

**N. Shiva Ram**

**Vinod Singh**

**Dr. Thakur, Sugandha Shekhar**

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## **Introduction**

As we know the core of a democratic society is the principle of equality. Democracy is not even a concept that can be achieved or dreamt of without it. In addition, the Constitution of India forbids a variety of other sorts of discrimination, including those based on caste, religion, gender, place of birth, and lineage. A comprehensive discussion of the factors that contribute to gender disparity, as well as the actions that are being taken by both the government and society to eradicate it, has been included in this chapter. “Special opportunity inequality” is a word that is used in India to describe the uneven access to opportunities and resources that exist between different groups and individuals. A variety of factors, including caste, creed, religion, gender, and socioeconomic level, are often considered to be influential in determining the availability of this option (Jha, 2015). It is more difficult for disadvantaged people to get access to education, employment, healthcare, and other essential services that are essential for their growth and well-being as a result of this disparity, which may pose severe challenges and hurdles for these populations. To overcome these various challenges, it is important to investigate the policies that have been taken by the government and society, as well as the statements that have been made in the process of putting these policies into effect. All members of society need to be provided with policies that promote equality, diversity, and social

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N. Shiva Ram

Phd Scholar, Central University of Rajasthan, Culture and Media Studies.

Vinod Singh

Instructor in School of Mass Communication and Journalism, Lovely Professional University

Dr. Thakur, Sugandha Shekhar

Assistant Professor in the School of Mass Communication and Journalism, Lovely Professional University

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justice. The policies in question need to be all-encompassing and welcoming to everybody. It is of the utmost importance to be aware of many social, political, and economic inequalities that exist within the intricate fabric of Indian society.

### **Keywords**

Gender, Inequality, Policy, Society, Law, Economic.

### **Women in Ancient India**

As the foundation upon which the cosmos is built, affection, compassion, kindness, and service are the foundations. A woman has all of these characteristics and more that we can see every time and can never deny the fact. The natural world is full of everything that exists in the cosmos. Another way of saying this is that she is the mother of the whole cosmos. Within the context of praising women, Kailashpati Shiva asserts that there is no yoga, no chanting, no penance, and no journey that is comparable to that of a woman. Among all the deities that are worshipped in this world, a woman is the one that is most revered. In the Manusmriti, there is a shloka that says, “Yatra naryastu buoyant, romance tatra devata.” (Sharma) This shloka translates to “where a woman is worshipped, she is respected, and the gods reside.” This shloka reveals that our Vedic civilization, which existed thousands of years ago, has a considerably more advanced way of thinking than we have now. The food that was regarded to be the most valuable asset in the town was thought to be riches ever since ancient times. Women in the household were the ones who were in charge of it at all times. The richness of the mother was found in the food. For as long as food was regarded as money in the village, it was always matriarchal wealth, which meant that it was always held by women. As a result, women were responsible for all of the activities that were associated with it, including transactions, loans, interest, charity, religion, and honor. Women are associated with compassion, devotion, commitment, and sacrifice; thus, as long as wealth in the form of food remained in the hands of women, there was no one in the community who went to sleep hungry. From the very beginning, women were granted a great deal of privileges. Not only did women study the Vedas, but they also taught them (Kundalia R. &.). According to the Vedas, there are 404 sages mentioned, and thirty of them were believed to be female. Around three thousand years ago, there was a Chandali by the name of “Wadli” who wrote a book that had a wealth of information on astrology. ‘Wadli ka Jyotish’ is the name of this book, which continues to enjoy massive popularity in the state of Maharashtra. As far back as ancient times, women have been skilled in the art of warfare as well as administrative duties. It is only through the adoration of women, as Swami Vivekanand asserts, that society may make progress. He was of the opinion that the disrespect of women, who are the personification of power, was the cause of the collapse of Western nations.

### **Gender Inequality in India**

According to the Vedas and the Upanishads, women are regarded as mothers and goddesses, and they are held in great respect throughout these three ancient

texts. There are two statements that can be found in the Manusmriti 3/57: “The family in which women (such as mother, wife, sister, daughter et al.) are full of sorrow that family meets its destruction very soon; while the family in which they do not grieve is always prosperous.” Both of these statements can be found in verses 3.55–3.56. Within the context of a certain civilization, men and women are treated on an equal footing and are instrumental in the establishment and development of their own houses. Polygamy, on the other hand, became a practice that was damaging to the status of women in India throughout the medieval era. Sati system was another feature that added to the damaging of status of women. In point of fact, the battle for equality is one of the fundamental aims of the women’s movement all over the globe, and this is in fact true on a global scale as a whole.

