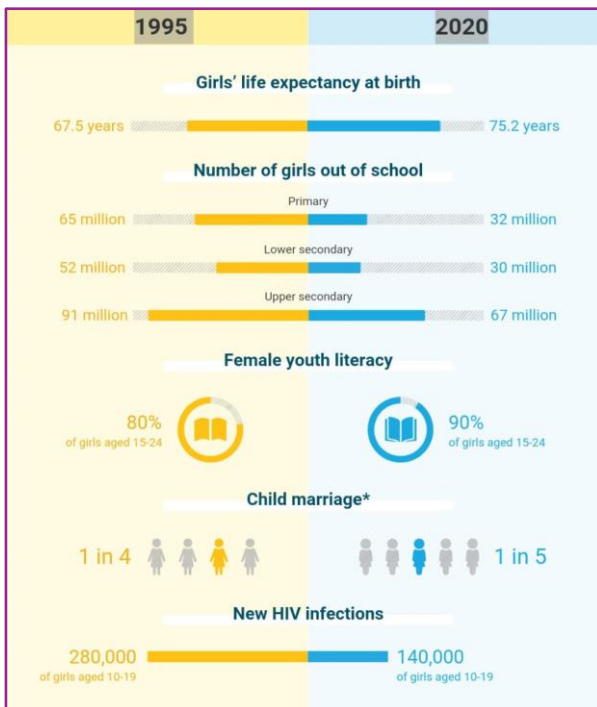
to religious and cultural reasons, view women as weak or inferior people living within the society will develop the same views and will act accordingly. In any religious practices, women were considered secondary or impure.

The emotional, sexual, and psychological stereotyping of females begins when the doctor says, 'It's a girl.'

- Shirley Chisholm

The Stereotype ideas and beliefs pertaining to women has made a gradual and steady change over a period of time but the practices are yet to be curbed and it can be seen in many countries in different forms.

In several countries around the world such as Arabian courtiers, Africa, Bangladesh and Pakistan things have not changed much and women are still considered a minority and do not have equal access and rights in their societies as do males.



GENDER GAP DIMENSIONS

Gender discrimination has its root to the patriarchal nature of the society. This caused the fundamental inequality between men and women in Indian society. In the male

“If women are expected to do the same as men, we must teach them the same things” - Plato

dominated patriarch family women are treated as assets and they were not given enough power to take decision or well-informed choices. Mostly it was forced on them may it be assigning household chores, child marriage, discontinuing of education etc.

Some of the key features which can help to understand the gender parity in a society is demographic index such as sex ratio, mortality and morbidity rate, poverty ratio, education attainment, employment status and political participation

One of the key dimensions of gender inequality is disproportionate burden of poverty on women. Women are estimated to make up 70% of world poor. Thus, the probability of facing the causes arises out of poverty such as malnutrition, inadequate health care, less education etc., is likely to be higher for women. Maternal mortality is one of the direct outcomes of women poverty. Predominantly the maternal mortality can be the result of prenatal malnutrition, comorbidity, lack of proper health care, non-institutional delivery. There is a high variation in the rate of maternal mortality between developed nation and



under developed nation. Against 14 maternal mortalities per 100,000 births in a developed nation the under developed nation has an alarming rate of 590 maternal mortality for every 100,000 births, which is equivalent to 6 deaths per 1000 birth. So due to poverty the women have higher chances to die due to the delivery complications (World Bank, 2012).

Another important manifestation of gender inequality is violence against women. The women are succumbing to various forms of gender-based violence such as rape, acid attack, domestic violence, dowry deaths, etc. The crimes or violence also changes its forms according to the changes in the society for e.g. cybercrime, which is one of the modern-day

violence against women which is equally harmful as physical violence. The damage created out of both physical and psychological violence are equally devastating. The trend of crime and violence against women is always increasing sometimes in changing forms irrespective of the various legislative measures to control it. This shows the vulnerability of women and also the unequal power relation between men and women

Sex ratio is one of a sensitive indicator which conveys how much the girl children are valued in a society (Patel, 2004). the trend of sex ratio is one of a key demographic factor to determine the gender relation in the state. for the persistent low levels of sex ratio, the most common reasons given were preference for sons and neglect of the girl child. Preference of sons over daughters was inflicted by both cultural and social factors. The sons are always linked with income inheritance continuation of blood line whereas daughters are associated with expenditure financial liability property of marital home, thus boys are considered more valuable than girls. Thus, the socio-cultural beliefs pushed to women to a lower status and which manifest in various discrimination practices against girl child.

Child Sex Ratio (0-6 yrs) fell from 976 in 1961 to 919 in 2011 – Census data, India

Education and employment play an influential role for empowerment of women. Education is one of the basic needs for any person to emancipate from oppression and realise their potential,



especially to vulnerable section of society. So, for women education is one of the primaries to tool for empowerment. With the help of state intervention and legislative protection measures overall education attainment of women has improved however the gap between men and women literacy rate still persists. One of the key reasons for the persisting gap is the preference of educating a boy than a girl. As per world bank 2012, in developing countries close to

one quarter of girls do not attend schools. Basically, the families with limited income put the education of boy as priority sometimes even at the cost of dropping out girl child. So in a difficult circumstance the chances of dropping out was higher for girl child. Apart from

economic reason, culture also play a major role in education of women. Women are mostly seen as procreation tool and also the carrier of purity. In order to maintain the endogamy many girl children are dropped out in the name of safety and security. This scenario could be easily understood by the prevalence of child marriage. So this greatly affects the education and employment of women in India.

Though there are many factors which exemplifies the status or value of women in a particular society, global community has developed a set of indicators to understand the status of women in a country, they are “*Global Gender Gap Index and Gender Development Index*”.

Global Gender Gap Index

The gender score | India ranked 135 in gender parity out of 146 countries, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2022 released by the World Economic Forum. A look at India's ranking in the four sub-indexes based on which the overall ranking was determined

India	Rank 2022*
Global gender gap index	135
Economic participation and opportunity	143
Educational attainment	107
Health and survival	146
Political empowerment	48

*out of 146 countries



Since the compilation of the index the gap score of India was oscillated between 0.593 and 0.683. In 2022, India ranked 135th place with score of 0.629 which is the seventh highest score in the last 16 yrs. Female constitutes 662 million population in India, and the score is varied for various states and regions. Hence the India’s score was highly depended on the regional rankings. On 2021

India registered the most significant and positive change in the economic participation and opportunity for women irrespective of the shrunk in labour force participation of both men and women. However, in every other indicator India has gained in parity relative to the weighting of other indicators on the subindex. The share of women legislators, senior officials and managers increased from 14.6% to 17.6%, and the share of women as professional and technical workers grew from 29.2% to 32.9%. The gender parity score for estimated earned income improved; while values for both men and women diminished, they declined more for men. The Educational Attainment and Health and Survival subindexes report small, insignificant changes. However, Political Empowerment records a declining

score (-0.010) due to the diminishing share of years women have served as head of state for the past 50 years.

Sl. No	Indicators	Female	Male	Gender Gap
HDI Value		0.573	0.699	-0.126
1	Life Expectancy at Birth	71.0 yrs.	68.5 yrs.	2.5 yrs.
2	Expected years of Schooling	12.6 yrs.	11.7 yrs.	0.9 yrs.
3	Mean Years of Schooling	5.4 yrs.	8.7 yrs.	-3.3 yrs.
4	Gross National Income Per Capita	2,331	10,702	-8,372
GDI VALUE OF INDIA 2019 is .820				

Gender Development Index (GDI)

The simplest definition of the Gender Development Index is the ratio of females to compare female Human Development Index values (HDI f) to male Human Development Index values (HDI m). This indicates the changes in the development of women in comparison to men in any country. The same three indicators used for calculations of HDI are used according in table given below. The three dimensions of a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living are calculated according to the framework provided.

The top five countries in GDI are Norway, Ireland, Switzerland, Hongkong and Iceland where the human development is very high. In the south Asian countries Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines and China are reported to have high human development. But India falls in the medium human development index which ranks between 120 to 156.

The GDI score of India is less than the medium HDI that means it is in low category. Further it is also less than the average of South Asian Countries.

So from the data it can be concluded that the development of women in various field such as education, employment political participation etc., is undeniable. However irrespective of the development the prevalence of gender discrimination and inequality is clearly seen in many aspects of the women's lives of people.

“The only way to solve the problem of women’s subordination is to change people’s mindset and to plant the new idea of gender equality into every mind.”

– Qingrong Ma

GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality means that irrespective of being a man or a woman all should have equal access to every opportunity that can bring personal social and economic development as well as equal power relation to take decision for their life. Women empowerment plays a crucial role to achieve gender equality. It includes not only economic independence but authority to take decision concerning her life, access to the resources, and

overall felt self-worth about her ability to create a change. Concern of issues related to gender issues does not include women alone. Gender inequality is a manifestation of relationship exchange between men and women in a society. So, the attitude and behaviour of men plays an essential role to achieve gender equality.

“Gender Equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance.”

- Kofi Annan

SEX- RATIO

Sex ratio is one of a sensitive indicator which conveys status of women in the society (Patel, 2004). the trend of sex ratio is one of a key demographic factor to determine the gender relation in the state. According to the census data there has been a steep decline in the child sex ration (0-6 yrs) i.e., from 976 in 1961 the sex ration fell to 919 in 2011 (Census Data). The disparity in the sex ratio reflects unequal position of women in the society and also the prevalence of gender discrimination in the Indian society. For the persistent low levels of

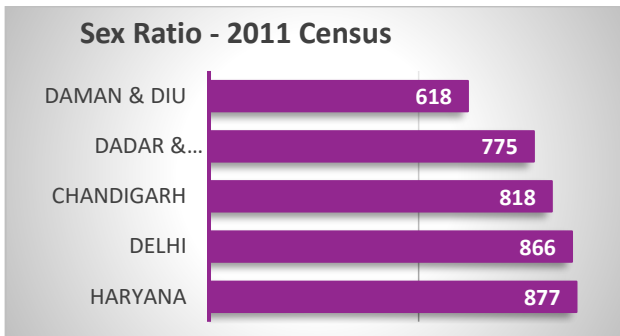
sex ratio, the most common reasons given were preference for sons and neglect of the girl child. Preference of sons over daughters was inflicted by both cultural and social factors. The sons are always linked with income inheritance continuation of blood line whereas daughters are associated with expenditure financial liability property of marital home, thus boys are



considered more valuable than girls. Thus, the socio-cultural beliefs pushed to women to a lower status and which manifest in various discrimination practices against girl child.

As per 2011 census there are only 940 females for every 1000 males. The ratio was declined as low as 618 females to every 1000 males in Daman and Diu. So, this reveals a very appalling trend of sex ratio in India. The sex ratio in India is 940 females per thousand males as per 2011 census.

The sex ratio is primarily influenced by sex ratio at birth and differential mortality rate.

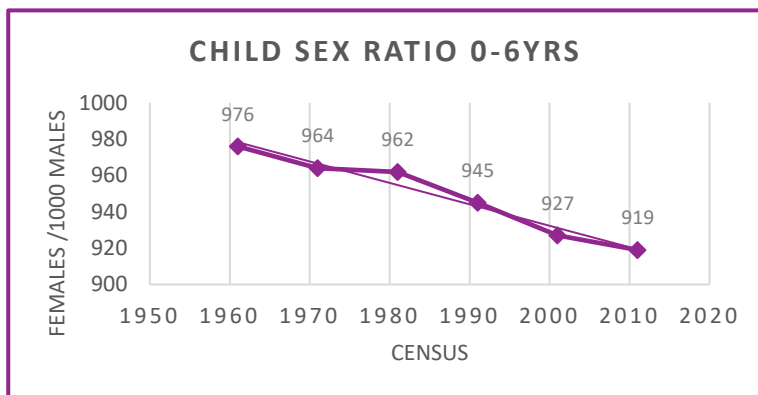


The preference of son is so strong among the patriarchal society, which manifest itself in limiting the survival of girl child since from the conception. The prenatal diagnostic technique is used to identify the sex of the child during the conception period and lead to sex selective abortion to avoid female birth. This is one of the key reasons for low female birth.

