



A Study On Empowerment Of Women And Its Impact On Sustainable Development In India

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Abstract: Gender equality is essential for sustainable development because no society can achieve lasting progress while half of its population remains constrained by unequal opportunities, restricted participation, and inherited social disadvantages. In India, women have historically experienced discrimination rooted in patriarchal customs, religious interpretations, traditional family structures, and unequal control over resources. For many generations, women were expected to remain dependent on male family members for education, livelihood, mobility, and decision making. Although constitutional protections and social reforms have improved women's status, many barriers still persist in education, employment, health care, and leadership. These inequalities continue to limit women's full participation in economic and social development and reduce the overall capacity of society to grow in an inclusive and balanced manner.

Social enterprise encounters this status quo, putting people before profits. This study aims to determine how effectively women's social enterprises respond against gender discrimination to directly empower women. Social entrepreneurs believe women's equality is built by its impact on beneficiaries, other entrepreneurs, employees and societal norms. It has the power to contribute more. It is necessary to support society by developing more social enterprises through providing jobs for other women with economic freedom, prestige and social recognition.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, Sustainable Development, Education, Social Enterprise, Economic Development, Political Participation, Women Entrepreneurship.

1. INTRODUCTION

In India, a woman suffers from much repugnant social practice, religious traditions, and rites from time centuries-old due to her low literacy rate, less decision-making power, less ingress to the occupation, or work opportunity than men. This desperate situation gave rise to the dependency of women on men's overall lifecycle. The sustainable development goals (SDGs) are a 2030 agenda of the United Nations. In this sense, it is a crucial step to enroute gender equality as the successor of the millennium development goals (MDGs). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is actively progressive at the global level in making its strategic plan (2018-2021) for agenda 2030 to mainstream gender so that everyone will feel self-determination and prospects to thrive in society.

India is at the verge of turning point to emerge as a significant hub for promoting at large scale, a dynamic start-up ecosystem. The start-up India wave, if adjusted for social enterprises, has provided the possibility to unravel a portion of our most societal issues through entrepreneurship and change the substance of India for good. Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In addition to being a fundamental human right, gender equality is also a



precondition for a world that is stable, affluent, and sustainable. The objective of the paper is to study the importance of gender equality for sustainable development, the role of women at present, role of education for empowering women. Given the patriarchal nature of Indian society, women are frequently subjected to discrimination and are outnumbered by their male counterparts. Therefore, it is very important to know about gender issues and how those issues can be solved. Education is one of the key elements to empower women and girls and to bring parity in the society. The government must take the lead in developing policies, organizing engagement and awareness programmes, providing health care services, and other things to ensure the viability of the country should be provided for the benefits of society and humanity at large.

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2. Objectives

The focus of the paper is:

- a. To find what extent India has achieved Goal 5 of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030.
- b. To highlight the National Schemes of Government India in attaining Sustainable Development goals and attempts to propose exclusive remedies to overwhelm the lacuna.

3. Methodology

This study is exploratory. It Analyses qualitatively by using secondary sources, which will include existing literature, Census of India, and different national and international reports of government and non-govt. Organizations.

4. Findings

The paper also develops a framework for women empowerment through cooperatives and reviews the field experiences to support the framework. The paper concludes that the theory of economic modernity holds true for women empowerment, as economic independence through cooperatives has helped women gain access to control over resources and led to women empowerment.

5. Gender Equality and Women Empowerment:

Gender is an imperative social factor of development. It defines the roles of rights and duties of men and women in social culture as their social norms. Development upholds gender equality not only as a moral obligation or human rights basis. But it is also a leading factor in sustainable development, environmental conservation, and reduction of poverty.⁵ Several actions have taken for promoting gender equality and women empowerment at the global and domestic arrays, since the 1970s. United Nations adopted an 'International Bill' for women's rights in 1979 that asserts the elimination of all kinds of discrimination against women in all universal spheres. Besides the Convention on the Elimination of all kinds of Discrimination against Women, the Four World Conferences on Women had also been identified as gender equality and women empowerment as a key to their development.

