



# Gender and Power in India Today: Structural Barriers and Social Change

**Dr. Manju Rani**  
**Assistant Professor**  
**Political Science Department**  
**Government College Badli, Jhajjar, India**

## Keywords:

Health, education, economic participation, employment, media representation, religion, caste, climate change impacts on gender, legal reforms, gender budgeting, grassroots movements, caste, religion, the role of technology, transgender issues, masculinity, and more. Below is a structured continuation, covering these areas with greater complexity, as well as further examples of governmental, social, and non-governmental efforts to combat gender inequality.

## 1. Introduction

Gender inequality is one of the most persistent and complex issues in contemporary India. While the country has made significant strides in terms of legislation, education, and economic development, gender-based disparities persist across various spheres. These disparities are rooted in a combination of historical, cultural, economic, and social factors, making gender issues particularly difficult to address comprehensively.

The country's push toward modernization and development has brought with it a heightened awareness of gender equality, supported by both governmental and non-governmental efforts. However, despite progressive legal frameworks and policies, societal attitudes toward women, and their roles in society, continue to limit their full participation in various domains. Women face structural and systemic barriers, compounded by intersecting factors such as caste, religion, class, and geographic location. This paper delves into these issues by analyzing the various dimensions of gender inequality in India and the multifaceted approaches needed to address them.

## 2. Education and Gender Disparity

Education is crucial for addressing gender inequality in India, but progress is uneven. While more girls are going to school, especially in cities, there are still many barriers affecting their educational achievements.

## 2.1. Early Childhood Education

Gender disparities often start in early childhood education. In many rural areas, girls are expected to help with household chores and care for younger siblings, which can keep them from going to school. Even when they do attend, they might not get as much support as boys, especially in families with fewer resources.

In these regions, traditional beliefs often lead to boys' education being prioritized over girls'. This cycle of disadvantage means that uneducated girls grow up with fewer opportunities. The Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao initiative aims to improve girls' education from a young age, but its effectiveness is limited by implementation issues and ongoing social biases.

To improve early childhood education for girls, it's important not only to ensure they can attend school but also to change societal attitudes. This requires community involvement, awareness campaigns, and engaging parents. Schools also need to offer safe, gender-sensitive environments with proper sanitation and security to encourage more girls to enroll.

## 2.2. Higher Education and STEM Fields

While more girls are entering higher education, there are still significant gaps, especially in STEM fields like science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Women are underrepresented in these areas, which are crucial for high-paying jobs in a modernizing economy. Cultural views and systemic barriers often discourage women from pursuing these fields.

Society often views STEM as "masculine," and there are fewer female role models in these fields. Even women who do study STEM subjects may find it hard to enter male-dominated industries or advance to leadership roles.

To address these issues, we need a range of strategies: provide scholarships and mentorship for women in STEM, change societal attitudes through outreach, and create supportive learning environments. Collaboration between governments and industries to offer internships and job placements for women in STEM can also help.

## 2.3. Gendered Curriculum and Hidden Biases

School curricula in India often reinforce traditional gender roles. Textbooks and teaching methods may show men as breadwinners and women in domestic roles, which can limit girls' aspirations and reinforce gender stereotypes.

Additionally, classroom interactions can perpetuate these biases. Studies suggest that teachers may unconsciously favor boys in subjects like science and math, which can discourage girls from fully participating or pursuing these subjects further.

To create a more equitable educational environment, curricula should be updated to remove gender biases, and teachers should be trained to recognize and counteract unconscious biases. Gender sensitivity training for educators can help foster an environment where all students feel encouraged to explore their interests.

## 2.4. Impact of the Digital Divide

The digital divide is a significant barrier to gender equality in education. Girls in rural India often have less access to digital devices and the internet compared to boys. This gap was exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic when online learning became more common, and many girls missed out due to lack of access.

Digital literacy is also a challenge. Girls in rural areas may face additional barriers due to safety concerns, traditional norms, or lack of infrastructure, limiting their access to digital education and participation in the digital economy.

