

Unveiling Equality: Exploring Gender Dynamics in India with Unbiased Perspective.

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Abstract

Everyone is born without prejudice of any sort such as ethnicity, sex, colour, language, birth or any other status; equal in dignity and liberty and everyone is entitled to all human rights and freedom. Women and men have received equal justice in ancient India and equal status in every sphere of life. This kind of treatment in present times has so far been an unrealised dream, which has tamed most of the individuals who are having high concerns for equal status of women with great agony. A lip service is given by the power bearers by making tall promises to bring gender equality which ends up in no results at practical level. Hence the marginalisation of women which consists nearly half of the population of our country has had drastic results on them, as they have lagged behind men socio-politically and educationally. The paper tries to explore the contribution of our country's political setup, and the policy formulation in alienating women from opportunities, that would have enabled them to contribute to society as men do. The paper also tries to explore the political consciousness of Indian women, and the illusions created by the people who are at helm of affairs. This paper also gives some highlights, in order to bring the gender egalitarianism in our country, for the development of any country is not feasible, if it does not treat both the sexes equally. This paper would look into the drastic backdrops of "patriarchy", and how "feminism" in retaliation, would help to build an egalitarian society.

Key words: Gender equality, Society, patriarchy and gender Justice

Introduction

Man for the field and women for the hearth, Man for word and for needle she, Man with the head and women with the heart, Man to command and women to obey, All else confusion" - Alfred Lord Tennyson Since the ancient time, India has been fostering its variety, which adds to the distinctiveness of the absolutely unique country, and has been dubbed the land of unity in diversity by many. Whereas the people shown amazing fortitude in maintaining their identity in the face of adversity throughout. The treatment or position of women in the pre-Manu simiriti period (Vedic period) was similar, as in the Vedic period they were regarded with honour and respect and were referred to as the ARDHANGALI (better half). The truth is that the most important duties carried out at any time to maintain the country's stability have not been only the labour of males, but women have also made significant contributions. As a result, the goal of the new millennium, to put women on an equal footing with men, has so far remained a fantasy in our nation. The society, which includes both genders, has evolved to the point where the effort of the man is recognised and appreciated, but that of the female is frequently ignored, regardless of how significant the labour may be. The delicate creature, who has since birth been subjected to partiality in treatment, is frequently compelled to remain within the confines of the home and to keep herself occupied with household duties, either by the environment, which is still largely male-friendly, or by the family. The irony is that crimes against women are perpetuated in all spheres of life in our nation, where they are venerated as Shakti. She is being treated with contempt and treated like a slave or a commodity; she is stripped of her pride and dignity both within and outside the four walls of her home. They are viewed as a source of foetal reproduction and male sex pleasure. They are the true Dalits, or oppressed, of society. They experience discrimination on two different levels: first, because of their gender, and, second, because of their extreme poverty.

It is an irrefutable reality that men and women make up each half of mankind. Without the assistance of the other, none can achieve its utmost level of creative greatness. Therefore, if the reality were to be recognised by everybody, it would result in significant changes for the better in our nation and genuinely unleash the potential of both sexes. But from birth to death, women are subjected to a variety of wicked deeds including assault, tyranny, and discrimination in the home, at work, and in society. All forms of oppression that women experience have as their underlying causes: illiteracy, economic dependency, male chauvinism, nationalistic structures of society, and others.

Nurturing Gender Equity: Pioneering Legislation for Women's Empowerment.

In the journey towards fostering gender equity, India has emerged as a pioneering force through a series of impactful legislations designed to empower women and dismantle systemic barriers. These legislative initiatives have played a

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crucial role in addressing gender disparities, promoting women's rights, and creating an environment conducive to their holistic development and participation in all spheres of society.

One of the watershed moments in this endeavor was the enactment of the Maternity Benefit Act in 1961, which guaranteed working women paid leave during and after pregnancy, ensuring their health and economic well-being. Subsequently, the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976 tackled wage discrimination by mandating equal pay for equal work, setting the stage for narrowing the gender wage gap. These statutes laid the foundation for a more equitable workplace, fostering women's financial independence and bolstering their socio-economic status.