Furthermore, Goal No. 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is aimed to achieve and to ensure the end of "discrimination" against women and girls ubiquitously. Gender equality is necessary for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The visions behind it that the creation of a world where every single woman and girl will be able to access full enjoyment of their socio-economic and political empowerment and equality of sex; and where universal respect of human dignity and human rights will be realized. Following are the targets covered under Goal 5:

- a) Target 1: "End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere;"
- b) Target 2: "Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;"
- c) Target 3: "Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation;"



- d) Target 4: “Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure, and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate;”
- e) Target 5: “Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life;”
- f) Target 6: “Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences;”
- g) Target A: “Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources, in accordance with national laws;”
- h) Target B: “Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women;”
- i) Target C: “Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Indian women always remain an underprivileged group in accessing their economic, political, and socio-cultural rights. There are as yet apparent disparities in access to paid employment in many regions, and also a conspicuous gap between both genders in the labour market. Sexual viciousness and abuse, the sporadic and unfair division of unpaid care and domestic work, and the public decision making all remain colossal obstructions in the path of women's progress. Empowering women is an input intended to eradicate these relegations and disparities. It is a definite idea that wants to unveil equality in society. There are now more women in public office than ever before, but encouraging more women leaders across all regions will help strengthen policies and legislation for greater gender equality. Development practitioners are resolute to elevate the empowerment level of women. So that women make themselves capable of challenging the dependent or oppressive position amid family and society. The 2030 agenda for sustainable development cannot be accomplished without achieving gender equality because women constitute almost half of the world population at a global level, as well as the national level.

The UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) at the 46th session of its meeting in 2015 had taken a progressive step for defining the instigating framework for SDG and gave stress to the development of vigorous high-grade indicators for achieving SDGs. The government of India has ascribed this task to the NITI Ayog for Realizing SDGs. The States have also undertaken to collaborate in the mapping of schemes as well as centrally supported plans and schemes of India. Table 1 demonstrates the National Schemes of the Government of India, which will help to achieve proposed targets given in goal 5. Schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, the Mission for Protection and Empowerment of Women, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna are some primary and progressive schemes for achieving Goal 5 of the SDGs.

Table 5.1: National Schemes for a feasible way to achieve UN Sustainable development Goal 5

S.N	National Scheme	Objective	Area of Concern
1	The mission for Protection and Empowerment of Women - Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra (PMMSK), Ujjwala, One-Stop Centers, Women Helpline, hostels, SWADHAR Greh, gender budgeting, etc.	To eliminate the following perils against women and girls everywhere: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination. • Violence • Harmful practices: Child marriage, Early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation. To adopt and give strength to sound policies and legislations for promoting gender equality and empowerment of girls and women at all levels.	Political, Social Economic and Cultural Development
2	National Scheme for Incentive to Girl Child for Secondary Education (NSIGSE)	To promote enrolment in education for ST/SC girl child under age group 14-18, especially those who have passed class VIII.	Educational development
3	Umbrella ICDS	It covers all the schemes of women and child development to provide equality, violence-free	Social, Economic and Cultural



		environment, and empowerment to all girls and women at various levels.	development
4	National AIDS Control Programme	It aims to prevent and control HIV/AIDS in India.	Health Development
5	Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)	It aims to provide pregnant women compensation for the loss of wage so that they can take rest before and after delivery of the first child. It foresees behind this purpose to eradicate gender inequality	
6	National Health Mission	It envisions realizing collective access to affordable, equitable, and quality amenities of health care. The universal access to reproductive and sexual health, reproductive rights of women, are the main focus of the scheme, also mentioned in International Conferences such as the Beijing platform of action.	
7	Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)	Encourage women to participate in the political, public, and economic life of the country. The scheme ensures active participation and makes accessible ways to women of decision making at all levels.	Political and Economic development
9	Science & Technology Institutional and Human Capacity Building	By enhancing the use of science and technology enable women to reflect themselves empowered.	Educational development
10	Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana	To take new active measures for women's equal access to economic resources, ownership, control over property and land, financial services, natural resources, and inheritance, consistent with the law.	Political and Socio-Economic Development
11	Deen Dayal Anthodia Yojana (DAY)- National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)		
12	Deen Dayal Anthodia Yojana (DAY) –National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM)		
13	Labor and Employment Statistical System (LESS)	To recognize and give value to 'unpaid care' and 'domestic work' over the facility of the public service area, infrastructure, and social security plans	Economic Development
14	Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna		
15	Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP)	The scheme is aimed to give the opportunity of employable skills to women and assist with competencies so that they can grow into self-employed /entrepreneurs.	Economic Development