To bridge this divide, we need targeted interventions, such as providing affordable digital devices to girls, improving internet infrastructure, and offering digital literacy programs. Ensuring girls are included in the digital economy and have the skills for a technology-driven world is essential.

### **3. Employment and Economic Participation**

India's growing economy has not seen a proportional increase in women's labor market participation. Women are often underrepresented in formal jobs and work in low-wage, insecure sectors. Gender discrimination, inadequate infrastructure, and societal expectations continue to limit women's full participation in the workforce.

#### **3.1. Informal Labor Market**

Many women work in the informal sector, including domestic work, agriculture, and small-scale industries. These jobs generally offer low wages, no job security, and limited access to social benefits like healthcare or pensions.

Women in the informal sector are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and often lack legal protections. Strengthening labor laws to cover informal workers, improving access to social security programs, and enforcing minimum wage standards are crucial for improving gender equality in employment.

#### **3.2. Gender Pay Gap**

The gender pay gap remains a significant issue in India, with women earning less than men for the same work. This disparity exists across various sectors, and in some areas, like agriculture or domestic work, the gap is even wider.

Several factors contribute to the pay gap, including societal norms that undervalue women's labor and discrimination in hiring and pay decisions. The "motherhood penalty," where women's earning potential decreases after taking time off for child-rearing, also exacerbates the gap.

To address the pay gap, we need stronger enforcement of equal pay laws, greater salary transparency, and initiatives to promote women into higher-paying roles and leadership positions. Regular gender pay audits and setting targets for closing the gap can also help.

#### **3.3. Role of Technology and the Gig Economy**

The gig economy provides new opportunities for women, especially in areas like ride-sharing, food delivery, and freelance work. However, women's participation is limited due to safety concerns, access to technology, and societal norms restricting their mobility.

For women who do participate, gig work offers flexibility but often lacks job security, social benefits, and career advancement opportunities. This makes long-term economic stability challenging.

To increase women's involvement in the gig economy, we need measures like improving safety, providing access to affordable technology, and creating gender-sensitive policies within gig platforms. Expanding social security coverage to include gig workers can also help ensure that women in these sectors have the benefits and protections they need.

#### **3.4. Entrepreneurship and Microfinance**

Entrepreneurship is a powerful way to empower women, especially in rural areas. Microfinance institutions (MFIs) have been key in providing women with access to credit, allowing them to start small businesses and

gain economic independence. Women-led businesses in agriculture, handicrafts, and retail contribute to local economies and improve women's socio-economic status.

Microfinance also enhances women's decision-making power within their families and communities. However, challenges remain, such as accessing larger financial markets or scaling businesses beyond the local level.

Supporting women entrepreneurs involves improving access to finance, providing training and mentorship, and encouraging financial institutions to offer women-friendly products. Reducing collateral requirements and offering business development services can help women expand their businesses and contribute to economic growth.

## 4. Gender-Based Violence

### 4.1. Domestic Violence and Family Courts

Domestic violence is a serious issue across India, affecting women from all walks of life. The **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA)** was introduced to offer legal protection against physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse. However, the implementation of this law is often inconsistent, and many women still struggle to get the justice they need.

One major challenge is the stigma surrounding women who report domestic abuse. Many victims fear shame or backlash from their families and communities, which discourages them from speaking out. Cultural beliefs that domestic issues should be handled privately further complicate matters.

Family courts, intended to handle cases like divorce and abuse, are often overwhelmed, causing delays. Additionally, many judges lack the training needed to handle these sensitive cases effectively, leading to decisions that may favor reconciliation over the protection of women's rights.

To better address domestic violence, it's crucial to invest in gender sensitivity training for law enforcement and judicial personnel. Expanding access to shelters, legal aid, and counseling is also necessary to support victims. Public awareness campaigns can help shift societal attitudes and reduce the stigma attached to seeking help.

### 4.2. Sexual Harassment and Institutional Failures

Sexual harassment is a widespread issue in India, impacting women in workplaces, educational institutions, and public spaces. The **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013**, or the POSH Act, aims to prevent and address harassment at work. Despite this, many women face significant hurdles in reporting harassment or achieving justice.