After the birth of the female child the neglect of parents tend to increase their morbidity and mortality rate thus it further intensifies the population bias.

As per census from 945 girls to every 1000 boys in 1991, the ratio has declined to 927 girls to 1000 boys in 2001 and it became dismal 919 girls in 2011. An acute skewed trend can be observed from the data.

The 2001 census data for India revealed a sharp decline in the sex ratio for the population age 0-6, from 945 females in 1991 to 927 females per 1,000 males. The trend in the sex ratio of the under-seven population based on National Family Health Survey data for the period 1992-93 to 2005-06 also provides evidence of continued decline and shows that in 2005-06 the under-seven sex ratio had fallen further to 918 females per 1,000 males. Following the NFHS data the 2011 census data on under six years confirmed the steep decline of sex ratio i.e. 919 girls for every 1000 boys.



Decline of Sex Ratio – Causes and Consequences

The popular belief is higher the education and better economic position education could possibly create an ambience for gender equality. To demystify it the child sex ratio has revealed that highest ratio 972 females per 1,000 males, in the lowest wealth quintile state, Arunachal Pradesh and the sex ratio at birth falls

As per 2011 census there are only 940 females for every 1000 males. The ratio was declined as low as 618 females to every 1000 males in Daman in Diu.

dramatically by wealth to a low of 834 for births to women in the highest quintile states in India, Haryana (NIPCCD, 2018). In India, however, the post neonatal mortality rate (the number of deaths to children age 1–11 months per 1,000 live births) for females is 21, compared with only 15 for boys. The child mortality rate, defined as the number of deaths to children age 1-4 years per 1,000 children reaching age 1 year, is 61% higher for girls

than for boys (NFHS-3). From the above data it is clearly evident that the chances of birth and survival for girl child is far less than a boy child.

The United Nations recently declared India to be the world's most dangerous place for girls: Until the age of five, according to a new UN study, their mortality rate is 75 percent higher than that of boys. In addition, for 100 new-born girls, about 112 boys are born, whereas nature usually dictates a ratio of 105 boys to 100 girls (humanium.org, 2018).

These alarming trends in sex ratios and survival rates indicate that preferences for sons in Indian society have been established over the years. Having A son is expected to carry on the family name/blood line, earn money, support the parents in their old age, and perform funerals, but the girls mean economic burden, further the sense of attachment also less because they will be married of to another family with a dowry. So, the overall social and economic disposition of girls in a family is very marginal.



Another important factor for decline of sex ratio is desire for smaller families. Desire for smaller family combining with strong preference for boy child becomes detrimental to unborn girl child. This led to the systematic abortion of female foetus. The development of prenatal diagnosis technology has made it even easier to select the sex of the unborn child.

Women are often under tremendous pressure from family and society to have sons instead of daughters. Some women experience violence and abandonment when they give birth to daughters or when they refuse to engage in gender selection practices. Fear of being victimized compels women to practice sex selection and infanticide.

Another important factor is high mortality rate of female child. Because girl children are vulnerable due to practice of discriminatory attitude which is exhibited in post-natal care, breastfeeding, allocation of nutrition food, health care etc.

The gender imbalance in the Indian society can increase forced marriages, rape, trafficking of girls and women for purpose of marriage and sexual exploitation.

HEALTH OF WOMEN IN INDIA

In terms of biology, females have an edge over men. Men die more often than women do throughout their lifetime in western nations with low survival rates. Since there are more women than men in the population overall, women may anticipate living longer than men. India, however, is one of the few

nations where men greatly outnumber women. There were only 943 females for every 1000 males, according to the 2011 Census. Apparently, In India, there are 1,020 women for every 1,000 men, according to the NFHS-5, which was just published in December 2020.

The most direct effects of poor health and nutrition among females in countries such as India are high mortality rates among young children and women of childbearing age and high morbidity rates throughout the life-cycle. Social, cultural, and economic variables, which have an impact on all facets of women's life, are intricately linked to the dietary and health condition of women. The wellness of their children, especially female offspring, is affected as well as the women themselves.

In the old days, males have dominated the medical field. Because there were few women working in medicine, doctors had a one-size-fits-all mentality and treated men and women equally. They believed that all sexes experienced health and sickness in the same way, and the vast majority of scientific studies and clinical trials solely enrolled men as subjects. Researchers started to recognise in the 1980s and 1990s that there were still a lot of unanswered questions on how diseases and illnesses impact women, women's health trends, and how hormonal variations may affect women's disease progression and therapy response. Women's health and reproductive health are often thought of as being somewhat interchangeable terms. While it is true that some health illnesses, such as breast cancer and gynaecologic health problems, impact women more frequently or exclusively than men, there are many other conditions that have differing effects on both men and women.

The evolution of women's rights and the education around them from the early 1900s to the present day have been intimately linked throughout history, making women's health and

“When women can decide whether and when to have children, it saves lives, promotes health, expands education, and creates prosperity – no matter what country in the world you’re talking about.”

- Melinda gates

well-being a diverse and complex issue. Discrimination has afflicted women as patients throughout history, from sex education and health education to domestic abuse and mental health, to sexual and reproductive health, including menstruation, pregnancy, menopause, and hormones. Feminism and the struggle for women's rights go hand in hand with the fight for an equitable approach to women's health care, mental and sexual health, and education.

Why is Women's Health Being Important?

Women's health is a clear indicator of how well the country is doing. Because of their declining standard of living, emerging nations are more concerned about women's health. India has achieved significant social and economic advancements recently, such as an increase in life expectancy, but infant mortality and illiteracy show that it has trailed behind in terms of the advancement of women's health.

“To be liberated, women must feel free to be herself, not in Rivalry to man but in the context of her own capacity and her personality.”

- Indira Gandhi

The issues influencing the women's health are multifaceted. Despite recent efforts, the wellness of women continues to rank among the community's most critical health issues, particularly in emerging nations like India. For the sake of the children, family, society, and ultimately the nation, women's health is crucial. One of every person's fundamental right is to have the best possible level of health. It is essential to awaken the woman in effort to awaken the masses. Once she moves, the family, the community, and the entire country move with her. Taking mental health as an illustrative example. Women are more prone than males to develop depression as a result of puberty, pregnancy, and menopause because of changes in their chromosomal and hormonal makeup. Culturally speaking, women are more prone than males to discuss and seek treatment for mental health problems.

Gender Bias – The Reason for Negligence of Women's Health

A form of prejudice known as gender bias favours one gender over the other. In this case, most cultures only prioritize men over women and place a high value over men for various beliefs. In India, discrimination against women and low status are both a result of several cultural traditions. Indian gender norms are a result of patriarchy, hierarchy, and

multigenerational households, among other social constraints. In India, men are more favoured and enjoy superior privileges, which leads to a culture in which women have little to no influence. Even while Indian women nowadays may be highly concerned with the

“India is the only country in the world where more girl babies die than boy babies (U5MR). The gender differential in under 5 mortality is 3 percent. – UNICEF

health and wellbeing of their families and children, they rarely find time for themselves. Some medical and mental health practitioners continue to be suspicious about female emotional and physical suffering, frequently believing that women exaggerate or fabricate their symptoms. There is also the ongoing stigma associated with issues related to female reproductive health. It is discovered in several news articles that doctors writing off severe pelvic discomfort as cramps and advising over-the-counter painkillers due to this stigma and a general lack of understanding of the menstrual cycle, a natural process that is absolutely required for human existence. One of the reasons for which women are perceived as less valued in families is because of marriage duties. Due to the increased future financial responsibility placed on women in the family, a power structure favouring men is developed. In addition, boys are frequently preferred over girls since it is widely believed that women are incapable of caring for their parents as they age.

Status of Women’s Health:

Women were notably absent in clinical research in prior decades. Apparently, this is because women were frequently unavailable to volunteer in clinical research studies since they were the primary caretakers. Maybe it's because female bodies were only viewed as scaled-down copies of male bodies since researchers didn't understand the nuanced variations between genders. Family, marriage, and kinship relationships have a significant role in

*Neonatal Mortality (1- 28 days)
40.9 male v/s 36.8 female. Post-neonatal mortality (28 days to 1 year) 15.4 male v/s 20.9 female.
Under 5 Mortality 69.7 male v/s 79.2 female
- OXFAM India*

determining an individual's and household's situations as well as their access to important social resources in traditional civilizations. Although these connections vary considerably between cultures, they all share the idea that gender is defined in terms of the right duties, responsibilities, and behaviours of women well within wider social structure. This social

structure led to the negligence of the women's health for decades. Overall, males are valued more highly in the household than women.

In the old days, males have dominated the medical field. Because there were few women working in medicine, doctors had a one-size-fits-all mentality and treated men and women equally. They believed that all sexes experienced health and sickness in the same way,

“Women’s health needs to be front and centre – it often isn’t, but it needs to be.”

– Cynthia Nixon

and the vast majority of scientific studies and clinical trials solely enrolled men as subjects. Researchers started to recognise in the 1980s and 1990s that there were still a lot of unanswered questions on how diseases and illnesses impact women, women's health trends, and how hormonal variations may affect women's disease progression and therapy response. Women's health and reproductive health are often thought of as being somewhat interchangeable terms. While it is true that some health illnesses, such as breast cancer and gynaecologic health problems, impact women more frequently or exclusively than men, there are many other conditions that have differing effects on both men and women.

The health condition of women and their female offspring is impacted both directly and indirectly by the poor position of women in India. Sons are strongly preferred, and resources like food, healthcare, education, and income are distributed inequitably affecting the health of the women. There is also seen high degree of negligence of health care among women themselves, them knowing their own health condition neglect to treat them for various reasons. India tops the list of nations with the greatest rates of maternal mortality as well as the largest proportion of girls who do not attend school. One-quarter of all girls born and raised don't even make it to their 15th birthday. According to estimates, women made for 40% of HIV infections in India in 2005.

Initiatives Taken by the Government to Improve Women Health

In India, women's health, education, and work status have all significantly improved over time. But compared to those for boys and men, health indicators for girls and women do substantially worse. Numerous programmes have been put in place to enhance the health of women by succeeding governments, who have recognised the disparities in health indicators. Numerous initiatives, such as the National Rural Health Mission, offer care for

women, particularly throughout pregnancy, delivery, and the postpartum period. Family planning programmes provide services for women that are connected to contraception, enhancing their health. Numerous public health initiatives have an effect on women's health as well.

“Parents are willing to make the effort for their sons, but not their daughters”.

– Dr. Amit Upadhyaya, Head of Pediatrics, Lala Lajpat Rai Government Medical College

Health is not specifically acknowledged as a Fundamental Right in the Indian Constitution. However, it acknowledges the rights to life, equality, and freedom of speech, expression, and opportunity as fundamental rights, as well as the right to pursue legal relief for the enforcement of these rights. The Directive Principles of State Policy's Article 47 mentions the right to health. For the right to health of women to be understood and upheld, these constitutional clauses must be read broadly.