The 21st century witnessed a surge in legislations addressing gender-based violence and discrimination. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, provided a comprehensive framework for safeguarding women's rights within their homes, while the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, tackled a deeply entrenched social issue by raising the legal age of marriage, thereby curbing early marriages and its associated consequences. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, was a significant leap forward, ensuring a safe working environment for women and addressing a critical concern that hindered their professional progress.

Recognizing the importance of political participation, the Constitution (73rd and 74th Amendment) Acts, 1992, reserved one-third of seats for women in local governance bodies, empowering them at the grassroots level and amplifying their voices in decision-making processes. Additionally, the landmark Supreme Court judgment in *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan* (1997) led to the formulation of guidelines to address sexual harassment at workplaces before the aforementioned legislation was enacted.

Efforts to empower women have extended to education as well, with the Right to Education Act, 2009, ensuring free and compulsory education for all children, irrespective of gender, laying the groundwork for gender parity in literacy rates and intellectual growth. Moreover, the *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter) campaign launched in 2015 aimed to reverse the declining trend in the child sex ratio and promote the education and welfare of girls.

In the realm of legal reforms, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, was a watershed moment, amending laws related to sexual offenses and strengthening the legal framework for addressing crimes against women. The Nirbhaya Fund was also established to support initiatives for enhancing women's safety and security.

While these legislative strides have undoubtedly made significant strides, challenges persist. Gender-based violence, gender pay gaps, and underrepresentation of women in leadership roles remain issues that need sustained attention. However, the Indian government's commitment to nurturing gender equity through pioneering legislation continues to shape a more inclusive and just society, reaffirming the nation's determination to create an environment where women can thrive and contribute to the nation's progress unhindered by gender-based constraints.

Gender justice endorsed by Indian constitution.

The Indian Constitution stands as a resolute advocate for gender justice, fortified by its unequivocal commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of all genders. Rooted in Articles 14, 15, and 16, it staunchly denounces gender-based discrimination, ensuring equal protection under the law. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019-20), strides have been made in improving gender parity, with the female literacy rate rising from 53.7% in 2005-06 to 70.3% in 2019-20. Additionally, Article 39(a) emphasizes equal pay for equal work, aligning with the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2020 which noted a gradual but consistent improvement in India's gender wage gap. The Constitution's enduring commitment to women's empowerment is reflected in Article 51A(e), which encourages citizens to renounce practices derogatory to women, reinforcing initiatives aimed at curbing gender-based violence. Legislative measures like the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, further exemplify the Constitution's role in fostering gender justice. Although challenges persist, such as the gender gap in political representation, currently at 14.4% female members in the Lok Sabha (2021), the Indian Constitution remains an unwavering cornerstone for promoting gender equity, galvanizing a multifaceted approach towards a just and inclusive society.

Empowering Women's Political Participation: Bridging Gender Parity in Legislative Chambers.

The quest for gender equality and the empowerment of women in the realm of politics has become a cornerstone of progressive societies worldwide. One crucial arena where this aspiration is being actively pursued is within legislative chambers, where laws are debated, decisions are made, and the course of a nation is charted. The drive to bridge the gender gap in these chambers, ensuring equal representation and participation of women, is a pivotal step towards a more inclusive and just governance structure.

Historically, women's political participation has been marred by systemic barriers, stereotypes, and deeply ingrained biases. However, the winds of change have been blowing, and concerted efforts have been made globally to dismantle these obstacles. In recent decades, the importance of women's presence in legislative bodies has been recognized as not just a matter of gender equality, but also as a means to enrich the quality of governance by bringing diverse perspectives and experiences to the table.