Fear of retaliation or damage to their careers often prevents women from reporting harassment. In male-dominated fields, women may face ostracism or even job loss if they come forward. Many organizations fail to set up effective internal complaints committees as required by the POSH Act, and some that do, do not operate impartially.

Institutional failures also play a role. Law enforcement and the judiciary may not always treat harassment cases seriously, and the legal process can be daunting. Victims may be pressured to settle complaints privately rather than pursuing legal action, often resulting in inadequate justice.

To tackle these issues, we need stricter enforcement of the POSH Act, better training for law enforcement and judicial staff, and public awareness campaigns to empower women to report harassment without fear.

### 4.3. Human Trafficking and Exploitation

Human trafficking, a severe issue in India, disproportionately affects women and girls. They are often trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labor, or domestic servitude, particularly from marginalized communities. Despite legal frameworks like the **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956**, trafficking remains widespread due to weak enforcement and corruption.

Victims of trafficking face many obstacles in escaping their situations, including lack of access to legal aid, shelters, and rehabilitation services. Traffickers often operate with impunity, and victims face significant barriers to getting help.

Effective measures against trafficking require robust law enforcement, specialized training for police, and international cooperation to tackle cross-border trafficking. Providing comprehensive support services, such as legal aid, healthcare, and vocational training, is crucial for helping survivors rebuild their lives.

### 4.4. Acid Attacks and Legislative Responses

Acid attacks, a particularly brutal form of violence, continue to be a significant problem in India. These attacks, often driven by personal vendettas or rejection of marriage proposals, leave victims with severe physical and emotional scars.

The government has introduced measures to address acid attacks, including regulating the sale of acid and enforcing harsher penalties for perpetrators under the **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013**. However, enforcement is inconsistent and acid remains readily available in many areas.

Beyond legal measures, survivors need comprehensive support, including free medical treatment, reconstructive surgery, psychological counseling, and vocational training. Public awareness campaigns are also essential to reduce stigma and prevent future attacks.

## 5. Health and Gender

Gender disparities in health are significant in India, with women facing unique challenges in accessing and receiving quality healthcare. These issues are compounded by socio-economic factors, cultural norms, and systemic inequalities within the healthcare system.

### 5.1. Maternal Mortality

India has made progress in reducing maternal mortality, but it remains a critical issue, especially in rural and underserved areas. Maternal deaths often result from inadequate healthcare, poor nutrition, and lack of awareness about maternal health.

In rural areas, women may struggle to access prenatal and postnatal care due to distance, lack of transportation, and poor service quality. Traditional practices like early marriage and frequent pregnancies also contribute to higher maternal health risks.

Improving maternal mortality requires better access to quality maternal healthcare, especially in remote areas. This includes increasing the availability of skilled birth attendants and addressing socio-cultural factors that affect maternal health. Initiatives like the **Janani Suraksha Yojana** and **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan** have made strides, but more efforts are needed to ensure all women have access to these services.

## 5.2. Mental Health of Women

Mental health issues among women in India are often overlooked, despite their significant impact. Women are more likely to experience conditions like depression and anxiety, especially due to gender-based violence, economic inequality, and social isolation. Stigma around mental health often prevents women from seeking help, leading to untreated conditions and increased suicide risk.

Women who face domestic violence or sexual harassment are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues but may lack access to services. Cultural norms and family pressures can also deter women from seeking treatment.

Addressing women's mental health requires improving access to mental health services, raising awareness, and reducing stigma. Integrating mental health care into primary healthcare systems, especially in rural areas, can ensure women receive the support they need.

## 5.3. Reproductive Rights and Healthcare Access

Reproductive rights are essential for gender equality, yet many Indian women face challenges in accessing reproductive healthcare. Issues include limited access to contraception, unsafe abortions, and inadequate sexual health education.

Societal pressure often forces women to have children early and frequently without making informed decisions about their reproductive health. Access to family planning services is often limited, particularly in rural areas, and unsafe abortions contribute to maternal mortality and health complications.

Improving reproductive healthcare access involves providing comprehensive sexual education, expanding family planning services, and ensuring women can make informed decisions about their reproductive health. Government programs like the **National Health Mission** are making progress, but more work is needed to address contraception needs and reduce unsafe abortions.