The specific worth mentioning areas in which 'Women Empowerment and Gender Equality' is crucial for their sustainable Development can be assessed under the following headings:

6. Women in politics:

For making women empowered and to accomplish gender equality, there should be consistent enrolment of women in the political sphere is significant. Globally, India is a legal member of the International Convention on Women entitled "Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979". The convention advocated for the right of women in 'public and political life' under article 7. Besides, the "Beijing Platform of Action 1995" had also taken into account women's political representation as to the calculating indicator of 'Gender Equality.' However, India is still far behind hand in realizing the women's equal representation in political decision-making power.

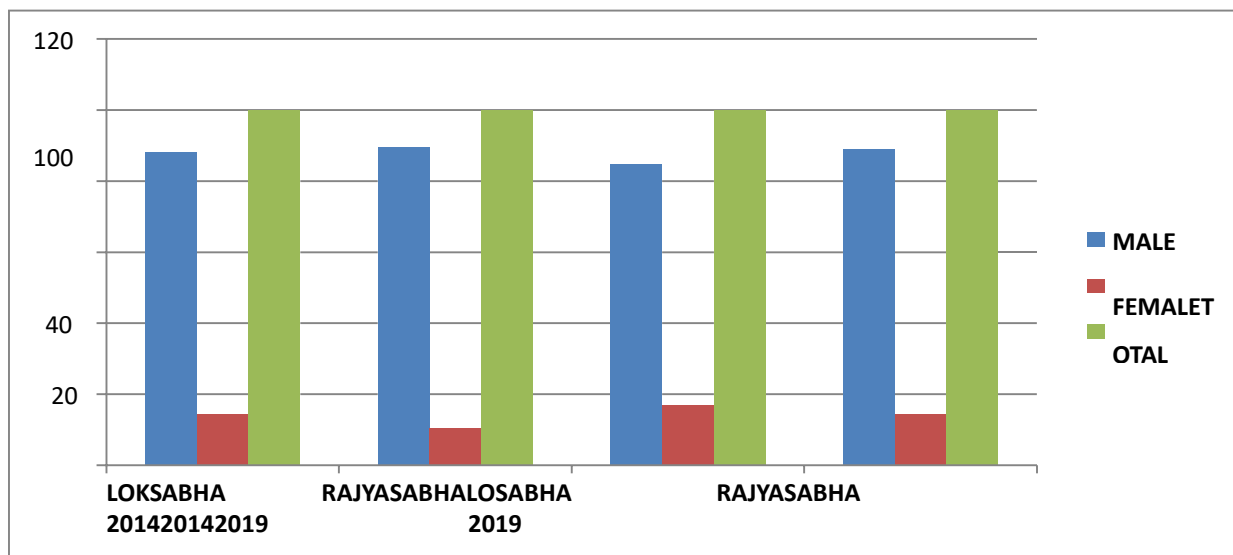
As of January 2017, India was at 88th rank in "Women in Politics Map, 2017"¹⁷ published by the UN Women and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in acquiring ministerial position while it was at 148th rank in triumph the position in Lower House with 11.8% women and Upper House with 11.0%. Subsequently, as of January 2019, India ranked 78th position for obtaining the ministerial seats, and unlikely it has dropped to 149th rank for reducing seats in parliament.