Numerous countries have implemented measures to actively promote women's political participation. Quota systems, for instance, have gained traction, mandating a certain percentage of seats for women in legislative bodies. Rwanda stands

as a remarkable example, boasting the highest proportion of women parliamentarians globally, largely due to a quota system that has elevated women's representation to over 60%. Similarly, India's constitutional amendment in 1992 reserved one-third of seats for women in local governance bodies, setting a precedent for greater women's political engagement.

Critical to this endeavor is changing societal attitudes towards women in politics. Stereotypes portraying women as less competent or suited for leadership roles have been vigorously challenged. Role models and trailblazers have emerged, inspiring future generations of women to actively engage in politics. Notable female leaders like Angela Merkel, Jacinda Ardern, and Kamala Harris have shattered glass ceilings and demonstrated the caliber and capability of women in positions of power.

Education and awareness campaigns have played a pivotal role in encouraging women's political participation. By dispelling myths and empowering women with the knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, these campaigns have created an environment conducive to their active engagement. Mentorship programs and leadership training have also emerged, equipping women with the skills and confidence to navigate the often complex and competitive world of politics. While progress has been made, challenges remain. Deep-rooted patriarchal norms, inadequate support systems, and lingering gender biases continue to impede women's political participation. Harassment and discrimination against women in political spheres also persist, deterring many potential leaders from entering the fray.

In conclusion, the journey towards empowering women's political participation and bridging gender parity in legislative chambers is an ongoing and dynamic process. It requires a multipronged approach involving legal reforms, societal transformation, and targeted initiatives. The benefits are manifold: diverse perspectives enrich policy discussions, more inclusive legislation is enacted, and the overall governance structure becomes more reflective of the populace it serves. As nations strive for a more equitable and representative political landscape, the concerted effort to empower women in legislative chambers stands as a testament to the collective aspiration for a fairer and more just world.

Women's Reservation Bill.

The Women's Reservation Bill in India is a proposed piece of legislation aimed at reserving a specific percentage of seats for women in both the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) and state legislative assemblies. This initiative seeks to address the long-standing gender disparity in political representation and empower women to participate more actively in the democratic process. While the bill has garnered substantial support for its potential to enhance gender equality in politics, it has also encountered significant opposition, reflecting complex socio-political dynamics.

Focal points of the bill.

Reserved Seats: The bill proposes to reserve a specific percentage of seats for women in both the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) and state legislative assemblies. The exact percentage may vary, but the primary aim is to provide women with a predetermined number of seats, ensuring their representation in these legislative bodies.

Gender Parity: The central objective of the bill is to address the gender disparity in political representation. By reserving seats for women, the bill aims to bridge the gap and ensure a more balanced composition of elected representatives, thereby promoting gender equality in decision-making processes.

Enhanced Women's Participation: The bill intends to provide a platform for women to actively participate in the democratic process and contribute to policy discussions. By increasing their representation, the bill seeks to amplify women's voices and perspectives on various issues, including those that specifically affect women and marginalized groups.

Inclusive Policy Formulation: With greater women's representation, the bill aims to result in more inclusive policy formulation. Women bring unique perspectives and experiences to the table, which can lead to the development of policies that address a broader range of societal concerns and challenges.

Empowerment and Social Change: The bill seeks to empower women by giving them a more significant role in decision-making. This empowerment can have a ripple effect on society, challenging traditional gender norms, and inspiring more women to engage in various fields, including politics.

Constitutional Principles: The bill aligns with constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination. It recognizes that women have historically been underrepresented in politics due to systemic barriers and aims to rectify this by creating a legal framework for their increased participation.

Encouraging Gender-Sensitive Legislation: Women's increased representation can lead to legislation that is more attuned to gender-specific issues and challenges. The bill seeks to encourage the formulation of laws and policies that address the needs and rights of women and other marginalized groups.

Changing Societal Attitudes: The bill, if enacted, can contribute to changing societal attitudes towards women in leadership roles. It can challenge stereotypes, dispel biases, and encourage the acceptance of women as competent and capable political leaders.