## 5.4. Impact of HIV/AIDS on Women

HIV/AIDS poses significant health challenges in India, disproportionately affecting women due to biological, social, and economic factors. While overall HIV rates are declining, certain groups, such as sex workers and intravenous drug users, remain at high risk.

Women are more biologically susceptible to HIV infection, and social stigma and economic dependence on male partners can increase their risk. Access to healthcare services is crucial but often limited, making it difficult for women to receive timely treatment and prevent mother-to-child transmission.

Programs like the National AIDS Control Program (NACP) aim to address these issues, but more is needed. Ensuring all pregnant women have access to HIV testing, antiretroviral therapy, and safe delivery practices is essential for reducing transmission rates.

## 6. Caste, Class, and Religion

Understanding gender inequality in India requires looking at how caste, class, and religion intersect with gender, creating multiple layers of discrimination and exclusion.

### 6.1. Dalit Women and Gender Discrimination

Dalit women face severe discrimination due to their low caste status, including social, limited access to education and healthcare, and exploitative labor practices. They are also more vulnerable to gender-based

violence. Improving their situation requires addressing both caste and gender biases through targeted policies and affirmative action.

## 6.2. Gender and Tribal Communities

Tribal women face challenges related to their marginalized status and cultural practices. They often live in remote areas with limited access to education and healthcare and may be restricted by traditional norms. They are also vulnerable to land displacement and exploitation due to industrialization. Empowering tribal women involves respecting their traditions while promoting gender equality and development.

## 6.3. Gender and Religious Minorities

Women from religious minority communities face compounded discrimination based on gender and religion. Issues like forced marriages, limited access to education, and economic marginalization are common. Legal reforms and inclusive policies are needed to address these challenges and protect minority women's rights.

## 6.4. Urban-Rural Divide in Gender Equality

The gap between urban and rural areas significantly impacts gender equality, with rural women facing greater disparities in education, employment, and healthcare. Rural women often engage in unpaid domestic and agricultural work with little recognition or compensation. Addressing this divide requires investments in rural infrastructure, education, and healthcare, as well as initiatives to promote women's participation in the formal economy.

## 7. Leadership and Political Representation

Representation of women in leadership roles is crucial for gender equality. In India, women are still significantly underrepresented in politics, corporate leadership, and academia.

### 7.1. Women in Grassroots Governance: Panchayat

The Panchayati Raj system, which decentralizes governance to local levels, has increased women's participation in politics by reserving one-third of seats for women in Panchayats. This has helped women engage in decision-making on local issues. However, ensuring effective representation and empowering women to influence policies remains a challenge.

### 7.2. Quota Systems and Their Impact

Quota systems reserve seats for women in legislative bodies and corporate boards, aiming to increase female representation. While quotas can help break barriers and ensure women's voices are heard, some argue they may lead to tokenism. Despite this, quotas have been effective in increasing the number of women in leadership roles, though their impact varies by context.

### 7.3. Global Comparisons of Female Political Representation

Comparing India's female political representation with global standards shows both progress and room for improvement. Countries like Rwanda and Sweden have achieved high levels of female representation through proactive policies. India's female representation in Parliament is around 14%, lower than some neighboring countries but has been improving. Learning from global best practices, such as gender-sensitive electoral reforms and political party support for women candidates, can help enhance female representation in India.

## 8. Legal Framework for Gender Equality

A strong legal framework is essential for advancing gender equality. India has several laws designed to tackle gender discrimination and violence, but challenges remain in their implementation and enforcement.

### 8.1. Women's Reservation Bill

The **Women's Reservation Bill** aims to reserve 33% of seats in the Parliament and state legislative assemblies for women. This measure is intended to increase female representation in politics. However, the bill has faced resistance due to concerns about disrupting existing political balances and questions about merit. Despite multiple attempts, the bill has not yet been passed, reflecting deep-rooted patriarchal structures within the political system. Advocates continue to push for its enactment, emphasizing its importance for women's political empowerment.

