

OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF GENDER EQUITY- AN OVERVIEW OF PROBLEMS AND CONSTRUCTIVE SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

Purpose: The present paper focuses on past, present, and future obstacles in the way of gender equity and the constructive role of society. Besides this, the government needs to channel women's participation in national growth by strengthening legal reforms, rebates, and policies to uplift.

Design/ Methodology: The present paper is based on secondary data sources to analyze the increasing role of Indian women in attaining gender equality in the 21st century. The paper concludes that there is a variety of traditional obstacles in addition to new ones in this century but due to increasing awareness among the Indian masses & the spread of education has played a significant role in attaining gender equality. The role of women especially observed in the space field needs to be appreciated.

Findings: The recent govt. Reform of reservation will strengthen political, women empowerment. The paper emphasizes the changing stereotype role in the society and positive role at the grassroots level. If the Indian female population is educated, and skilled then it can be channelized properly at the individual & societal front.

Originality/ Value: In a nutshell, this will enhance improving the global gender gap index of India and attainment of gender equity to adopt the path of positive approach by all the sections of society. India is the 5th largest economy in the globe. If individually and collectively Indians can work to overcome gender disparities, then untapped female resources can be utilized and a positive image of India can be established.

Keywords: Gender equity, globe gender, sex ratio.

Introduction

Today, India has enhanced its position on the world stage on multiple fronts like entrepreneurship, service sector, political sector, space, higher education, and others. In this era of the 21st century, India has shown a strong way of progress in overcoming gender issues by imparting equal opportunities on each front. Although we are aware that India is still struggling with past hurdles like gender discrimination, low male-female sex ratio, crime rate, abuse, etc. the scenario of changing mindset and govt. Constructive role to uplift women is remarkable. The challenges are still enormous but to address aggressively on every front is the need of this hour. Every human being is special and deserves all the opportunities/ equity in life. Indian constitution has given equal fundamental rights to everyone so as to reach their full potential. However, society is still dominated by gender-based inequality (Jha, 2015). In India,

gender-based inequality and discrimination began with the birth of a girl child (Lorber, 2001). Gender discrimination is witnessed in homes, communities, and society at large (Sen, 2007).

Women's equity refers to equality and fairness in opportunities, treatment, and representation of women in various sectors of society. This includes equal rights in every sector - education, job opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes. Gender equality is a fundamental human right and addressing gender inequality is crucial to achieving sustainable development. (Green, 2021).

Women's Equity in India: Women face challenges in social, political, and economic participation and access to education. Despite constitutional provisions for women's empowerment, such as Articles 14, 15, 19(1) (g) & 21 which take into account fundamental rights in favor of women and guarantee equality in all fields (Guthold et. al., 2022). Gender parity in

India is a complex issue that requires optimistic solutions at different levels. Indian women still face significant barriers to equality and equity. Women's equality is extremely important in today's society. By breaking the societal perceptions and gender barriers, India can pave the way for the holistic development of all. For this government has introduced various schemes and programs aimed at promoting gender equality and women's education as the country continues to struggle with high rates of violence and crime against females.

Objectives of the Research Study:

- To analyze the obstacles and constructive solutions to overcome gender disparity.
- To analyze the role of women in the 21st century in India.

Review of Literature:

In this era of the 21st century, India has shown a strong way of progress in overcoming gender issues by imparting equal opportunities on each front and strengthening a global map on a multi-faced front. Although we are aware that India is still struggling with the past hurdles like gender discrimination, low male-female sex ratio, crime rate, abuses, etc. (Iyer, 2012) Discrimination and Gender Stereotypes in India Despite the efforts of women, the government, and women in positions of power, gender stereotypes and prejudice continue to exist in Indian society (Kaushik, 2014). Indian women are facing gender inequalities in almost all fields whether it is education, managerial positions, or leadership fronts. Society and government are working on these issues to feel like women empowerment and their work-life balance but the reality is far away from this (Chakraborty, 2023). The role and participation of women are growing in various sectors, namely the fields of Entrepreneurship, Service sector, Political sector, Space, Higher education, etc. (Beaman L. C., (2009)).

Despite their significant contributions to the social and economic fabric of their country and the world at large, women continue to be at the bottom of the power and reward hierarchy in the workplace (Singh, 2010). The two largest things standing in the way of women's achievement are poor social status and limited purchasing power

(Baruah, 2015). However, as per the author (Beaman L. D., 2012), it is amazing how the government is transforming attitudes and playing a positive role in uplifting women. The challenges are still enormous but to address aggressively on every front is the need of this hour. Women face challenges in social participation, political participation, economic participation, and access to education. (Epstein, 2022). In order to ensure women's equity in India, several steps can be taken. In the twenty-first century, there have been efforts to bring women in India to a stage where they have equal rights, equal pay, and independence (Latha, 2022).

Research Methodology:

The present paper is based on secondary data sources as the topic of the research is very vast and primary data could limit the scope of the study. So, the researcher has framed this research work with the help of existing sources of information to analyze obstacles & the solutions to the problems and the increasing role of Indian women in various sectors to attain gender equity in the 21st century. Besides this, the paper includes a variety of traditional obstacles in addition to new ones in this century.