About 76,000 health and wellness facilities exist in India, and they check for five different sorts of illnesses: hypertension, diabetes, breast cancer, oral cancer, and cervical cancer. A total of 46.4 crore people has visited these health and wellness facilities. Out of these, 24.91 crore that is 53.7% are women. Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram is a service programme that ensures the female adolescents are educated about their health

issues. India had a female adult mortality rate of 142.9 per 1,000 female adults in 2020. India's female adult mortality rate decreased from 357.8 deaths per 1,000 female adults in 1971 to 136.2 deaths per 1,000 female adults in 2020, a moderate pace of decline.

Schemes and Policies

Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandhana Yojan – The Ministry of Women and Child Development launched the Maternity Benefit Program in 2010. It is a conditional transfer plan for first-time mothers who are 19 years of age or older who are both pregnant and nursing. This programme offers child care, a safe environment for delivery, and a nutritious

diet. The programme also compensates these mothers for any salary losses they incur while giving birth.

Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva

Abiyan – This programme intends to give pregnant women in underserved, semi-urban, impoverished, and rural regions free prenatal treatments and necessary treatment during their period of pregnancy of three to six months. Checkups are conducted on the ninth of every month in medical facilities, including public and private hospitals as well as private clinics. Blood pressure, sugar level, weight, a haemoglobin test, a blood test, and screening are all free tests.

“The women of today are the thoughts of their mothers and grandmothers, embodied and made alive. They are active, capable, determined and bound to win. They have one-thousand generations back of them... Millions of women dead and gone are speaking through us today”

– Matilda Joslyn Gage

According to a special report issued by the Registrar General of India, India's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has decreased by 10 points. From 113 in 2016–18 to 103 in 2017–19, it has decreased (8.8 percent decline).

Sanitease – To advance women's health and hygiene, the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports introduced this programme as part of its "Swachhagraha" social development initiative. This programme seeks to increase knowledge and supply women and girls with sanitary products, particularly in rural and urban schools.

Janani Suraksha Yojana – This health programme is fully financed by the Indian government through the National Health Mission, with the goals of enabling all pregnant Below Poverty Line, SC, and ST women to give birth at government health facilities and reducing infant and maternal mortality. The programme also offers monetary incentives to pregnant women of Below Poverty Line, SC, and ST households of Rs. 700 for deliveries in urban areas, Rs. 600 for C-section deliveries in private facilities, along with Rs. 1500. In addition, they receive a financial incentive of Rs. 500 to make up for their lost wages after giving birth if any of the expectant women in the aforementioned groups give birth at home.

Ayushman Bharat Yojana Scheme – In order to give health insurance coverage to all Indians with modest incomes, the Ayushman Bharat Pradhanmantri Jan Arogya Yojana was

launched in 2018. It is a centrally sponsored programme that is jointly supported by the Union government of India and state governments. Some of the standout characteristics of PMJAY include reimbursement for diagnostic costs and out-of-pocket charges for medications, as well as coverage for medical treatment costs up to Rs. 5 lakh per family per year, pre-hospitalization for 3 days, and post-hospitalization for 5 days. Not only that, but the programme also covers pre-existing medical issues, allowing the recipient to receive treatment at any hospital on the panel, no matter where they are located in the nation.

Way Forward

Women's health has to be addressed on a multi-sectoral basis, such as by ending child marriages and providing access to contraception and healthcare facilities at all levels. Healthcare for women throughout their lives should get the majority of attention, while maternal healthcare is unquestionably crucial. The areas that demand emphasis include greater health promotion, routine screening, and preventive care. Women are reluctant to put their health first for several reasons. In order for women to speak out about their health difficulties, there has to be an increase in the number of female nurses, physicians, and other healthcare professionals, particularly in rural regions. Women use health facilities if they are close to where they live since they seldom ever have time for themselves because of their many responsibilities.



Having reputable and high-quality healthcare facilities close to women is the key to ensuring that they can access medical treatments. Women must prioritise their health as well as be aware of the government services that are available to them. As it is often claimed that prevention is preferable to treatment when it comes to many diseases, several stakeholders must

speak out to emphasise the significance of testing and awareness to reduce health risks. Due to the multiple roles that women currently play, they frequently fail to maintain a balanced diet, which contributes to anaemia and malnutrition.

The recently released Global Nutrition Report 2019 states that slightly over half (53%) of Indian women of reproductive age (15–49 years) are anaemic. The fourth National Family Health Survey (NFHS-IV) in 2015–16 projected that a comparable percentage (53%) of people were anaemic. Pregnant women must have frequent checks in order to guarantee that their anaemia is treated and that child birth takes place in a secure environment. Men in society need to have their mindsets corrected, and they need to be educated as well. In order to ensure excellent health for women and eventually for everyone, education is essential.

GIRL CHILD EDUCATION IN INDIA

Introduction

Education is one of the most important means of empowering individuals or the community in general, and women and girls in particular. Education plays a vital role in the human life, especially in Women Empowerment. It also helps to eradicate gender discrimination. Education is the first step to empowering women to choose the way of life she wants to lead. It helps women to be more productive in their work. The level of education achieved and the level of literacy are indicators

of the general development of any society. Gender equality and women's empowerment are essential to achieving prosperity and sustainable development.

“If sons and daughters are treated equally, raised and educated in the same manner, then the responsibilities assumed by men and women would surely become equal. When this happens, the nouns ‘man’ and ‘woman’ would no longer be necessary.”

– Leta Hong Fincher, Betraying Big Brother: The Feminist Awakening in China

Literacy Status of Women in India

Women's education is essential for adequate social and economic development of the country. Both men and women run parallel like two wheels in every society. Both are a significant part of growth and development in the country. Thus, both require equal opportunities in terms of education. Since women are considered as the foremost educator

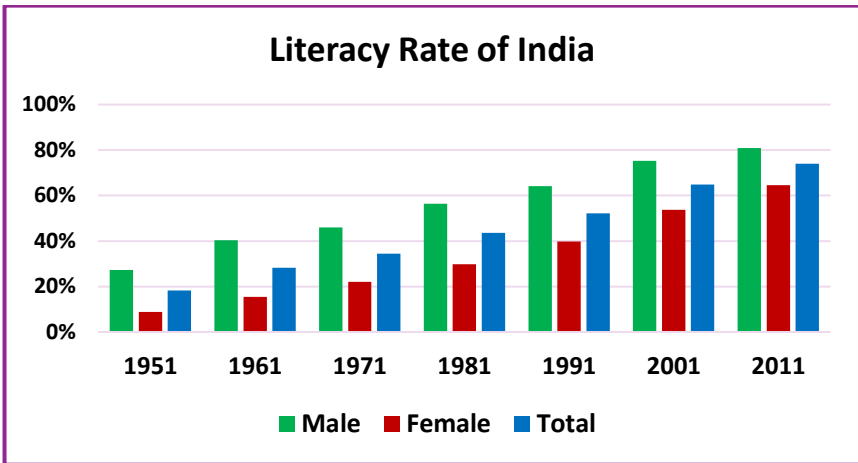


of their children who are the future of the nation, Girl's education in India is essential for the development of the country. Uneducated women cannot contribute dynamically to family management and proper childcare, thereby resulting in a weak future generation.

According to the 2011 census, the overall literacy rate in India is 74% and the female literacy rate is 65.46%. The percentage of female literacy in the country was 54.16% in 2001. The country's literacy rate has increased from 18.33% in 1951 to 74% as per the

2011 census. The female literacy rate has also increased from 8.86% in 1951 to 65.46% in 2011. The female literacy rate increased by 14.87% during the period 1991-2001, while the male literacy rate increased by 1.72%. The increase in the female literacy rate was 3.15% higher compared to the male literacy rate.

The following chart shows general literacy statistics of India and the breakup of literacy rates among men and women.



According to the Census 2011, Kerala has the highest female literacy rate (91.98%) which is higher than the national literacy rate, whereas Mizoram (89.4%) and Tripura (83.15%) take the second and third place respectively. In addition, Rajasthan has the lowest female literacy rate (52.66%), Bihar (53.33%) and Jharkhand (56.21%) holds the subsequent positions.

GIRLS ENROLMENT

The data presented in the following table shows a steady decline in the number of girls enrolled in education as they progress from primary to secondary to tertiary education. There is a clear decline in numbers, especially during the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate courses.

As per educational statistics at a glance, in 2018, for every 100 boys only 92 girls were enrolled in school education further it was reduced to 83 girls for higher education enrolment.

Level-wise Enrolment in School & Higher Education

Level	All Categories		
	Male	Female	Total
Primary (I-V)	66873	62250	129123
Secondary (IV-X)	20547	18598	39145
Senior Secondary (XI-XII)	13002	11733	24735
Higher Education Total	18594	15991	34585

Source: Educational Statistics at a Glance 2018

Factors for Low Literacy Rate of Girls:

Even though India's literacy rates are rising, millions of females are still denied access to education. Millions of girls in the nation are classified as illiterates. A country's economic prosperity as well as the lives of women and their families are greatly harmed by low levels of literacy. In addition to this, it is detrimental to a girl's health. The patriarch Indian

society culture believes that educating females is worthless because they will be married off to another family and will leave eventually their maternal house. Hence it is popularly believed that the sons are more reliable in taking care of their parents whereas it was opinionated that women who marry are not obligated to care for their parents.

“You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation.”

– Brigham Young

Culture plays a major role in the education of women. In Indian culture women are always symbolised with chastity and purity, hence after attaining puberty the overall mobility of the girls is restricted to a great extent in the name of safe and security, which is reflected in early and child marriage, discontinuation of education especially after puberty and in strict endogamy. The parents of the girl child deeply believe that marrying the girl child is one of the safest ways to protect the girl child as well as preventing of taint to their pride and caste if in case of love marriages. Further women are mostly seen as procreation tool rather than an equal economic contributing partner to the family as well as the country therefore education and skilled employment of women are always overlooked.

Basically, the families with limited income put the education of boy as priority sometimes even at the cost of dropping out girl child. So, in a difficult circumstance the chances of dropping out was higher for girl child.

“In developing countries close to one quarter of girls do not attend schools.”

- World Bank 2012

One of the gender descriptions is division of labour. Always the unproductive and household chores are given to women whereas men are engaged in productive work. So, in any household the burden of domestic chores is burden disproportionately to the girl children. Hence, they left with very little time or no time for their after-school education activities. This is one of the major reasons for not able to acquire class appropriate knowledge by the girl children. Apart from these reasons, a significant proportion of girls drop-out due to the lack of access to local educational institutions and lack of regular and safe transportation. Only till primary school neighbourhood schools are promoted so for their secondary and higher education in the rural places the girl children have to travel longer distance. As already mentioned, mobility is highly restricted to girls after puberty, so travelling to longer distance for education was not encouraged by parents irrespective of their economic condition. Lack of adequate toilet/sanitation and hygiene is also cited as the key reason for keeping young girls out of school.

Government Initiatives to Improve Girl’s Education:

An integral part is the expansion of education among girls/women educational policies and programs. Ministry of Human Resources Development undertook a number of

initiatives to expand girls' schools and higher education, the details of which are given below:

School Education:

- **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya** – This program was launched in July, 2004, to provide education to girls at the primary level. It is mainly for disadvantaged and rural areas where girls' literacy levels are very low. The schools that have been established have 100% reservation: 75% for backward class and 25% for BPL (below poverty line) girls.
- **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao** – This is a newly announced scheme of Govt. of India for improving girls' education in India.
- **UDAAN – Giving wings to female students** – The scheme is dedicated to development of girls' education to promote enrolment of girl students. The aim is to address the learning gap between school education and engineering entrance exams. Trying to improve the admissions of female students in prestigious technical educational institutions through incentives and academic support.
- **Mahila Samakhya - Mahila Samakhya (MS)** is an ongoing program for empowerment of women which was launched in 1989 to translate the goals of national education policies into a specific program for education and empowerment of women in rural areas, especially those from socially and economically marginalized groups.
- **Saakshar Bharat:** The National Literacy Mission has been revamped with a new variant, Saakshar Bharat launched in 2009. It aims to accelerate adults' education, especially for women (in the age group of 15 years and above) who do not have access to formal education, focused on women's literacy as critical a tool for women's empowerment.
- **Mid-day meal program:** Gender differences in school participation tend narrow, because the Mid-day Meal program helps to break down the barriers that stand in the way girls from going to school. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme is also useful

source of employment for women and helps free working women from burden of cooking at home during the day. In these and other ways, women and girls have a special share in the mid-day meal program.