### 8.2. Inheritance and Property Rights

Inheritance and property rights are crucial for economic empowerment, but gender disparities persist. The **Hindu Succession Act, 1956** provides women with equal rights to inherit ancestral property, but societal norms and discriminatory practices often prevent women from claiming their rightful shares. For Muslim women, personal laws impose even more restrictive inheritance rights. Ongoing efforts aim to reform personal laws and ensure equal inheritance rights for women, eliminating gender-based discrimination and promoting economic independence.

### 8.3. Gender-Neutral Laws and Gendered Outcomes

While gender-neutral laws are meant to apply equally to everyone, they often result in unequal outcomes due to existing social biases and inequalities. For example, labor laws that don't account for maternity leave or gender-based harassment fail to address women's specific needs. Similarly, criminal laws may not fully protect women from certain forms of gender-based violence. Revising these laws to include gender-sensitive provisions is essential for ensuring effective legal protections that address the unique challenges women face.

## 9. Cultural Perceptions and Media Representation

Cultural attitudes and media portrayals significantly shape societal views on gender roles. In India, media acts both as a reflection of societal norms and as a powerful influencer of change.

### 9.1. Bollywood and Gender Stereotyping

Bollywood, India's prominent film industry has long been criticized for reinforcing gender stereotypes. Female characters are often depicted in traditional roles as homemakers, love interests, or victims, reinforcing limited views of femininity. However, there has been a shift towards more diverse and empowered female characters in recent years, reflecting evolving societal attitudes and advocating for gender equality. Films that challenge stereotypes and highlight women's strength contribute to a broader cultural shift towards gender equality.

### 9.2. Advertising and Objectification of Women

Indian advertising often objectifies women, using their bodies to sell products and promoting narrow beauty standards. This not only undermines women's dignity but also contributes to body image issues and the commodification of femininity. Progressive advertising that celebrates women's achievements, diversity, and individuality is crucial for countering these negative portrayals and promoting a more respectful representation of women.

### 9.3. Role of Social Media in Gender Debates

Social media has become a powerful platform for discussing and challenging gender norms in India. Movements like **#Me-too** and **#WhyIStayed** have used social media to raise awareness about sexual harassment and violence, providing a space for women to share their experiences and advocate for change. Social media also facilitates feminist discourse, mobilizes grassroots movements, and promotes gender equality initiatives. However, addressing digital harassment and online abuse is essential to ensure social media remains a safe and supportive environment.

### 9.4. Gender Roles in Indian Literature

Indian literature has long been a medium for exploring and challenging gender roles. Contemporary authors are increasingly addressing issues like female empowerment, gender-based violence, and the complexities of women's identities. Literature serves as a tool for social change, fostering empathy and understanding while questioning traditional gender norms. Supporting diverse voices in literature and promoting gender-sensitive storytelling can significantly impact societal attitudes towards gender equality.

## 10. Work-Life Balance and Care Economy

Achieving a balance between work and personal life is a significant challenge for women in India, who often carry the primary responsibility for caregiving and household management. The care economy, which includes unpaid domestic work and formal caregiving services, is vital but remains undervalued.

### 10.1. Role of Men in Domestic Responsibilities

Encouraging men to share domestic responsibilities is crucial for achieving gender equality at home. Traditional gender roles often assign women the majority of caregiving duties, limiting their professional and personal opportunities. Promoting men's involvement in household chores and caregiving can help balance the burden and enable women to pursue their career and educational goals more effectively. Awareness campaigns and policy incentives, like paternity leave, can support this cultural shift towards more equitable sharing of domestic responsibilities.

### 10.2. Maternity and Paternity Leave Policies

Effective maternity and paternity leave policies are essential for supporting working parents and promoting gender equality in the workplace. In India, maternity leave is legally mandated, allowing women time off before and after childbirth. However, paternity leave policies are less common and often not enforced, which limits men's ability to participate in caregiving. Expanding paternity leave and ensuring its implementation can encourage men to be more involved in parenting and support women's continued participation in the workforce.