Objective 1: To analyze the obstacles and constructive solutions to overcome gender disparity.

Women in both developed and developing nations are greatly impacted by gender inequality, a widespread problem that has an impact on societal roles, education, economic advancement, and career prospects. Major obstacles and solutions are hereby discussed.

Female Sex Ratio in India: According to the 2011 census, India has a sex ratio of 943, which means that there are 943 females for every 1,000 males. A lopsided sex ratio favoring men is commonly associated with an increased risk of female fetal death; this problem is especially common in areas where parents preferentially choose the gender of their offspring, which results in the terrible practice of female feticide. Sex determination tests in which a preference for male results in the termination of a pregnancy. The law prohibiting sex discrimination is ineffective, making it a difficult traditional barrier to overcome. Some couples opt for smaller families' norms if they have a male child

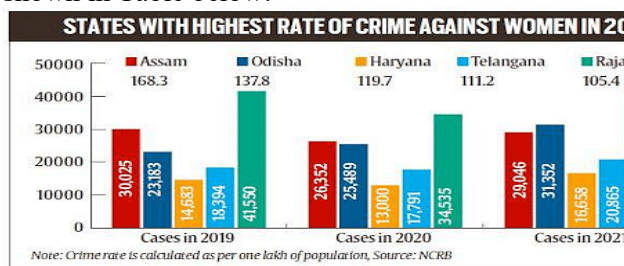
and go for next only if their 1st child is a girl. Dowry Practices in India are also a big reason for not preferring or neglecting female children. (Banerjee, 2014). Calculation of Sex Ratio = (Number of Females / Number of Males) x 1000.

Sex Ratio as a traditional obstacle from 1901 to 2011

Cens us Year	Sex Ratio (females/10 00 males)	Cens us Year	Sex Ratio (females/10 00 males)
1951	946	1991	927
1961	941	2001	933
1971	930	2011	943
1981	934		

Source: <https://www.studyiq.com/articles/sex-ratio-in-india/>

Crime against women: Crimes against women include various forms of violence such as domestic violence, and sexual violence. Abuse, rape, acid attacks, and human trafficking. Indian women are facing more crimes every year. The issue of crimes against women is widespread, and action must be taken immediately to shield women from criminal activity. Based on NCRB data, there was a 15.3% rise in crime against women in 2021 compared to 2020, with 4,28,278 cases reported, up from 3,71,503 in 2020. The data provided by NCRB India shows that there is a rise in criminal activities against women year by year and Assam, Odisha, Haryana, Telangana, and Rajasthan are the states with the highest crime rates year after year against women in 2021 shown in Table below:



Source: <https://prepp.in/news/e-492-acts-for-prevention-of-crime-against-women-social-justice-note>.

These crimes not only create an atmosphere of fear and anxiety among women but also hinder their social and economic development (Lolayekar, 2022). According to NCRB data, an average of 93 women are raped in India every

day, and a woman is harassed in public every 51 minutes. (Bhattacharyya, 2022). Acid attacks on women are another heinous crime that victims endure daily. These attacks not only disfigure the victims but also completely devastate their lives. The number of cybercrime occurrences in 2021 has climbed by 18.4% when compared to 2019 figures, according to the National Crime Record Bureau. A total of 52,974 instances were registered under the category of cybercrimes, reflecting a 5.9% jump in registration over 2020 (50,035 cases in 2020) are the new obstacles faced by Indian women in the 21st century.

Gender Inequality: Indian girls face many risks, insults, and vulnerabilities simply because of their gender. These challenges are intertwined with the economic, political, social, and cultural disadvantages that girls face every day. Child marriage, teenage pregnancy, child labor, limited access to education and healthcare, sexual abuse, acid attacks, cybercrimes, exploitation, and violence contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality (Sukhtankar, 2022). Steps related to constructive solutions: Several steps have been taken in India to improve the sex ratio, including a legal Ban on Sex Determination. National Girl Child Day: In 2012, January 24th was declared as National Girl Child Day, emphasizing the importance of the girl child and promoting gender equality. Sabla Scheme in 2011 focused on empowering adolescent girls by promoting self-development, improving their health and nutrition, and raising awareness about various aspects of health, hygiene, nutrition, and reproductive health to overcome this gender gap. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme was initiated in 2015 to Revention of gender-biased sex-selective elimination, To Ensure the survival and protection of the girl child, and To Promote education and active participation of the girl child.

Implementation of strict laws to prevent women: The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987, National Commission of Women Act 1990, Protection of women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, Prohibition of Child

Marriage Act, 2006, Protection of women from sexual Harassment (POSH) Act, 2013.

Improvement in Sex ratio 2023 witnessing the impact of Laws and schemes imposed by the Indian government: According to the National Family Health Survey, 2020-21 (NFHS-5) India's Sex ratio in 2023 is 1020 females per 1000 males. This shows the outcomes of the implementation of schemes and Laws by the Indian government.