Higher Education:

- Scholarships: To pursue higher education as well as to motivate continuation of education various scholarships are provided to girl children. Indira Gandhi Post Graduate Scholarship for Single Girl, Postdoctoral fellowships for women
- Infrastructure facilities: Construction of women's hostels at universities, financial assistance for construction of a female dormitory in the existing polytechnic colleges, day care centre at universities and colleges etc.

Conclusion:

Empowerment of girls and women is an essential prerequisite for sustainable development. New strategies and initiatives must include a range of tools for women's social empowerment. Such as the right and access to meaningful education, proper health care, adequate nutrition, access to property rights and equal opportunities, legal and institutional mechanisms to support women in need. The progress of a country depends on the education of girls. Therefore, girls' education should be promoted. Quality learning is important for the future lives of girls and boys, but it is also a particularly important part of the virtuous circle of development emanating from girls' education. Socio-cultural practices that are barriers to the empowerment of women and girls must be eliminated as soon as possible.

WOMEN EMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

Introduction

Numerous issues, including discrimination, education, unpaid caregiving, work-life balance, and marital status, can affect women's preferences, decisions to enter the workforce, and access to good jobs. Respect for the gender binary is a significant factor in the lack of acceptable employment prospects for women.

“To be liberated, women must feel free to be herself, not in Rivalry to man but in the context of her own capacity and her personality.”

- Indira Gandhi

In comparison to more than 5% of males, over 15% of working women globally support their families. The disparity is greatest in underdeveloped nations, when just 17.2 percent of males and roughly 36.6% of women are employed as contributing family workers.

Women Employment in India

India has one of the lowest rates of female labour force participation worldwide. According to World Bank projections, this percentage was 20.3% in 2019. Over the past ten years, India's women's labour force participation has been steadily declining, and the epidemic has made things worse. According to data from the CMIE (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy), just 7% of working women in the country live in urban areas, indicating that this issue transcends both regions and social classes. Women's contributions to India's

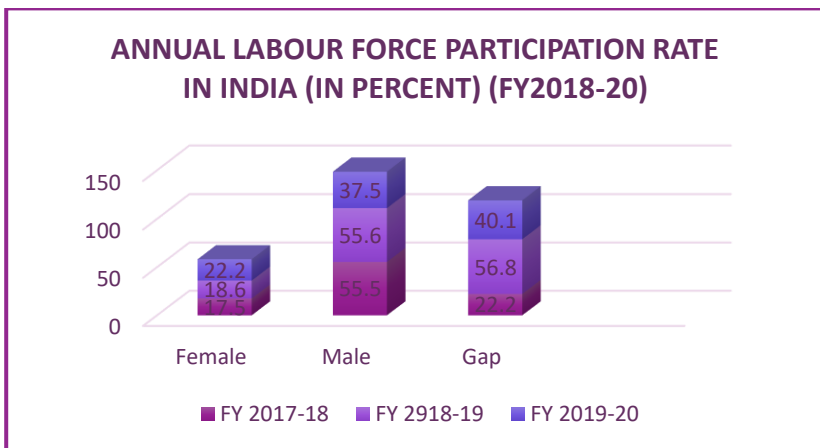


GDP (Gross Domestic Product) are among the lowest in the world at barely 18%, according to a significant 2018 McKinsey analysis. Even a 10% increase in women entering the workforce will have a substantial economic impact on India. Hence without a major increase in women's labour participation, it is difficult to

see India becoming an economic powerhouse.

India's Female Labour Force Participation

Female workforce participation in India is much lower than male labour force participation, according to the annual report of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2019–20 statistics. While the male participation rate was 56.8% in FY 2020, just 22.2% of women participated in the workforce. The most recent quarterly PLFS polls point to a further drop. This was 16.9% in the quarter from January to March 2021, with some of the best performers including Himachal Pradesh (29.6), Andhra Pradesh (23.1), Tamil Nadu (24.2), Kerala (19.5), and West Bengal (19.5). With a participation percentage of 4.4%, the state of Bihar continued to score the poorest, trailing only Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, which both had participation rates of 8.8% and 9.7%.



Source: Authors estimates based on NSO-PLFS (National Statistical Office-Periodic Labour Force Survey) data and population data.

Women Entrepreneurship in India

There are numerous barriers that women face in obtaining and retaining 'good jobs', entrepreneurship provides an alternate avenue to productive participation in the workforce. However, India is not performing well on the index of female entrepreneurship either, with only 21.49 per cent of total establishments and 13.41 per cent of non-agricultural establishments in India being owned by women. As in the case of employment, women face a number of constraints in pursuing entrepreneurship as a means

of livelihood. The most important factors pertaining to business success are a good business proposition, availability of adequate funding, and an understanding of how to set up and manage the business. A study on women's entrepreneurship conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reveals that an absence of business

“There is no such thing as a woman who doesn't work. There is only a woman who isn't paid for her work.”

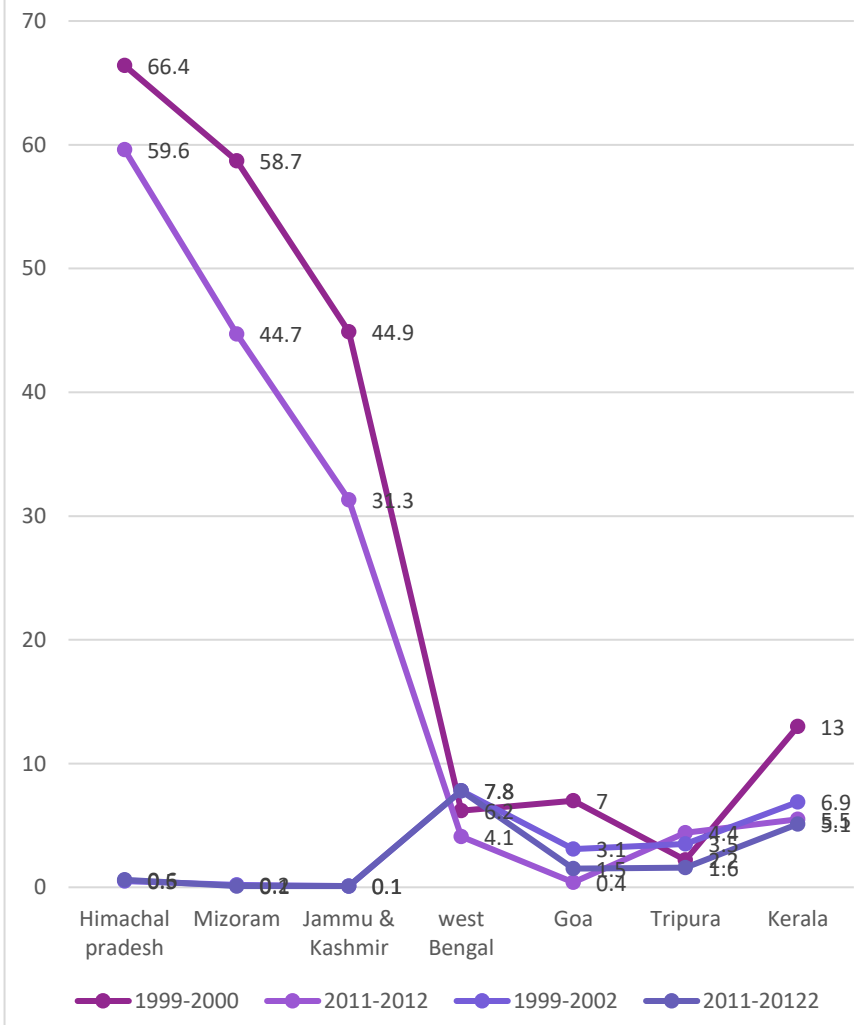
— *Caroline Criado-Perez, Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*

management skills is a major barrier faced by women with entrepreneurial aspirations. A study on women's entrepreneurship conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reveals based on surveys that an absence of business management skills is a major barrier faced by women with entrepreneurial aspirations.

Trends in Women Employment

The collapse of rural employment has particularly hit rural women. This is because women are primarily – and even more so than men – employed in the rural areas and they do not have access to even the limited employment opportunities that are available in the urban economy. Work participation rates for men and women differ in different social groups. Scheduled Tribes have the highest work participation rates for women, followed by the Scheduled Castes, other castes, and finally the Muslims. According to Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-2018, these ranks were maintained between 1999-2000 and 2011-12, there was a sharp decline in work participation rates of working-age women in all social groups. For rural Adivasi women, the work participation rate fell from 71 per cent in 1999-2000 to 55 per cent in both 2009-10 and 2011-12. For rural Dalit women, the work participation rate fell from 53 per cent to about 41 per cent in 2009-10 and about 40 per cent in 2011-12. For each social group, the decline was steeper among rural women than among urban women, and steeper among women than among men

WOMEN WORKERS as SELF EMPLOYED & WAGE LABOUR



Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-2018

Barriers in Mobility of Women Workers

Barriers to the mobility of workers are one of the most important factors behind the decline in the ratio of women's employment. Lack of decent housing and other basic amenities and serious problems of safety, rural women find it difficult to migrate or commute to make use of employment opportunities in urban areas.

Unemployment Surveys, NSSO collects data on location of workplace only for non-agricultural

employment. Further, codes used for the location of the workplace are defined in such a way that they cannot be used to identify rural residents commuting/migrating from their villages to other villages or urban. The social norms we follow, the attitudes we maintain, and the work and education that empower us, in part derive benefit from the privilege our mobility endows us with. When we go out, for how long, where, and with whom are not just mere matters of choice but a consequence of unequal and unjust systems that perpetuate the differences in our ease of access and extents of mobility.

“When women earn more, families are stronger, and children have better access to quality health care and education.”

– Kristen Gillibran

Women Unemployment Rate

In 2011-12, 61 per cent of working-age women are found in rural, about 65 per cent of working-age women are found in urban, and those were principally engaged in housework. Between 1999-2000 and 2011-12, the portion of rural working-age women increased by about 6 percentage points and also the portion of urban working-age women who were principally engaged in housework declined by about 2 percentage points. The portion of rural working-age women who were principally engaged in housework was highest in Bihar which is 81.5 per cent and lowest in Sikkim which is 11.9 per cent. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar over 73 per cent of urban working-age women were principally engaged in housework. A portion of urban working-age women whose principal status activity was housework was lowest in Meghalaya which is 35.7 per cent. In 2011-12, about 17 per cent of rural women who were principally engaged in housework and 4.2 per cent of urban women who were principally engaged in housework were employed in a subsidiary status activity. The rest of the women who are engaged in housework are classified in the NSS (National Sample Survey) as being out of the Labour force. The main change has occurred

in rural women household workers for the overall decline in agricultural employment, there was a decline in participation in agriculture as a subsidiary activity from about 17 per cent in 1999-2000 to about 13 per cent in between the year 2011-12. In recording principal and subsidiary activity statuses in the NSS (National Student Survey) Employment and Unemployment Surveys. The proportion of rural and urban working-age women household workers who regularly undertake different activities for obtaining various commodities for use of their households and in specific, for rural women household workers, obtaining fuel for household use was the most important economic activity.