For a very long time, women in India have been considered to be a subjugated segment of society, and for hundreds of years, they have been not given any consideration they suffered to very extent. There is a big truth that males and females in India have not been treated equally since the very beginning. With the implementation of the Partha, Dowry, and Sati systems, the situation has already gotten much more dire (Hazarika, 2011). In addition to the infanticide and other forms of discrimination that women in India are subjected to, the dowry system is the most severe of these, since it is responsible for the deaths of a great number of women. In addition to the practice of dowry, there is also the practice of female infanticide. Even though many families are now aware of the significance of having a daughter, there are still many families that are solely interested in having a son. This results in the death of the female kid either while she is still in the womb or shortly after she is born.

At the current time, one of the most significant issues that the nation is facing is the execution of female infants. In the census completed in 2011, Kerala had 1,084 females for every 1,000 men, making it the state with the greatest gender ratio. In contrast, the state of Haryana has the lowest gender ratio of any state in India, with just 877 girls for every 1,000 men. Girls are often subjected to sexual exploitation in India, including but not limited to rape, sexual assault, domestic abuse, harassment, forced prostitution, eve teasing, marital rape, gang rape, and sexual assault. Despite this, women are achieving remarkable success in a variety of sectors in the current day. Compared to other nations, India has a gender disparity that is much larger than the difference that exists in other countries.

### **Women Empowerment in India**

The governments of practically all democratic nations throughout the globe, including India, are implementing a wide variety of programs for the advancement of girls. The purpose of these programs is to improve the educational opportunities available to girls (Iqbal, July 2024 ), as well as their economic circumstances, and to guarantee that girls have the right to equality. In a similar vein, the government of

India is now implementing a wide variety of programs all throughout the nation with the goal of empowering girls to become financially self-sufficient. These programs will be of great assistance in the healthy development of girls. With the intention of achieving this objective, the Government of India made the announcement that the National Girl Child Day will be celebrated on January 24, 2008.

**To bridge the gap between social inequalities following skims were introduced by the government of India**

Through the passage of the Nari Shakti Act (Patel, 2023), the government of India has provided women with a reservation number of 33 percent (14). For the very first time, the National Sex Ratio reached a new high of 1020. There is now a minimum of 26 weeks of paid maternity leave (Ghosh, 2018 & 2019). The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan was responsible for screening more than 4.73 crore pregnant women. Accounts for the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana totalling 3.2 crore. The provision of LPG gas cylinders resulted in the establishment of around 10 crore smokeless kitchens. According to the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin (14), women own 72% of the businesses. MMR decreased from 130 per 100,000 live births in 2014–2016 to 97 per 100,000 live births in 2018–20. Triple talaq should be abolished because it gives Muslim women more agency. 69% of loans have been approved for female entrepreneurs under the PMMY program, and 84% of those who have benefited from the Stand-Up India program are female. In a total of twelve different forces and services, women officers were awarded permanent commissions. Agniveers were the first kind of women to join any of the three armies. Women make up 43 percent of graduates in STEM fields in India, which is the highest percentage in the world.

**Regarding the position of women in the Constitution of India**

In addition to the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties, and Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution, the idea of gender equality has also been stated (Kumar G., 2021). Furthermore, the Constitution not only guarantees that women be treated equally, but it also instructs the governments to engage in discriminatory practices that are favorable to women. India's path to prosperity is intricately connected to the advancement of women's rights and opportunities. Due to the fact that the Central Government is aware of the significance of this connection, it has prioritized Nari Shakti at the forefront of its agenda for the last nine years. In the current day, the concept of "women empowerment" has been seen as a primary concern about the position of women. During the year 1990, an Act of Parliament was passed that led to the establishment of the National Commission for Women. This commission is responsible for providing protection for women's rights and legal rights. Two amendments to the Constitution, the 73rd and 74th, were passed in 1993 (Kumar, 2021). These amendments included a clause that allowed for the reserving of seats for women in elections for Panchayat and Municipal bodies. This

provision paved the way for women to participate in elections at the local level. The end consequence was that the number of women who participated in the elections for local bodies grew. Madhya Pradesh was the first state to provide women with a reservation of fifty percent of the seats in the legislature. Subsequently, a number of other states followed this policy, and if we consider the most recent Lok Sabha elections, we find that the youngest member of the Lok Sabha is a woman.

### **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**

“Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao” is a significant social awareness project that was initiated by the Government of India with the purpose of completely eradicating the patriarchal mentality. “Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao” (Parmar, 2020) is the name of a new campaign that was introduced by Mr. Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, in order to promote the “Beti Bachao” initiative. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao is a program that was initiated by the Central Government on January 22, 2015, with the intention of decreasing gender disparity in the nation and providing more opportunities for women to achieve their full potential. A number of potential solutions have been developed in order to solve the issues of a decreasing child-to-sex ratio (CSR) and the empowerment of women. The Digital Guddi-Gudda Board, Udaan, and Lakshya Se Rubaru were carried out by the government as part of the strategy. For the purpose of providing young women with financial support, the government initiated a program known as the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, which is a financial incentive program.