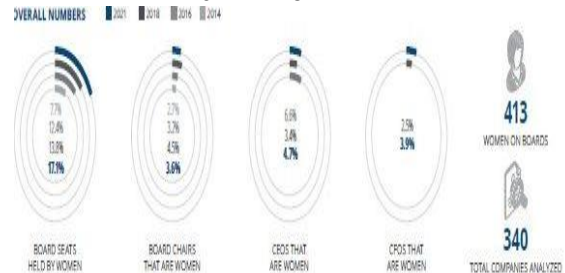
Objective 2: To analyze the role of women in the 21st century in India.

Women have proven their capabilities and are breaking traditional barriers by becoming prominent figures in fields like science, technology, business, politics, sports, the space sector, entrepreneurship, the arts, etc. Indian women have shown their resilience and determination in the face of these challenges, making significant contributions to various fields. In recent years, there has been a notable improvement in their social position due to education, work opportunities, changing the mindset of society, government policies, and development programs. Promoting gender equality in leadership positions will also contribute to women's equity in India. Research has shown that when diverse perspectives are included in decision-making processes, better outcomes and more equitable distribution of resources can be achieved. To achieve this, efforts should be made to actively recruit and promote women into leadership roles in both the public and private sectors. The promotion of gender-sensitive education policies and programs is showing better results in the 21st century in India which prioritizes equal access. Women are getting inclusive workplaces that are providing equal opportunities for career advancement and pay equity. In this century Indian women have registered their presence in space technology i.e. Chandryaan project, Asian games, Olympics, Entrepreneurship like Nykaa, Lime Road, Mamaearth, etc., and many other domains.

Women's Participation in Corporate Sector (Higher Positions):

Data indicates that, in the short period of nine years, from 2013 to 2022, women's participation

in higher positions and management has increased from 6% to 18%.



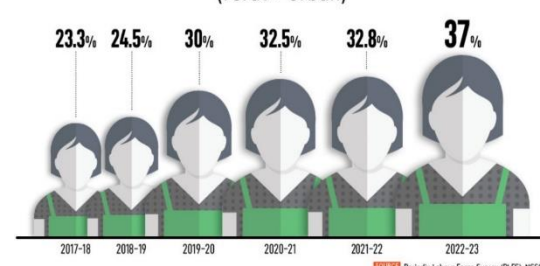
Source: Report by EY in 2022 titled "Diversity in the Boardroom: Progress and the Way Forward".

Contribution of women as unpaid workers as a homemaker in the 21st Century: The report of SBI Research presents that a country must consider and Calculate the contribution of women to their house making work although they are unpaid workers for that particular work still their contribution to the growth of a country must be considered. The table below shows that in urban and rural areas it is rs.8000 and 5000/-p.m. for their 8 hours work.

Contribution of Unpaid Women in GDP			
		Rural	Urban
Unpaid domestic work by women	Minutes	432	431
	Hour	7.2	7.2
Total Women (18-60 years)		28.7	13.2
Working age women	in crore	1.4	4.0
Unpaid women		27.3	9.3
Per day per hour wage*	in Rs	21	33
Total unpaid contribution	in Rs lakh crore	14.7	8.0
Total Rural + Urban Contribution (in Rs lakh crore)		22.7	
Total Rural + Urban Contribution (% of GDP)		7.5%	

Source: SBI Research; *Assuming monthly wage of Rs 5000 & Rs 8000 in rural and urban areas for 8 hours, respectively

Female Labour Force Participation Rate (rural + urban)



As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), NSSO the participation of Female Laborers in the country is also growing and indicating the positive contribution of women in every field of society.

Recommendations: In order to ensure women's equity in India, several recommendations and solutions can be implemented. Increasing awareness among the Indian masses & spread of education have played a significant role in attaining gender equality. To address the issue, it is crucial to invest in and **empower girls** by providing them **with education, life skills, and support**. This can be achieved through the implementation of policies that prioritize girls' education and provide equal opportunities for girls to pursue higher education. **Scholarships or Financial assistance** specifically for female students, as studies have shown that gender disparities in educational achievement persist in India. Additionally, it is important to address the issue of female foeticide and dowry. **Strict enforcement of laws** against gender-based discrimination and the promotion of awareness campaigns to change societal attitudes towards these practices. Furthermore, there should be an emphasis on **extending employment opportunities** to women.

Conclusion: The outcome of the study is that presently women's resources in India are still untapped. She faces a lot of obstacles in terms of gender discrimination, insults, crime, acid attacks, lack of leadership roles, and political participation. It is analyzed that although obstacles are there in the way women have registered their presence in the field of space technology, politics, and entrepreneurship. Undoubtedly this credit goes to collaborative efforts of awareness about gender issues, changing the mindset of the society about gender issues, and aggressive govt. Policies & initiatives to uplift women in India. If the role of women significantly improves then obviously the growth of the national economy of our country will rise upward placing India as a superpower being the top largest growing economy in the world. This will lead to the sustainable development of India through gender parity only.

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