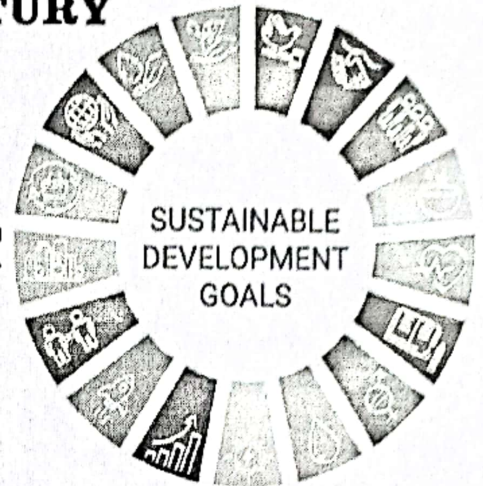
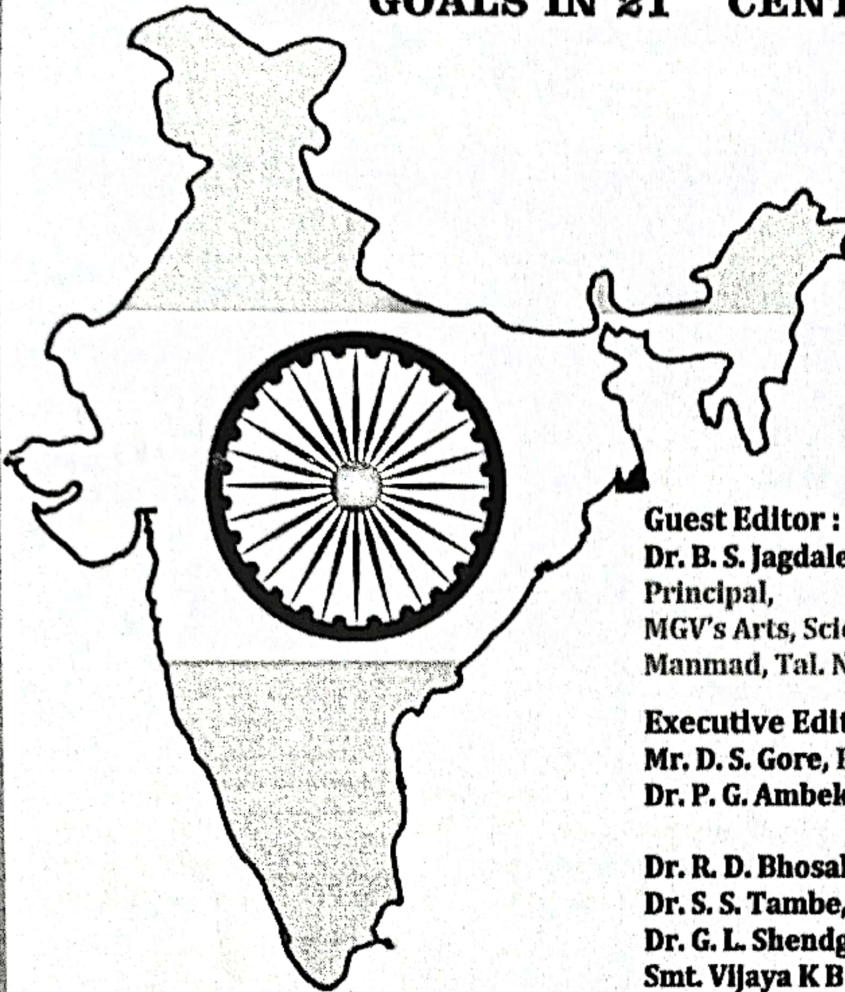


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**INDIA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
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Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in India : A Key to Sustainable Development

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Abstract:

Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. As a result, their full involvement is needed to achieve long-term development."Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is one of its significant goals. Indian women always remain an underprivileged group in accessing their economic, political, and socio-cultural rights. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to look into the plans and policies initiated by the Indian government to promote women's empowerment and gender equality in India in order to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The paper's findings reveal that the Indian government is making promising efforts to reduce gender inequality and achieve women empowerment in all fields as part of the process of achieving the SDGs. To address the threat of gender discrimination and achieve women's empowerment, these efforts must be implemented effectively and correctly. In the field of education, women must play an important role that positions them as catalysts for sustainable growth.

Keywords: Women empowerment, gender equality, sustainable development

➤ Introduction:

In India, a woman suffers from various problems of social practice, religious traditions, and rites from time centuries-old due to her low literacy rate, lack of decision-making power, and lack of access to occupations or job opportunities than men. As a result of this dismal situation, women have become increasingly reliant on men throughout their lives. Consequently, due to this over dependency, they became a burden and lesser valued in the family. Women construct approximately an equal ratio of the total population of humans. So, making women empowered in the development course has been one of the main concerns of almost all development plans and policies of our country. The political, economic and social developments of a woman are the essential keys to their empowerment, dynamic civil society, gender equity, and good governance in a country. It is a fundamental step towards the acceleration of sustainable development.

Gender equality is a goal in its own right but also a key factor for sustainable economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability. By providing the same opportunities to women and men, including in decision-making in all kinds of activities, a sustainable path of development can be achieved to ensure that women's and men's interests are both taken into account in the allocation of resources. In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) made important provisions for the recognition of women's contributions and their full participation in sustainable development. The United Nations' 2030 Agenda contains the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this regard, it is a vital step toward Gender Equality, which





will succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is making strides at the global level to mainstream gender in its Strategic Plan (2018-2021) for Agenda 2030, ensuring that everybody has self-determination and resources to succeed in society.

➤ Objectives of the study

- To find what extent India has reached Target 5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.
- To highlight the Government of India's National Schemes in achieving Sustainable Development Targets
- To study the women empowerment in India and gender equality.