### 10.3. Impact of COVID-19 on Women's Economic Participation

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on women's economic participation in India, worsening existing gender inequalities. Lockdowns and economic disruptions led to job losses, particularly in the informal sector where many women work. Increased caregiving responsibilities due to school closures and health concerns further limited women's ability to engage in paid work. The pandemic highlighted the need for resilient support systems, including flexible work arrangements, childcare services, and social protection measures to support women in the workforce.

### 10.4. Daycare and Elder Care in India

Access to affordable and quality daycare and elder care services is crucial for enabling women to balance work and family responsibilities. In India, formal childcare services are limited, especially in rural areas, forcing many women to rely on informal arrangements or forego employment. Similarly, elder care is often

handled by women, adding to their caregiving burden. Investing in daycare facilities, promoting shared caregiving responsibilities, and providing support for elder care can help reduce the disproportionate burden on women and facilitate their active participation in the economy.

## 11. Transgender and Non-Binary Gender Issues

Gender diversity extends beyond traditional male and female categories, encompassing transgender and non-binary identities. In India, transgender individuals, often known as **Hires**, face significant discrimination and marginalization, affecting their social, economic, and legal status.

### 11.1. Legal Recognition of Third Gender

In a landmark 2014 judgment, the Supreme Court of India recognized transgender individuals as a third gender, affirming their rights and dignity. The **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019** further aims to prevent discrimination and ensure equal opportunities. However, implementation of these legal provisions is inconsistent, with many transgender individuals still facing bureaucratic hurdles and societal rejection.

### 11.2. Discrimination against Transgender Individuals in Employment

Transgender individuals often face discrimination in employment, limiting their economic opportunities and perpetuating poverty within their community. Social stigma and lack of inclusive workplace policies contribute to high unemployment rates among transgender people. Initiatives promoting workplace diversity, providing vocational training and enforcing anti-discrimination laws are crucial for improving employment prospects for transgender individuals.

### 11.3. Transgender Access to Education and Healthcare

Access to education and healthcare is vital for the well-being and empowerment of transgender individuals. Educational institutions often lack inclusive policies and support systems, leading to high dropout rates and limited academic achievements. Similarly, transgender individuals face barriers in accessing healthcare services, including gender-affirming treatments and mental health support. Creating inclusive educational environments and ensuring accessible, transgender-sensitive healthcare services are essential steps toward addressing these disparities.

### 11.4. Grassroots Movements for Transgender Rights

Grassroots movements and advocacy groups play a crucial role in advancing transgender rights in India. Organizations like **Sambhav** and **Naz Foundation** work to raise awareness, provide support services, and advocate for policy changes that benefit transgender individuals. Community-based initiatives, including support groups, shelters, and vocational training programs, empower transgender people to lead dignified and independent lives. Continued support for these movements is vital for fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

## 12. Masculinity and Gender Relations

Redefining traditional notions of masculinity is essential for promoting gender equality and reducing gender-based violence. Changing how masculinity is perceived can lead to healthier gender relations and a more equitable distribution of power and responsibilities.

### 12.1. Toxic Masculinity and Gender Violence

Toxic masculinity refers to cultural norms that equate masculinity with dominance, aggression, and emotional suppression. These norms can contribute to gender-based violence, as men may feel pressured to

assert their dominance through aggressive or abusive behavior. Addressing toxic masculinity involves promoting alternative models of masculinity that emphasize emotional intelligence, empathy, and equality. Educational programs and community initiatives that challenge harmful gender norms can help reduce instances of gender-based violence and foster healthier relationships.

## **12.2. Role of Men in Gender Equality Movements**

Men play a crucial role in advancing gender equality, both as allies and active participants in feminist movements. Engaging men in discussions about gender roles and encouraging them to support women's rights can lead to more comprehensive and sustainable change. Programs that involve men in caregiving, promote shared household responsibilities, and advocate for equal opportunities in education and employment contribute to breaking down patriarchal structures and fostering a more inclusive society.

## **12.3. Fatherhood and Changing Masculine Norms**

Redefining fatherhood to include active participation in childcare and household responsibilities challenges traditional masculine norms. Encouraging men to take on caregiving roles supports gender equality and promotes stronger family bonds and emotional well-being. Policies such as paternity leave and flexible work arrangements help facilitate men's involvement in parenting, shifting societal expectations and normalizing the sharing of domestic duties.