Currently, 78 women have acquired seats in the 17th Lok Sabha from the total number of 543 members of Lok Sabha. In Rajya Sabha, there are a total of 239 members as of September 2019, from which 26 are women. As Table 2 demonstrates a minuscule change in the percentage of women's involvement in the decision making of the country. In 2014, there were only 65 women (11.99%) from the total member of 524 in 16th Lok Sabha and 26 women (10.40%) from the total number of 239 members in Rajya Sabha. The 1st Lok Sabha had only 4.4% of women. Therefore, the



percentage of women representation in Lok Sabha from 1st Lok Sabha to present Lok Sabha is overall amplified by 10% only. Women have an equal share in the country’s population, but the skewed figure of the political participation of women will not help in the Sustainable Development of the Country.

Table: 6.1-Percentage illustration of women in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.



7. Women in Education:

Education is one of the key indicators of the social and cultural development of all humans, including women and girls. Today in this era the education is needed to use as an essential tool for gender parity and women empowerment. Through education of girls and women, any country shrinks poverty, advances its economy, lessens population burden and also makes available a bright future for children. In India, there was an enormous gap in literacy rates of the men and women in the post-independence era. In 1951 there was only 18.32% total literacy rate in which women had only shared 8.86 per cent. Slowly but surely, India got success in improving the standards of literate persons. Now, the 2011 census of India exemplifies male and female literacy rates, respectively are 82.14% and 65.46% from the total literacy rates of 74.04% while it was correspondingly 75.26% and 53.67% out of 64.83% literacy rates according to the 2001 census. Notwithstanding, women are still far behind the men with the gap of 16.68% in education.

Table 7.1 indicates the gender gap in the boys and girls attending school at a different level of age and school. It has lessened gap at the ‘primary level’ and slightly less at the ‘higher level.’ However, the Age-Specific Enrolment Ratio (ASER), for girls, was 94.36 per cent, and for boys, it was 91.97 per cent from the total ASER of 93.11 per cent for 6-10 years age of children. The government of India is continuously trying to enhance the value of education and encouraging people to enroll themselves in the education programme. It has launched many schemes for the promotion of education in India. The Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) and the Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) are new milestone initiatives in the road map of Higher Education.

Table: 7.1 Percentage of Population Attending School (Primary and Tertiary Education)

year	Gender	Aged 6-14 years	Aged 15-19 years	Aged 20-24 years
2001	Male	74.73	42.15	11.12
2011		82.51	51.15	57.99
2001	Female	67.13	32.18	5.95
2011		80.70	46.82	59.98

Source: Census of India, 2011.



8. Conclusion

Women's contribution to sustainable development must be recognized. Women have a strong role in education and socializing their children, including teaching them care and responsibility about the use and protection of natural resources. More should be done to increase women's voice in environmental decision making and to enable women to seize opportunities in the "green economy."

The Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals supported to mainstream the "Gender Equality and Women Empowerment." The women's development is directly linked to the country's goal of Sustainable Development, and a significant transformation cannot happen until the government steps up their determinations at all levels to report the profound 'gender disparities' and make policy and implementation efforts. The government of India, as a remarkable signatory to the agenda 2030, is progressively implementing effective schemes to accomplish the targets. Considerable progress has ensued over the last decade. However, the growth is plodding due to the lack of adequate awareness of the national plans and programmes for the eradication of Gender inequality from India. Indian women endured much degradation and faced an exigent level of deprivation in their family and society. Now the process of their emancipation through sustainable development has set a positive hope. For the accomplishment of SDGs by 2030, women will surely get empowerment and equality in no small magnitude in India.

This paper "UN Sustainable Development Goals: In Search of Gender Equality in India" concludes to a significant remark that amputation of poverty, more political and economic involvement of women and universal access of primary as well as higher education and awareness programmes for the effective implementation of national schemes will help to achieve the Goal of Sustainable Development of women in India.

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