SECTOR	MEN		WOMEN		ALL	
	1999-2000	2011-2012	1999-2000	2011-2012	1999-2000	2011-2012
CONVENTIONAL						
excluding persons engaged in unremunerated specified activities						
RURAL	1.9	1.9	1.1	1.7	1.6	1.8
URBAN	4.7	3.1	6.1	5.5	4.9	3.6
TOTAL	2.6	2.2	1.8	2.5	2.4	2.3
REVISED						
including persons engaged in unremunerated specified activities						
RURAL	1.9	2.2	43.7	50.7	22.4	24.9
URBAN	4.7	3.2	61.7	53.9	26.0	20.6
TOTAL	2.6	2.5	47.1	51.3	23.2	23.8

Source: National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO)

Between 1999-2000 and 2011-12, there was an increase in the proportion of household worker women who regularly worked to maintain a kitchen garden as well as an increase in the proportion of household worker women who were regularly engaged in free

collection of food. A majority of women principally engaged in housework are engaged in specified unremunerated activities for household use and that is not considered as a part of the labour force in official statistics on employment in India. This results in misleading estimates of the size of the labour force and of the extent of open unemployment that exists in India. As per the Indian System of National Accounts, activities related to production in agriculture and sectors that are crop production, maintenance of animals, fish production and collection of agricultural products, even if for household use, are covered under economic activities.

It is important to include this economically-active population in the labour force, and it is also important to recognise that such work is unremunerated and is minimally productive. In an attempt to correct the error caused by the exclusion of such persons from the labour force, National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) (2014) included them not only in the labour force but also treated them as employed. Given that the work done by these persons is unremunerated and minimally productive, treating them as employed, as done by National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) (2014), is a statistical travesty as great as excluding them altogether from the labour force. In the official statistics on employment in India, only those persons are considered unemployed who, during the reference period, actively sought work but did not find any. This is incorrect since a vast number of people, particularly women, do not seek work simply because, from past experience and their observation of the labour market, they know that getting remunerative employment is not possible.

Schemes and Policies for Women Employment in India

- **Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women:** This was also called as STEP, was launched in the year 1986-1987, to ensure and provide skills that gave employment ability to women, and also to benefit the women age group of 16 and above in the country.
- **Mahila Police Volunteers:** An MPV will serve as a public police interface in order fight against crime in India, the board mandate of Mahila Police Volunteers is to report the violence against women such as domestic violence, dowry, child

marriage and etc., that are faced in public sectors. This was launch in the year 2016.

- **Mahila E-Haat:** This was launched in the year 2016, to facilitate the entrepreneurship opportunities for women in the online basis, and also to educate women in online selling and establish their venture.
- **Women working hostel (1972-1973):** To promote and encourage working among women government has initiated working women hostel to provide safe and convenient accommodation to the working women as well as day care facility for their children. The girl child up to the age of 18 years and boy child up to age of 5 years were provided with day care facility under this scheme.
- **Mahila Shakti Kendra's:** This was launch in the year 2017, where they create an environment for women where they have access to healthcare, quality, education and employment and etc. to facilitate this opportunity in block and district level in the country.
- **Women helpline scheme:** This was launched in 2016, facilitate crisis and non-crisis intervention through referral to the appropriate agencies such as police/Hospitals/Ambulance services/District Legal Service Authority (DLSA)/Protection Officer (PO)/OSC and also provide toll-free 24-hours telecom service to women affected by violence. The women helpline scheme helps to provide information about the appropriate support services, government schemes, and programs available to the woman who are affected by violence, in her particular situation within the local area in which it is employed.

Conclusion

In spite of the various programmes of the government, the country has not made great strides in entrepreneurship development among women. The country will need to formulate economic and social strategies that work parallel to overcome the challenge. The economic strategy, as pioneered in other Asian countries (such as Bangladesh and Vietnam) would be

to promote new industries that are drivers of women’s employment. Even after bringing many schemes and laws to uplift the lives of women and their employment, there is still a gender gap that couldn’t be ignored. Gender equality would accelerate India’s economic growth by leaps and bounds. Better education and more inclusive and flexible workplaces are the need of the hour which would eventually help India achieve its Sustainable Development Goals, that function on the principle,

“Leave no one behind”

CRIME AGAINST WOMEN

Gender-based violence is one of the most overt manifestations of the uneven power relations between men and women. This kind of violence is frequently maintained by a culture of denial and silence, which is firmly ingrained and instilled through social and cultural institutions. Women are disproportionately impacted by gender-based violence, which can occur in both public and private settings.

“Sexual, racial, gender violence and other forms of discrimination and violence in a culture cannot be eliminated without changing culture.”

– Charlotte bunch

A girl can be victim or target of crime even before born.

Gender-based violence can take many different forms, ranging from rape or murder to verbal abuse and hate speech on the Internet. It can also be sexual, physical, verbal, psychological (emotional), or socio-economic in nature. Anyone can commit it, including current or past spouses or partners, members of the family, co-workers, classmates, friends, strangers, or representatives of institutions from other cultures, religions, states, or intra-states. As with other forms of violence, gender-based violence is a problem involving power dynamics. It is motivated by a sense of superiority and a desire to demonstrate that superiority in the family, at work, at school, in the neighbourhood, or in society at large.

The United Nations approved the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women on September 3, 1981. By prohibiting "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life," the convention seeks to protect women (United Nations). India approved this convention in the same year. Nevertheless, India continues to fall short in its efforts to safeguard women from this incredibly brutal kind of prejudice against them.

Gender Violence at Different Stages of Woman Life

Stage 1	Foeticide and infanticide	Where there is an economic or cultural preference for sons, the pregnancy diagnostic tools can lead to female foeticide and abandonment of new born child as well as infanticide
Stage 2	School going age	Many Girls are not given the access to proper education due to discrimination in the family and society
Stage 3	Adolescence	Many adolescent girls become victims of sexual abuse both on internet and otherwise, exploitation and violence, acid attacks, rape, early marriage, or even HIV/AIDS.
Stage 4	Marriage	Many women are tortured physically, economically and emotionally after their marriage by their husband and in laws and also succumbs to dowry related violence
Stage 5	Motherhood	Women many times are not provided with proper nutrition, pre-natal and post-natal care, and overall health care. She is often compelled to abort a female foetus or forced to give many births in expecting boy child
Stage 6	Workplace	often women suffer at work place due to unequal pay, lack of recognition for their work, sexual harassment, etc.,

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), crimes against women have been steadily rising in India lately. The World Health Organization has classified gender-based violence as a high impact health problem for women in India. In India cultural practices promote gender inequality and covers the violence against women as a private affair of the family and it is considered as the right of the husband/family to discipline the

woman in the family. In India, gender-based violence is heavily entrenched and grows out of social, cultural, or religious traditions (Johnson et al., 2007). Because men and women are subject to distinct laws, oppression beliefs encourage gender inequity and enable violence against women (Russo and Pirlott, 2006). The sex-gender system that exists in India exposes girls and young women to many sorts of violence, including as infanticide and selective abortion procedures, harassment, rape, kidnapping, and murder, preventing them from leading dignified lives (Patel, 2015).

As per data maintained by National Crime Record Bureau, the conviction rate of States/UTs relating to cognizable crime under Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special & Local Laws (SLL) crimes during 2018, 2019 and 2020 is 66.6, 66.4 and 73.4 respectively.

Types of Violence Against Women

Rape

One of the most heinous crimes committed against women is rape. Because in rape more than physical trauma the psychological trauma inflicted by the incident can have a long-lasting impact on the wellbeing of the victim. It is known to be the fourth most common crime against women in India (Women

laws in India.org). Because of the cultural and social norms and beliefs, sexual assault survivors confront various stigma. Due to gender stereotypes many a times the society places the responsibility for the occurrence of the crime on to a victim mentioning reasons such as lack of proper dressing, family background, time of the incident and place of the incident occurred etc., as if the circumstances and the behaviour of the women which led the man to commit the crime. Portrayal of victim as the instigator combined with cultural vulnerability makes less reporting of rape.

“It’s not the bruises on the body that hurt. It is the wounds of the heart and scars on the mind.”

– Aisha Mirza

India is a developing nation, yet rape is still an issue right now. The stigma associated with rape has always existed. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports that a total of 32,559 rape incidences were registered in 2017, while 33,356 instances were reported in 2018. In 2018, 91 rapes were recorded nationwide every single day. Only the cases that



have been reported are included here. Most victims choose not to even report their instances out of concern that they won't be taken seriously or that doing so will harm their own perception of themselves. Only a small percentage of rapes are prosecuted in court each year.

As per National Crime Record Bureau, Rajasthan has highest number of rape victims i.e., 19 percent (women and girl victims) and Nagaland has the least number of rape victims i.e., 0.014 percent (women and girl victims). The most of the offenders were known to victims such as family members, friends, relatives, etc.

Domestic Violence



It is difficult to leave an abusive relationship since, in most cases, the abuser is someone close, loved, and cared for. Abuse in most relationships is about power and control, therefore leaving the relationship is important for one's mental health, financial

stability, and the protection of any children, if there are any.

Despite being aware of the warning signs and symptoms, many victims find it difficult to leave an abusive relationship. Since most victims share family, friends, finances, and emotional ties with their abusers, leaving an abusive relationship requires tremendous mental and psychological fortitude. Most women are stuck in abusive relationships because they are financially reliant on their abusers, they cannot afford to retain an attorney to start a divorce, or

they cannot afford to go through the lengthy legal processes required to ensure safety and security.

But most significantly, it requires awareness of the warning signs and symptoms of domestic violence in order to be ready to survive. To be able to escape violent situations, one furthermore requires solid emotional, financial, legal, and law enforcement assistance.

Some key facts about Domestic Violence

According to the National Family Health Survey-5 report,

- ❖ Almost one-third of women in India had been the victim of physical or sexual abuse.
- ❖ 30% of women between the ages of 18 and 49 have suffered physical abuse since the age of 15, 6% have experienced sexual abuse
- ❖ Only 14% of women reported of their physical and sexual abuse.
- ❖ 32% of married women between the ages of 18 and 49 had been victims of physical, sexual, or emotional spousal abuse.
- ❖ Tamilnadu is one of the top states in high incidence rate of domestic violence against women.
- ❖ Physical violence is more prevalent among women in rural regions (32%) than it is among those in urban areas (24%)

Acid Attack

An acid attack, as defined by the National Commission of India, is "any act of throwing



acid or using acid on the victim in any form with the intention of or with knowledge that such person is likely to cause to the other person permanent or partial damage or deformity or disfiguration to any part of such person's body." The number of acid attacks on women is rising daily, primarily on young females

between the ages of 11 and 30. Sulfuric, nitric, and hydrochloric acids are the most often used acids in these assaults. To raise awareness of this horrible crime, local government agencies and administrative divisions are running a number of community awareness activities.

Dowry

In India, the practice of killing a newlywed lady for dowry is common. The killing of women by the family of their husbands persists despite several efforts, legislation, campaigns, and educational programs at the local and federal levels. The National Crime Records Bureau estimates that 7,634 women lost their lives in 2015 as a result of dowry harassment, or it can be said 20 women died every day because of dowry either they committed suicide or they were killed.

“I’ve lost track of how many dowry deaths have been recorded, but in every single one, I’ve seen this very same pattern: the girl was afraid to stay with her husband and yearned to go back to her parents. However, she was returned to her parents, who learned of her passing a few days later (Rights of equality.com)”. The parents continue to disregard several warning flags because they believe that saving the daughter's marriage is more essential than saving her life.

“Enforcing a law is not sufficient. You have to change people’s mindset and empower women.”