## **13. Gender and Climate Change**

Climate change, especially in developing countries like India, is perceived to impact more on women than men because they rely on natural resources and environmental disasters for their livelihoods.

### **13.1. The Gendered Effect of Environmental Degradation**

Climate change and degradation of the environment only magnify more gender inequalities since it reduces the control of women over basic resources like water, land, and energy. In developing countries where a good number of household women gather water and cooking fuel, climate-induced disasters greatly reduce the quantity, hence making the task even more difficult. Similarly, climate change-associated disasters such as floods and droughts affect women more than men, considering that such disasters ruin their livelihoods, give them a heavy workload, and put them at risk for violence and displacement.

### **13.2. Role of Women in Climate Change Adaptation**

Because of their traditional knowledge in ecosystems and resources management, women play an important role in adaptation and mitigation measures concerning climate change. Access to education, training, and leadership by women greatly enhances a community's resilience concerning the impacts of climate change. Programs allowing for active participation by women in decision-making processes on environmental management and sustainable development yield strategies that address climate issues better and are far more inclusive.

### **13.3. Climate Affected Regions Access to Resources**

Ensuring equality in access to resources at the site of climate change is paramount in attaining gender equality. Most women do not own land and other productive resources. Lack of ownership and control hampers women's ability to adapt to new changed environments. Other policy reforms include increased access to finance and technology to allow them to adopt sustainable agricultural methods and diversify their sources of income, increasing their resilience to shocks emanating from climate change.

## 14. Grass-Roots and Non-Governmental Movements

This thus makes the role of grassroots movements and NGOs very crucial in promoting gender equality in India. They work at the community level for addressing certain challenges vis-à-vis gender, lobbying for policy enactment, and providing service delivery for disadvantaged women.

### 14.1. Women's Movements in India's Freedom Movement

They participated in the Indian independence movement and struggled against traditional gender roles for political as well as social rights. Women such as Sarojini Naidu and Kasturba Gandhi led by example, thus serving as examples to others. This legacy endures through its potential to inspire contemporary gender activism, giving stability to the importance of women's contributions to the construction of social order.

### 14.2. Role of NGOs in Promoting Gender Equality

NGO engagement at the forefront of battling gender discrimination is in education and health issues, lobbying for legal reforms, and assisting victims of violence. Other NGOs, such as SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) and Breakthrough, work on increasing economic, social, and political empowerment for women. NGOs in efforts for gender equality in India have resourced research studies and community-based interventions.

### 14.3. Community-Oriented Approaches for Combating Gender Violence

Community-based programs against gender-based violence stand right at the fulcrum, as they are directed at the issue within the very cultural and social niches of the locality. Efforts through dialogues with local leaders raise awareness of the ruinous destruction that takes place because of such violence, changing embedded norms and attitudes. Among the most vital support structures for these survivors, in terms of rebuilding their lives and seeking justice where possible, can be shelters and counseling.

### 14.4. Intersectional Feminism in India

Intersectional feminism realizes that gender disparities interact with other discriminatory practices based on caste, economic class, and religion. That becomes quite important in understanding the diverse experiences of women in India, hence ensuring their voices are also heard in the quest for gender equality. Movements operating on the basis of intersectional feminism mobilize for policies and practices that are inclusive, taking into consideration the many facets of women's identities, therefore cultivating a more holistic and fair approach to gender equity.

## 15. Gender Budgeting and Economic Policies

Gender budgeting is a tool that mainstreams gender perspectives in fiscal policy and budgeting. This methodology ensures that government spending and resource allocation are made with due regard to the particular needs and priorities of different genders.

### 15.1. Gender-Responsive Budgets

This means that gender-sensitive budgeting has to look at how revenues and government expenditures differentially affect men and women. Such an analytical examination helps identify such areas where the allocation of resources can help in improving gender equality, especially in such areas as education, health, and social services, which generally favor women. The incorporation of gender analysis in the process allows policymakers to make well-informed decisions that empower women and dismantle deep-seated disparities.