Positive Impact on Governance: Proponents of the bill argue that with more diverse representation, legislative bodies can make better-informed decisions that reflect the diverse needs of the population. This can potentially lead to improved governance and more responsive policies.

Pathway to Leadership: The bill provides a pathway for women to ascend to leadership positions within political parties and government. As more women enter politics through reserved seats, they can gain experience and recognition, paving the way for greater gender diversity in leadership roles.

Detailed Account: The Women's Reservation Bill was first introduced in the Indian Parliament in 1996. The main objective of the bill is to promote gender parity and ensure that women's voices are adequately represented in legislative bodies. Proponents argue that increased female participation in politics can lead to more inclusive policies and a balanced representation of societal perspectives. By providing women with a stronger platform in decision-making processes, the bill aims to address gender-specific issues and advocate for policies that benefit all segments of the population. Supporters of the bill contend that it aligns with the principles of equality and social justice enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The bill also recognizes the historical and structural disadvantages faced by women in accessing political power, and aims to rectify these imbalances by creating a conducive environment for women to engage in active politics.

Opposition: Despite its noble intentions, the Women's Reservation Bill has encountered significant opposition, highlighting various concerns and challenges:

Meritocracy and Quality: Critics argue that reserving seats for women might compromise the principle of meritocracy. They contend that political candidates should be elected based on their qualifications and capabilities rather than their gender. Concerns are raised that mandated reservations could lead to the selection of less qualified candidates, potentially affecting the quality of governance.

Reservation for Marginalized Groups: There is a debate about whether the reservation should be implemented solely for women or should also consider other marginalized groups, such as Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). Balancing multiple forms of representation becomes a complex task.

Political Resistance: Opposition can arise from entrenched political interests that resist change. Existing male political leaders may perceive the bill as a threat to their positions and influence, leading to resistance from within the political establishment.

Societal Norms and Empowerment: Some critics argue that true empowerment comes from voluntary participation rather than mandated reservations. They suggest that societal norms and cultural changes should drive women's increased political involvement, and that reservations might not be the most effective approach.

Implementation Challenges: Critics also point out logistical challenges in implementing the bill, such as the potential for conflict between different marginalized groups, ensuring fair distribution of reserved seats, and addressing issues of political dynasty.

Therefore, the Women's Reservation Bill in India represents a bold step towards achieving gender parity in politics. While supporters emphasize its potential to enhance women's participation and influence in governance, opponents raise valid concerns related to meritocracy, political dynamics, and the complexities of implementation. Striking a balance between promoting women's representation and addressing these challenges remains a central aspect of the ongoing discussion surrounding the Women's Reservation Bill in India.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, the journey of "Unveiling Equality: Exploring Gender Dynamics in India with Unbiased Perspective" has illuminated the multifaceted landscape of gender in the country. By delving into the complexities of historical context, cultural norms, legal frameworks, and societal challenges, a clearer understanding has emerged of the intricate interplay between tradition and progress. The examination of women's empowerment, representation, education, and rights underscores the significant strides that have been made, while also shedding light on the persistent disparities that demand urgent attention.

Through an unbiased lens, it becomes evident that true equality encompasses not only legal provisions but a transformation of attitudes, a dismantling of entrenched biases, and an active pursuit of inclusivity. The remarkable stories of women breaking barriers and challenging conventions highlight the resilience and determination that characterize India's ongoing journey towards gender parity.

As we navigate the complexities of gender dynamics, it is imperative to recognize that achieving genuine equality requires collaboration across all sectors of society – from government and civil society to families and individuals. By embracing diversity, confronting stereotypes, and fostering inclusive environments, India can truly unlock its full potential, harnessing the talents, aspirations, and contributions of all its citizens, regardless of gender.

In the pursuit of this noble endeavor, let "Unveiling Equality" stand as a testament to the power of knowledge, dialogue, and collective action. As India continues to evolve, may this exploration serve as a catalyst for informed conversations, meaningful reforms, and a future where every individual, regardless of gender, can thrive and contribute to the nation's progress in an environment of true equality.

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