– Sheila Dixit



According to statistics from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), dowry-related crimes caused the deaths of 19 women per day in 2020. 7,141 dowry deaths occurred in 2019 compared to 7,167 in 2018. With 2,274 incidents and 2,302 victims, Uttar Pradesh has the most cases reported. Following this was Bihar, where 1,046 cases and 1,047 victims were reported. Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, Sikkim, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Ladakh, and Lakshadweep did not record any such cases. Cruelty by spouse accounted for 30 percent of crime against women.

Even though the dowry system was prohibited in India in 1961, it continues to be practiced in many regions despite class, wealth, religion, and education of the victim as well as the perpetrator.

Child Marriage

The term "child marriage" typically refers to a societal phenomenon when a young kid, typically a female under the age of eighteen, is wed to an adult man with or without her consent. Two major reasons cited for child marriage is economic constraint and tradition/cultural practices. Whatever the reasons, child marriage has tremendously negative effects that are harmful to any society's advancement.

Girls are expected to have children soon after marriage, before their bodies have matured. This can lead to pregnancy and childbirth complications. Additionally, girls are more vulnerable to domestic abuse. Even if girls have a choice to divorce their abusive spouses, they have difficulty supporting themselves afterwards because they have little financial support and education.

Child marriage has a lot of negative effects on girls and violates the rights of children. Societies that practice child marriage need to be aware of the detrimental effects and must consider letting go of this practice. Marriage is globally agreed to be between two consenting adults and forcing children into marriage does more harm than good



There is a huge discrepancy in the data provided by NCRB and other organization on child marriage. As per NCRB totally 523 cases under the Act were registered in 2019. On the other hand, according to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), at least

15 lakh girls under the age of 18 were married each year in India. This clearly indicates the underreporting of cases.

Sexual Harassment at Work Place

Women's rights to equality, life, and liberty are allegedly violated by sexual harassment at work. As a result, women are less likely to participate in the workforce, which has a

negative impact on their social and economic empowerment as well as the objective of inclusive growth. In order to protect the women at workplace a special act Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act was passed in 2013.

CONCLUSION

Despite the numerous laws designed to defend and promote women's rights and interests, the prevalence of crime against and victimization of women is skyrocketing. It is often claimed that a dance requires two people. It means that the rise in crimes against women in our society is not only under the authority of the law. The eradication of discrimination against women and the instillation of social ethics, morality, and values, as well as respect and dignity for all people toward women, are urgent needs that can also help to lower the rate of crimes against women. However, more and more restrictive regulations are required in order to prevent anyone planning to commit such crimes from gathering the confidence to carry out his plan.

LEGAL PROVISIONS TO PROTECT WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE

CRIME	SECTION	PROVISION	PUNISHMENT
RAPE	Section 376	Rape Persons committing offence of rape on a woman under sixteen years of age.	Rigorous Imprisonment for 10 years to Imprisonment for Life + Fine Rigorous Imprisonment for 20 years to Imprisonment for Natural-Life + Fine
	Section 376 B	Sexual intercourse by husband upon his wife during separation Sexual intercourse by person in authority	Rigorous Imprisonment of 2-7 years + fine Rigorous Imprisonment of 5- 10 years
	Section 376 D	Gang Rape on women under sixteen years old Person committing an offence of rape on a woman under twelve years of age.	Rigorous imprisonment for 20 years to imprisonment for Natural-life + Fine paid to the victim. Imprisonment for Natural-life + Fine paid to the victim. Rigorous imprisonment for 20 years to imprisonment for Natural-life + Fine or Death
ACID ATTACK	Section 326 A	Voluntarily causing grievous hurt by use of acid	Minimum imprisonment of 10 years extended up to imprisonment of life and fine up to 10 lakhs.

CRIME	SECTION	PROVISION	PUNISHMENT
ACID ATTACK	Section 326 B	Makes attempts to throw acid	Imprisonment of 5-7 years and up to Rs.3 lakhs in damages to the sufferer. The fine should be paid by the offender in addition to the compensation
DOWRY	Section 304 B Dowry Prohibition amendment Act, 2018	Dowry death by husband or relatives shall be deemed to have caused her death.	Whoever commits dowry death shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than seven years but which may extend to imprisonment for life.
CHILD MARRIAGE	Prohibition of Child Marriage act, 2006	Punishment for male adult	If an adult male who is above 18 years of age contracts child marriage, he shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment for two years or with fine which may extend to one lakh rupees or both.

WOMEN FIGHT FOR EQUALITY

Introduction

Women and girls represent half of the world's population and, therefore, also half of its potential. Being a fundamental human right, women's equality is crucial for the creation of peaceful societies, the realization of all human potential, and sustainable development. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that empowering women boosts economic growth and productivity.

"I raise up my voice – not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard... we cannot all succeed when half of us is held back."

- Malala Yousafzai

Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go before men and women have complete equality in terms of rights and opportunities. Therefore, it is crucial to put a stop to the many types of gender violence and ensure that women and girls have equal access to good healthcare, education, financial resources, and political engagement. Equal opportunities for employment, leadership roles, and decision-making processes must also be attained.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was ratified by the UN General Assembly on December



10, 1948, included equality as a component of international human rights law. The foundational document in the history of human rights recognized that "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, birth or another status." It also stated that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". The numerous women's movements and accomplishments

pioneered by numerous women activists and leaders are evidence of the fight for gender equality.

I. Prominent Women's Movements and Achievements

There have been many outstanding women who have made significant contributions to local or global history. Men and women who work together to advance gender equality and better the lives of women as a social group made up the women's movement. Women were typically restricted to the house as mothers, wives, and daughters in the majority of

countries, thus we frequently only learn about historical women via the lens of their connections to notable men. Women have always had a significant influence on culture and politics, yet they frequently go unnoticed. Even while women activists and the fight for equality have always been a feature of all human cultures, an organized women's movement didn't really begin until the 19th century.

1.1 Raise of Voices and Concerns of Women

The nineteenth-century social shift developments can be linked to the start of the women's movement in India. Women-led movements began independently in Maharashtra a few years after the emergence of the Indian feminist movement, led by trailblazing

"Women's freedom is the sign of social freedom."

- Rosa Luxemburg

defenders of women's rights and education like Savitribai Phule, who established the country's first girls' school. Most women's issues came to light throughout the nineteenth century, and solutions were put in place. Many of the early changes for Indian women were led by men. However, by the late nineteenth century, they had been joined in their endeavors by their husbands, sisters, daughters, and other people who had been directly impacted by campaigns like those for women's education. Due to the growth of independent women's organizations in the late 20th century, women gained more autonomy. A new narrative about "women's activism" had begun to take shape by the late 1930s and early 1940s. Women were unable to adjust to the rising demand due to a combination of factors including industrialization, evolving technology, ignorance, and a lack of portability. Social reformers tried to emulate Indian culture at this time by establishing sacred and legal structures, protecting the public and women from discrimination and ensuring equality for all citizens regardless of rank, ideology, religion, gender, or ethnicity.

1.2 Gender equality campaigns

HeForShe: It is a social movement project that provides men and boys with a methodical approach and a narrow platform so they can act as change agents for the achievement of gender equality. In order to achieve gender equality, according to UN Women, a

comprehensive approach that recognizes men and boys as allies in the struggle for women's rights as well as how they stand to benefit from greater equality is required. The initiative was established in 2014 by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UN Women Global Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson, who also inspired stars Matt Damon and Barack Obama to support it.

UNiTE campaign

The UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence Against Women campaign, started by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 2008, is a multi-year initiative to stop violence against women and girls globally. In order to combat the global epidemic of violence against women and girls, UNiTE calls on governments, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the commercial sector, the media, and the entire UN system to work together. The activity of all UN offices and agencies striving to end violence against women is coordinated through the campaign, which draws on pre-existing international legal and policy frameworks.

Me Too

The MeToo movement was started in 2006 by social activist Tarana Burke in response to the widespread awareness about sexual assault and harassment in America. After American actress Alyssa Milano tweeted a request for survivors of sexual assault to come out, embracing the harsh reality of society, and letting others know they are not alone, the movement began to receive attention.

Anti-Dowry Movement

In the 1970s and 1980s, the anti-dowry movement first gained traction. The movement seemed to wane in the 1990s as women's organizations dealt with a number of other issues, while dowry-related issues kept growing in number. India's diverse and dynamic women's movement has evolved into many forms in various regions of the nation. The Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act (1984) criminalizes the giving and receiving of dowries "as a condition of marriage" while exempting "voluntary gifts"—a set of rules that results in ineffective penalties.

Dalit Women's Movement

In the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, a movement of Dalit women goes by the name of Dalit Mahila Samiti (DMS) (UP). In order to empower women via popular education, the Indian government developed the Mahila Samakhya (MS) initiative in the late 1980s. Vanangana, a feminist non-governmental organization, supports DMS. The Mahila Samakhya personnel received solid training in feminist theory as well as leadership and grassroots organizing techniques based on feminist empowerment ideas. The MS program successfully mobilized Dalit women in the Banda District of Uttar Pradesh, including training them to repair and maintain the hand pumps of borewells, which were the primary source of water for the majority of the local population.

To facilitate additional engagement with Dalit women, the leadership decided to establish a different nonprofit organization, Vanangana, in 1993. In the following few years, Vanangana had a significant foothold in the villages near the Chitrakoot and Banda Districts in Uttar Pradesh. The Dalit Mahila Samiti has its origins in feminist activism. For Dalit women to become movement leaders, took many years. These ladies struggled in the late 1980s and the early 1990s just to leave their houses and show that they could use technology. As they gathered knowledge, they were able to create a distinct women's movement that was firmly focused on Dalit women's needs. Since 2002, Dalit women leaders have been working to clarify their objectives and organizational frameworks, and the Dalit Mahila Samiti was formally established in 2003.

II. WOMEN ACTIVIST

“I think every woman in our culture is a feminist. They may refuse to articulate it, but if you were to any woman back 40 years and say, ‘Is this a world you want to live in?’ They would say, ‘No’.”

– Dame Helen Mirren.

Every person's life is greatly influenced by the work of women activists. Women activists must be conscious of the parts their groups and they themselves play in the greater social struggle. In order to successfully bring about social change, activists and social movements must take on the four roles of the citizen, the rebel, the change agent, and the reformer. Each role can be played successfully or ineffectively depending on the player's goals,

preferences, abilities, and needs. The public must first perceive activists as upright people. For such movements to be successful, they must gain the esteem and, ultimately, acceptance of the majority of residents. Therefore, effective citizen activists must support the underlying ideals, beliefs, and cultural markers of a just society that are also shared by the general populace.

Some key facts about Women Activist:

- ❖ **SAROJINI NAIDU:** The first woman President of the Indian National Congress in 1925. Her presence was a signal for hundreds of other women to join.
- ❖ **ROJAMMA:** Collected her friends together, and they began to picket liquor shops. The campaign spread like wildfire – The Anti- Arrack Movement.
- ❖ **INDIRA GANDHI:** Declared the State of Emergency in 1975, putting a stop to all democratic political activity.
- ❖ **GLORIA STEINEM:** An articulate advocate of the women’s movement during the late 20th and 21st centuries.
- ❖ **MEDHA PATKAR:** works on a number of crucial political and economic issues that have an impact on Dalits, farmers, laborers, tribals, women, and other marginalized groups in India. She is a founding member of the well-known Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA).
- ❖ **LAXMI AGRWAL:** She serves as an example for all acid attack survivors, encouraging them to pursue their goals and live confidently. She is the founder and executive director of the Chhanv Foundation, an NGO that supports Indian victims of acid attacks.
- ❖ **MALALA YOUSAFZAI:** Pakistani activist who, while a teenager spoke on publicly against the Taliban’s prohibition on the education of girls. Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi shared the 2014 Noble Peace Prize in appreciation of their work for children’s rights.