## 15.2. Microcredit and Empowerment of Rural Women

These are microcredit programs that offer a small loan to women in rural areas to establish or expand a small business, hence achieve economic independence. That said, other organizations like the Grameen Bank and Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) have utilized microcredit practices where they have succeeded in empowering women with capital, education, as well as networks of support. Besides improving the economic status of such women, microcredit programs improve their social standing and decision-making place within the communities they are found.

## 15.3. International Agencies and Their Activities towards Promoting Gender Equity

International organizations, including the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, are financial and technical supporters of the development of gender equality causes. They have been associated with raising the cause and advocating change in policy formulations. These institutions enable projects related to gender, research initiatives, and capacity-building processes in India to help adopt best practices and new methods to combat gender inequality. It reinforces approaches and efforts toward gender equality in global solidarity and shared accountability for women's rights.

## 16. Conclusion

Inequality between men and women in India is multilayered, cutting across social, economic, and cultural dimensions. Despite significant advances in education, legal and institutional reforms, and political empowerment, formidable barriers remain. The latter demands an integrated approach that takes into account the various dimensions in the experiences of diverse women, cutting across different communities and regions. This can be achieved through the education of women, their involvement in economic life, and opportunities for leadership. Sufficiently pursued and implemented strong legal frameworks to protect and promote policies sensitive to gender issues would help a lot. Changes in societal attitudes and cultural mores come with education, media representation, and grass-roots movements. What is needed is cooperation at all levels: government machinery, NGOs, international organizations, and civil society. Identification and elimination of systemic barriers, advocacy for inclusive policies, and empowerment of women at all levels would push the cause of realizing a society in India where gender equality is more than a distant dream.

## 17. References

- [1]. **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5): Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. (2019-2021). National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5). Retrieved from [NFHS] (<https://rchiips.org/nfhs/>)**
- [2]. **National AIDS Control Programme (NACP):**  
**National AIDS Control Organization. (2020). National Strategic Plan for HIV/AIDS and STI 2017-2024. Government of India. Available at [NACO](<https://naco.gov.in/national-aids-control-programme>)**
- [3]. **Women's Reservation Bill:**  
**Government of India. (2021). Women's Reservation Bill 2008 (108th Constitutional Amendment Bill). Lok Sabha Secretariat. Available at [PRS India](<https://prsindia.org/billtrack/the-constitution-one-hundred-and-eighth-amendment-bill-2008>)**
- [4]. **Gender Budgeting in India:**

Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. (2018). **Gender Budgeting Handbook**. Retrieved from [WCD](<https://wcd.nic.in/>)

**[5]. Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019:**

Government of India. (2019). **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**. Available at [India Code](<https://www.indiacode.nic.in/>)

**[6]. SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association):**

Bhatt, E. (2006). **We Are Poor But So Many: The Story of Self-Employed Women in India**. Oxford University Press.

**[7]. Microcredit and Women's Empowerment:**

Yunus, M. (2007). **Creating a World Without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism**. PublicAffairs.

**[8]. Intersectional Feminism in India:**

Ghosh, J. (2009). **Never Done and Poorly Paid: Women's Work in Globalising India**. Women Unlimited.

**[9]. Panchayati Raj System:**

Government of India. (1992). **73rd Amendment Act, Panchayati Raj Institutions**. Constitution of India.

**[10]. Climate Change and Gender in India:**

Aggarwal, B. (2010). **Gender and Green Governance: The Political Economy of Women's Presence Within and Beyond Community Forestry**. Oxford University Press.

**[11]. Bollywood and Gender Stereotyping:**

Gokulsing, K. M., & Dissanayake, W. (2004). **Indian Popular Cinema: A Narrative of Cultural Change**. Trentham Books.

**[12]. MeToo in India:**

Jaggar, A. M., & Rothenberg, P. S. (2018). **Feminist Frameworks: Building Theory on Violence Against Women**. McGraw-Hill Education.

**[13]. UN Women Gender Statistics:**

UN Women. (2021). **Gender Equality: Women's Rights in Review 25 Years after Beijing**. Available at [UN Women](<https://www.unwomen.org/>)