### **Pragati Scholarship Scheme**

The Pragati Scholarship Scheme is designed for young women who have an interest in studying technical subjects and gaining experience in the area. These young women are eligible to receive a scholarship from the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), which falls under the purview of the Ministry of Education of the Government of India.

### **Financial Empowerment**

The economic empowerment of women is very necessary in order to realize the goals of gender equality and the rights of women. The term “economic empowerment of women” refers to the process of ensuring that women are able to make equitable participation in and benefit from social security and good job opportunities. Empowerment of women is contingent upon women’s ability to achieve economic independence. Because of this, the government has made measures to encourage women to participate in the financial system via programs such as Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana and Stand-Up India. The Stand-Up India plan is dedicated to assisting women, members of Scheduled Castes (SC), and members of Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the establishment of greenfield businesses(14). In a similar vein, the purpose of PMMY is to provide financial help to micro and small businesses that are not corporations and do not engage in agriculture. As of late, around 69%

of loans have been approved for female entrepreneurs via the PMMY program. Furthermore, it is a source of great satisfaction that 84% of the people who have benefited from the Stand-Up India program are female participants. During the Union Budget 2023-24, a small savings program called the Mahila Samman Savings Certificate was created. This program is designed specifically for female investors and is a modest savings program. With the help of these programs, women have been able to forge their own paths and make significant contributions to the expansion of the nation's economy.

### **Abolition of Triple Talaq**

The method of triple talaq was included in the Sharia law of Islam. There were three different kinds of it, and it was also known as Talaq-e-Biddat (Jha S., 2023). According to this reprehensible custom, a Muslim man was required to utter the word "Talaq" three times in order to divorce his wife. This dissolution of marriage could be communicated verbally, in writing, or electronically. It was not possible to revoke it. There has been a commendable step taken by the Government of India to empower Muslim women and free them from the shackles that have been placed on them for centuries. In addition to making the practice of giving instant divorce by saying talaq three times invalid and illegal, this Act also imposes penalties on husbands who engage in the practice of triple talaq, which include imprisonment for up to three years and a fine. The purpose of the government of India in enacting the Triple Talaq law was to offer legal protection to Muslim women who had been subjected to this backward practice for a considerable amount of time (Jha S., Analysis of the Ban on Triple Talaq, 2023). This important reform has improved the overall condition of Muslim women, saving them from domestic violence and discrimination, which they had to face in society earlier.

### **From Women Development to Women-led Development**

The efforts that the administration has made over the course of the last 10 years have resulted in tremendous development in the empowerment of women (14). There has been a substantial growth in the number of women who are employed by the police, and the spectacular accomplishments of women athletes have brought the nation great pride. There has also been a greater than anticipated growth in the number of women enrolling in programs that are related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). In an effort to bring successful women to the forefront of society, the government and the media have attempted to make them stand out as role models. Additionally, several states have appointed women to the position of brand ambassador for a variety of organizations in order to disseminate the idea that women should be empowered.

### **Women in Defence Forces**

A concerted effort is being undertaken in India to broaden the scope of women's involvement in every sector of the economy. Whether it be cricket or

politics, aviation or office work, women are making headway alongside males in every sector. This is true across the board. There has also been a rise in the number of women who are participating in the sector of border protection in the nation (Sharma Y. ). Women are doing superior jobs in all three branches of the military: the land, the navy, and the air force. Even in the present day, the highest number of women are participating in the armed forces.

### **Conclusion**

Gender inequality is a multifaceted topic that is seen at numerous levels. It also involves inequality of opportunity, which impacts the progress of women at many levels. Despite legal protections and societal development, women have not been able to acquire equal rights. Many important steps have been taken in the last several years to protect the socio-economic and political rights of women, including Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana, Safe Motherhood Assurance Equal Scheme, Free Sewing Machine Scheme, Mahila Shakti Kendra Yojana, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana. There are numerous such initiatives that are striving to empower women economically and socially. To empower women politically and to boost their engagement in politics, the Nari Shakti Vandan Act 2023 was enacted by the Parliament. Which allows for 33% reservation for women in Parliament. It is impossible to reject the reality of the situation, despite the fact that the government has made measures for the benefit of women. Illiteracy among women, societal norms, the inaccessibility of many communication channels, a lack of familiarity with technological advancements in this age of technology, and the existence of defects in the communication system are the primary factors contributing to this phenomenon. All of these things constitute a barrier to the advancement of women.

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