Activists must also be rebels who scream "No!" in the face of social norms, institutional practices, and institutional policies that go against fundamental societal ideals. Women activists must be change agents who fight to inform, unite, and engage the public in actively opposing current practices and looking for beneficial, constructive solutions. Finally, activists must also be reformers who collaborate with the established political and judicial systems to enact changes in legislation, as well as in the rules and regulations governing public and private organizations. Then they must work to get them accepted as the conventional wisdom of mainstream society

WOMEN LEADERS

Women leaders make a difference in people's lives and encourage a better future for all. However, progress on women's participation in decision-making is too gradual, and equality is still a long way off. There are still far too many individuals who think males are naturally better at leading than women, far too many institutions are set up to support and encourage male leadership, and much too little money is allocated to women's campaigns and initiatives. It will take 130 years to achieve gender equality in the highest levels of authority at the current rate of development. Feminist leadership is focused on distributing power fairly, making it visible, and holding everyone accountable in order to influence the course of events. Leading with feminist ideals entails reframing success and worth, sharing authority and responsibility, creating a sense of belonging and relationships, and, ultimately, addressing the underlying causes of the social structures and norms that impede progress for everyone, including women and girls. To meet the historically extraordinary

problems of our time, we require transformational feminist leadership. Some of the women leaders are

Some key facts about Women Leaders:

- ❖ **ROSHNI NADAR MALHOTRA:** CEO of HCL - Indian businesswoman who is now the chairwoman of the Indian multinational IT company HCL. She was the first Indian woman to run a listed IT company in the nation.
- ❖ **Dr. SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN:** Chief Scientist of WHO - Since March 2019, Indian paediatricians and clinical scientists have held the position of chief scientist for the World Health Organization. The AIIMS New Delhi alumna is renowned for her internationally acclaimed research on HIV and tuberculosis and her work as a member of the top scientific panel at the Global Health Summit.
- ❖ **GITA GOPINATH:** Director of IMF - Indian-American economist Gita Gopinath has held the position of IMF's First Deputy Managing Director. The Princeton alumna, who formerly served as the institution's Chief Economist, has assumed the number-two leadership position.

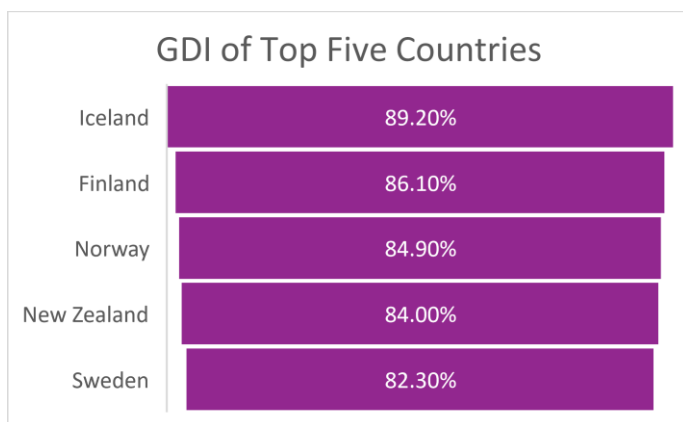
BEST PRACTICES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY

In the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, convened by the UN Secretary-General, prominent individuals agreed that gender equality must remain a separate goal (HLP, 2013). They also suggested setting national goals for stopping early marriage, assuring access to,

ownership of, and succession of assets, and abolishing discrimination against women in public, private, and economic life. To address the gender inequities that are still pervasive and persistent around the world and that disproportionately place women among the poorest and most marginalized people, a strong, independent aim is required. In order to advance the other goals, it is strategically crucial to have a standalone aim for gender equality. As it is anchored in the relationship between the two, gender equality is not just a "women's issue"; rather, it impacts both men and women. To ensure that both are equal, powerful, and deserving of dignity, both men and women must adjust their ways of functioning, attitudes, and social conventions. The top 5 Countries with the Highest Gender Equality are

“How important it is for us to recognise and celebrate our heroes and she-roes!”

– *Maya Angelou*



I. Best Practices of Iceland towards Women Equality

1. Women's Equality Is Literally Protected by Law:

Gender equality is a defining characteristic of Icelandic society because of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men. The law, which was first passed in 2000, was revised in 2008 with the ultimate objective of achieving equal rights across all social paradigms. The government and industry are required to abide by the gender equality provisions of this law. There are nine areas of gender discrimination that are specifically listed in the law. It distinguishes between subtle and overt forms of discrimination against women, recognizes salary disparities, and acknowledges the harm that gender-based violence

does to society. The law outlines a plan for achieving gender equality and even contains wording about eradicating harmful gender stereotypes. There are 35 articles in the law that outline precise laws on everything from prohibiting gender discrimination in hiring practices and job settings to purchasing products and services.

KEY POLICIES OF ICELAND

- * Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men Act, 2008
- * Equal Pay for Equal Work' is Mandatory
- * Best Parental Leave Policy in the World
- * From Preschool to College, Kids Learn Gender Equality Matters
- * Companies' Boards Must Include at Least 40% Women
- * Paying for Sex is Illegal. Strip clubs are Illegal.
- * Prostitutes Are Victims

2. 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' Is Mandatory, almost:

Icelanders judged it unacceptable that, at the current rate, it would be another 122 years before the gender pay gap was closed. On International Women's Day, lawmakers took action by announcing that Iceland would require businesses to demonstrate that they pay employees equivalent rates for equal work or pay the fine. The bill to make gender wage

discrimination illegal is anticipated to pass the parliament, making it the first nation to do so. To help eliminate the gender wage gap, the government anticipates that the law will take effect by 2020. Women currently earn between 14 and 18% less than men. However, the government is close to eliminating all workplace discrimination against women. “We want to break down the last of the gender barriers in the workplace,” said Thorsteinn Viglundsson, Iceland’s social affairs, and equality minister. “

3. Paying for Sex Is Illegal. Strip clubs Are Illegal. Prostitutes Are Victims:

In Iceland, paying for sex is forbidden. It's been like that for years. The government changed the law in 2007, nonetheless, on the grounds that the majority of those who engage in sex solicitation have no other choice or were forced to do so by others. Therefore, the legislation criminalizes individuals who pay for sex and other parties involved rather than punishing the poor people who are frequently driven into prostitution as a result of their circumstances. In 2009, the nation outlawed strip clubs for feminist reasons. According to the amended law, no employer may benefit from an employee's nudity. The parliament voted unanimously in favor of the measure. “It is not acceptable that women or people, in general, are a product to be sold,” said Kolbrun Halldorsdottir who proposed the ban on strip clubs.

This applies to public advertising too. No ad may belittle any gender or go against the country’s fierce mission to achieve gender equality.

II. Best Practices of Finland towards Women Equality

In Finland, there is an equal representation of men and women in the workforce. This is a result of steps to balance work and family life, accessible, high-quality child care, and a rule that more equally distributes parental leave. Law prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity, and gender expression. For at least nine years, all Finnish children attend school with free meals and learn in mixed-gender classes. In Finnish politics and business, women make up a large portion of the decision-makers. The percentage of female MPs

“Achieving gender equality requires the engagement of women and men, girls and boys. It is everyone’s responsibility.”

– Ban-Ki-Moon

elected in Finland's parliamentary elections has stayed stable at 40% throughout the 2000s. In the 2019 parliamentary elections, a new record of 47% was broken.

Women have occupied all of Finland's highest elected offices, including President of the Republic (2000), Prime Ministers (2003, 2010, and Sanna Marin from 2019 to present), Minister of Finance (2011), Minister of Foreign Affairs (1995), and Minister of Defence (2019-). (1990). In 2021, there will be 47% more female MPs than male MPs, and 11 out of the 19 ministers in the government will be female, representing 58% of the total. Participation in local politics is frequently the entry point into the national political scene.

- Women make up 39% of local councilors.
- Women make up 39% of municipal council chairs. The proportion of female directors in business and businesses in the private sector is among the highest in the world. Women make up over one-third of Finland's entrepreneurs, a higher percentage than in other EU nations. They also make up 29% of the board members of publicly traded corporations and 40% of the boards of state-owned businesses. Another notable fact is that women make up over 68% of the workforce and over 48% of ambassadors in the Finnish Foreign Service (2021).

III. Best Practices of Norway towards Women Equality

In terms of an international comparison of gender equality, Norway is rated favorably. Norway is one of the nations where women fare very well in comparison to men in terms of education, the job market, and political life.

1. Women work more than men

In equality, the division of labour is a major theme. Depending on the country, men and women perform different amounts of paid and unpaid labour. In Norway, women spend more time working overall than men do (28% vs. 27.7%), in both paid and unpaid labour. In Norway, women spend 0.3 percentage points more time working overall than men do. The disparity is far larger in the majority of nations. Women appear to work far more than males in Italy.

2. Large share of women working part-time in Norway

In most nations, more women than men work part-time in addition to the fact that there are typically more males than women in the labor force. Within this time, there has been a tendency for both men and women to work increasingly part-time, although for women the shifts have been more pronounced. It is important to consider this trend in light of the period's overall growth in the labour force, particularly for women.

3. The Nordic countries have the most gender equal political institutions

Access to and representation in leadership roles in administration and politics is crucial to achieving gender equality. The Nordic nations perform well when looking at the proportion of women in the legislature.

IV. Best Practices of New Zealand towards Women Equality

1. Enabling international deployments of New Zealand women

There are active programmes in place at both the New Zealand Police and the New Zealand Defence Force to boost the hiring, retention, and senior-level promotions of women, which will ultimately result in a greater number of women being qualified to participate in peacekeeping missions. The New Zealand Police hired their first female officer in 1941. The New Zealand Police has official networks spread throughout the organisation that focus on member support and development, including leadership, mentoring, and development programs specifically designed for women. These offer flexible job alternatives as well as rules and regulations for handling harassment and discrimination. Gender inclusion issues must be incorporated into all organizational development strategies, according to all consultants on organizational development. New Zealand Policewomen have their own development programs, and there are mentoring programs for women at the national and district levels. New Zealand commits to supporting women's education, leadership, and participation, and improving women's safety

2. Reaffirming its commitment to gender equality, New Zealand is dedicated to enhancing the lives of women in the following priority sectors:

Improving women's safety from violence, utilising women's skills to expand the economy, encouraging and developing women leaders by inspiring them to participate at the highest levels of governance and management. New Zealand has mainstreamed gender into its international development assistance program and continues to prioritize the prevention of domestic violence as a top priority within the Pacific region because it recognizes that addressing gender equality, women's empowerment and the human rights of women and girls in Agenda 2030 is essential to achieving other goals.

V. Best Practices of Sweden towards Women Equality

The Swedish Approach

Gender equality has long been strongly supported in Sweden. The guiding principle in Sweden is that everyone, regardless of gender, has the right to live free from abuse or violence, to work and support oneself, and to balance work and family obligations. Gender equality entails more than just a fair division of labour between men and women in all spheres of society. It also has to do with the qualitative aspects, making sure that both men's and women's expertise and experience are put to good use in order to advance society as a whole.

1. Reclaiming the F word

The present Swedish government, which is committed to a feminist foreign policy, has branded itself as such. The concept has drawn both local and international support and criticism, and discussions about feminism and what it means are also ongoing in Sweden, though not to the same extent as in many other nations. The government intends to emphasize that gender equality is important to society and that more work has to be done to achieve it by utilizing the "F word." Since Karin Kock became the first woman in the Swedish cabinet in 1947, there has been unquestionable development. The majority of women in Sweden's current parliament are also female.

2. Gender Mainstreaming

The Swedish Gender Equality Agency has been hired by the Swedish government to assist other government organisations in integrating a gender perspective into all aspects of their operations. The programme, known as Gender Mainstreaming in Government Agencies (GMGA), aims to mainstream gender equality into every facet of each agency's operations.

3. Equality in the workplace

Sweden has made great strides toward ensuring that men and women are treated equally at work. In the workplace, gender discrimination has been prohibited since 1980. The 2009 Swedish Discrimination Act (pdf) requires companies to take action against harassment in addition to actively promoting gender equality. As a result of a 2017 legislative expansion, harassment relating to all grounds for discrimination, including an employer's sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, handicap, sexual orientation, and age, is now covered under preventive work.

INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

The existing legal provisions on gender equality in India

The Constitution of India made things a little easier for women in terms of gender equality. The term gender equality in the Constitution is mentioned in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties, and Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constitution not only guarantees women's empowerment but also encourages the State to adopt various measures of equality and empowerment in favor of women. The **Constitutional Provisions pertaining to women are**

ARTICLE	DESCRIPTION
Article 14	Article 14 of the Indian Constitution talks about equal status or equality before the law. Every person has equal status before the law and the State cannot deny it.
Article 15	Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth. This article cannot prevent the State from making any special provisions for women and children
Article 16	Article 16 states that there shall be equal opportunity for all citizens of Indian in matters of employment or appointment to any office.
Article 39	According to Article 39 of the Constitution, the State shall make sure that men and women have an equal right to an adequate livelihood, there is equal pay for men and women, and the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and the material resources are distributed to serve a common purpose.
Article 42	The State shall secure humane conditions for work and for maternity relief according to the Constitution
Article 243(D)	Not less than 1/3 rd (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allocated by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat

Hence, the Constitution of India makes gender equality a human right. Apart from these constitutional provisions, certain Acts have emerged more or less from these constitutional provisions some of which are

The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976

Under this Act, the employer must give equal pay or remuneration to men and women for the same work. No employer can, while recruiting, training or transfer, for the same work, or for the work done can discriminate between men and women.

The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013

The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 came into force on February 3, 2013 on the recommendation of the Verma Committee Report. This Act added some new offenses such as an acid attack, sexual harassment, voyeurism, and stalking all of which have been incorporated into the Indian Penal Code.

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013

The issue was first brought to light in the Vishaka case in 1992, where sexual harassment of women at their place of work was talked about and legislation for the same was passed. Harassing women at their place of work violates the women's fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Constitution of India.



The Women's Reservation Bill

The Women's Reservation Bill or the Constitution's 108th Amendment Bill is a pending Bill in which India plans to reserve 33 percent of all seats in the Lower house of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women. The

Rajya Sabha or the Upper House of Parliament has not yet voted on this Bill.

The Hindu Succession Act, 1956

Under the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, a certain amendment was made in 2005 leading to the removal of discriminatory provisions. Under the Act, females are granted ownership of all property acquired either before or after the signing of the Act, abolishing their "limited owner" status.

The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961

An amendment was made in 2017 to the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961. Under the Act, paid maternity leave for women employees with less than two surviving children, from the original twelve (12) weeks to twenty-six (26) weeks was extended. The amendment further provided working mothers who have adopted a child below the age of three months, to take 12 weeks of maternity leave from the date of receiving the child and also allowed mothers to work from home after completing 26 weeks subject to their mode of work and employer's consent.

APPROCHES OF TAMILNADU TOWARDS WOMEN EQUALITY

Plans, programmes, and the constitution of Tamil Nadu all place a strong emphasis on women's empowerment. A social scientist defined empowerment as gaining authority and power, making independent judgments, and taking on more responsibility across a range of activities. It is a process that results in altered beliefs and perceptions as well as increased awareness of one's

If women want equality and succeed to the top like men, they need to stand on their own feet economically with the will power and strength.”

– Dr. J Jayalalitha

rights and chances for personal growth in all significant areas of life. It offers people situations and chances where they can utilise their skills and ability to the fullest extent possible in pursuit of certain shared goals. The creation of economic independence, self-reliance, political, social, and legal awareness, as well as self-confidence and a positive attitude among women, is what is meant by empowerment of women. Some of the practices are

The Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Ltd:

The Corporation was established on December 9th, 1983, in accordance with the Companies Act, 1956, with a focus on the empowerment of women. Its goals include fostering female entrepreneurship, identifying trades and industries that are suitable for women, conducting marketing activities for goods made by women, and encouraging women to form SHGs by providing training and credit facilities.

Vocational and Skill Development Programmes:

The Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women has made supporting economically marginalised women a main priority. All potential female entrepreneurs, ideally first generation, are welcome to participate in the entrepreneurial programmes funded by the Corporation. The programme, which is run out of Chennai and Madurai by the Industry and Commerce, started in 1998-99.

Mahalir Thittam:

The Mahalir Thittam initiative, which aims to empower women and develop the skills of underprivileged women in rural regions through SHGs, was launched in 1997–1998 and is participatory, people-centred, and process-oriented. It encompasses the whole of Tamil Nadu. Currently, all 30 districts of Tamil Nadu's rural areas are covered.

“Women’s liberation is the liberation of the feminine in the man and the masculine in the woman.”

– Corita Kent

The state government, non-governmental organisations, banks (including NABARD), and other financial institutions have formed an uncommon long-term collaboration with each other. It offers training for the improvement of communication skills and entrepreneurship development, as well as affordable and prompt finance to SHGs. Participation in exhibits, collective bargaining, the establishment of organisations like marketing unions, and the sharing of market knowledge are all made easier by it.

Anna Marumalarchi Thittam:

The Anna Marumalarchi Thittam programme was put in place by the Tamil Nadu government to promote agro-based food processing and other associated sectors in rural areas in order to increase employment there and boost the local economy. 16 Food goods including mango pulp, fruit pulp, refined edible oil, chips, and agricultural projects like a new rice mill that uses a polisher and colour sorter are among the projects that have started to produce. Other projects include cold storage facilities, the production of coir products that are environmentally friendly, such as coir pit blocks, herbal products like aloe vera gel and herbal medicines, eucalyptus oil, export-oriented aquaculture products like shrimp and

freshwater prawns, floriculture products like jasmine flower concentrates, and export-oriented cut flowers, among others. The government has ordered a special entrepreneurship development programme through reputable training institutions like the Central Food Training and Research Institute, Mysore, Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, Coimbatore, and National Institute of Small Industries Extension Training, Hyderabad, in order to encourage potential investors in the district to start industrial ventures in the agro-based and food processing sector in rural areas.

CONCLUSION

There is still work to be done on gender equality in every nation on earth. Women and girls are underrepresented in decision-making at all levels, have fewer access to education and healthcare, and frequently lack economic independence. Despite being sluggish and incremental, the advancement of gender equality over the past 25 years demonstrates the possibility of change.

Strategies that have been effective and should be scaled up include legal change, enhancing gender-responsive social protection and public service delivery, quotas for women's representation, and support for women's movements. Governments, NGOs, civil society, and the corporate sector working together have the ability to transform women's and girls' lives during the UN Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs.

“True equality means holding everyone accountable in the same way, regardless of race, gender, faith, ethnicity – or political ideology.”

– Monica Crowley

REFERENCES

Books:

1. Michael, P. (2006). *Inventing Intelligence: A Social History of Smart*. Wiley.
2. Barakade, A. (2012). *An Analysis with special reference to Maharashtra state*.
3. *Desire to have a male child and Female Infanticide in India*. (2018).

Journals and Articles:

1. Dhanunjaya.G.(Vol 3, 2017). Education of Girl Child in India. *IJARIE*, Issue 6.
2. Gender equality and Women's Empowerment in India, National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) India 2005-2006, Ministry of Health and family Welfare, Government of India.
3. Women's employment in India, Vikas Rawal, Partha Saha, (2015).
4. District level Study on Child Marriage in India, Padmavathi Srinivasan Nizamuddin Khan Ravi Verma International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), India.
5. Child Marriage in India, Plan International.
6. Early and Child Marriage in India, Nirantar Trust.
7. Child Marriage in India: Factors and Problems, B. Suresh Lal, Kakatiya University.
8. Dr. Rakesh Chandra, Women Empowerment in India – Milestones & Challenges
9. Gautam Bhan August 2001, India Gender Profile, SIDA.
10. A K Shiva Kumar, April 1996, UNDP's Gender-Related Development Index - A Computation for Indian States, Economic and Political Weekly, April 1996.
11. IShireen J. Jejeebhoy, Convergence and Divergence in Spouses' Perspectives on Women's Autonomy in Rural India. Volume 33, Number 4, December 2002.
12. World Development Report 2012, Gender Equality and Development Report. The World Bank, 2012.
13. IDrawing Lessons from the Recent Evaluations by SIDA and the European Commission, Integrating Gender Equality into Development Co-operation, November 2003.

14. Background report on gender issues in India, DFID, UK, Revised February 1995
15. Women and mental health in India: An overview, Savita Malhotra and Ruchita Shah.
16. Impact of roles of women on health in India, K.Buckshee
17. 1An Overview of Women’s Work and Employment in India, Decisions for Life MDG3 Project Country Report No. 13, University of Amsterdam /Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies (AIAS), Netherlands, January 2010
18. Statistics on Women in India - 2010 report, NIPCCD

E- Resources:

1. The Social Construction of Gender – Applied Social Psychology – http://www.personal.psu.edu/bfr3/blogs/applied_social_psychology/2011/10/the-social-construction-of-gender.html
2. Crimes against women, <http://www.womenlawsindia.com/legal-awareness/crimes-against-women/>
3. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1796564#:~:text=As%20per%20data%20maintained%20by,66.6%2C%2066.4%20and%2073.4%20respectively.>
4. Diva Rai, Offences against Women (2019), <https://blog.ipleaders.in/offences-against-women/>
5. <http://rchiips.org/nfhs>
6. <https://vikaspedia.in/social-welfare/women-and-child-development/women-development-1/meera-didi-se-poocho/child-marriage>
7. www.criminaldefenselawyer.com
8. www.indiacode.nic.in
9. feminisminindia.com
10. ncrb.gov.in
11. www.unwomen.org
12. <https://resiliencemi.org/stereotypes/>
13. <https://letstalkstigma.org/stigma-impacts-domestic-violence-survivors/>

14. <https://www.rightsofequality.com/empowering-survivors-domestic-abuse/>
15. <https://www.rightsofequality.com/acid-attacks-on-women-why-india-fails-to-tackle/>
16. Crimes against women | Women Laws India
17. <https://www.ecoleglobale.com/blog/key-factor-responsible-poor-women-literacy-rate-india/>
18. <https://www.humanium.org/en/indias-missing-daughters-desire-male-child-female-infanticide-india/>
19. Women and Work in India: Trends and Analysis - India Briefing News (india-briefing.com)
20. A Welcome Change: India Sees A Rise In Women's Employment In The Post Pandemic World (thelogicalindian.com)
21. <https://thelogicalindian.com/gender/employment-women-35052>
22. <https://idronline.org/womens-workforce-participation-what-we-need-to-know>
23. COVID-19's impact on women's employment | McKinsey
24. More women are self-employed in India, fewer hold salaried jobs | Business Standard News (business-standard.com)
25. http://www.personal.psu.edu/bfr3/blogs/applied_social_psychology/2011/10/the-social-construction-of-gender.html
26. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf
27. Gloria Steinem Simulcast | The USCB Current-
<https://www.news.ucsb.edu/events/gloria-steinem-simulcast#:~:text=%E2%80%9CA%20gender%20equal%20society%20would,In%20her%20ninth%20decade...>