➤ Methodology

This study is based exploratory research. It conducts a qualitative analysis using secondary sources such as current literature, the Indian Census, and various studies from government and non-government organizations.

➤ Concept of Gender Equity and Women Empowerment

Women's empowerment means women gaining more power and control over their own lives. This entails the idea of women's continued disadvantage compared to men which is apparent in different economic, socio-cultural and political spheres. Therefore, women's empowerment can also be seen as an important process in reaching gender equality, which is understood to mean that the "rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female". Gender is an imperative social factor of development. Since the 1970s, several steps have been taken to promote gender equality and women's empowerment on a global and domestic scale. In 1979, the United Nations passed a "International Bill" for women's rights, which calls for the abolition of all forms of oppression against women in all spheres of life. Gender role expectations are institutionalized through legislative, educational, political and economic systems. Women need to be "empowered" in order to narrow the "gender gap" and to create an equal playing field between women and men before gender equality can be reached and maintained.

➤ Sustainable Development

The term 'sustainable development' is coined to guarantee the development in such a way in which natural resources can be sustained and passed on without any impairment to future generations. It therefore encapsulates the needs of both women and men. In the year 1987s the report *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development defined the concept "sustainable development" as development which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

➤ United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of goals adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, 2015, that are a 15-year extension of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of 2000 and took effect on January 1, 2016. The MDGs' very first aim was the reduction of poverty. Its main aim, however, was not to address local, global, and national gender inequality and disparities. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had failed to discuss the root causes of poverty and the challenges that it posed.



Therefore, The SDGs have presented consciously a much diverse scope than MGDs with the incorporation of economic and ecological sustainability. The SDGs have 17 goals and 169 targets with a plan of achieving its aims by 2030. India is a signatory member of this extensive Plan and very firmly committed to accomplishing the objectives mentioned in the 2030 Plan for Sustainable Development. The commitments of the SDGs are prepared to apply in all countries. Therefore, the 2030 Agenda is more hopeful foreseeing the obliteration of poverty, manage climate change systematically, and construct a peaceful, stable, equal, and comprehensive social order. The SDGs have included Goal 5 as Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, one of its standing goals. Besides, the other SDGs Goals also inbreed the target of Gender Equality in their selves. 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.

Table 1: National Schemes for a feasible way to achieve UN Sustainable development Goal 5

S.NO.	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), Ujjawala, One-Stop Centers, Women Helpline, hostels, SWADHAR Gruh, 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 environment, and empowerment to all girls and women at various levels.	Social, economic and cultural development
4	National AIDS Control Programme	It aims to prevent and control HIV/AIDS in India.	Health development
5	Pradhan Mantri Matru 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.	





7	Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Yojana (RGSY)	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 technology enable women 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 economic development
11	Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY)- National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)		
12	Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY) -National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM)	The Mission aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial service	Rural and economic Development
13	Labour 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

Source: NITI Ayog, File No.F-20019/PA-SDGs/2017-DME0-Part (1)

The main areas where 'Women Empowerment and Gender Equality' is critical for their long-term development can be evaluated under the following headings:

➤ **Women in Education**

Education is one of the most important indicators of women's and girls' social and cultural progress. In today's world, education is a critical weapon for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. MHRD has been playing a vital reform role for 'imprinting' equal gender notions along with providing equal access to education at school and higher education level. Presently, there are 16 universities exclusively for women, three in Rajasthan, two in Tamil Nadu & one each in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. As per All India Survey of Higher Education report 2018-19, the total enrolment in higher education has been estimated 37.4 million with 19.2 million male and 18.2 million female students. Female students constitute 48.6% of the total enrolment, an increase of 4.6% in the past six years across all levels in Higher Education.

The Indian government is constantly working to improve the value of education and to encourage people to enroll in educational programs. It has launched many schemes for the

promotion of education in India. SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active–Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) and GIAN (Global Initiative of Academic Networks) are two new initiatives on the Higher Education road map. These are significant achievements but a larger collective effort is still required to attain Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 which aim to eliminate gender disparities in education.¹

➤ Women in Economic

Gender parity is a critical component of a country's economic development. Providing all women with fair economic opportunities empowers them in their families, communities, and countries. Women's economic empowerment is a significant factor that can help them succeed in society. Access to organized and skilled work is commonly recognized as a critical component in reducing poverty and empowering women. It can help a woman's financial independence and self-esteem. This process also provides a shift in the status of women in the house and society. However, Indian women remain to continue the fight to get equitable space in the economic sphere of the country. Women's active involvement in the country's economy is hampered by a lack of technical skills due to unequal access to supporting factors such as equitable participation in education, technology, and expertise capital. The government of India has introduced many schemes for women's enrolment in the economy of the country, which is mentioned above in table1.

Nevertheless, in the past two decades, India was unsuccessful in the creation of decent jobs even with high economic growth. Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2018-19 results indicate that in the rural sector, the Worker Population Ratio (WPR) was 19.0 for females and 52.1 for males. In Urban sector, the ratio is 14.5 for females and 52.7 for males. In both rural and urban areas, WPRs for females were considerably lower than males.²

➤ Women work participation in India

In the area of women work participation, Indian government policies and promotion strategies have been giving new opportunities to women, few have come forward. According to the same MSME annual report 2017-18, only 20.37% of enterprises in the registered MSME sector were enterprises managed by women representing about 2.15 lakhs across the country. As on Table 2 Percentage Distribution of enterprise by gender of owner in Rural and urban Areas. The proportion of women-managed enterprises is slightly higher in rural areas than urban areas.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of enterprise by gender of owner in Rural and urban Areas

Area	Female	Male
Rural	22.24	77.76
Urban	18.42	81.58
All	20.37	79.63

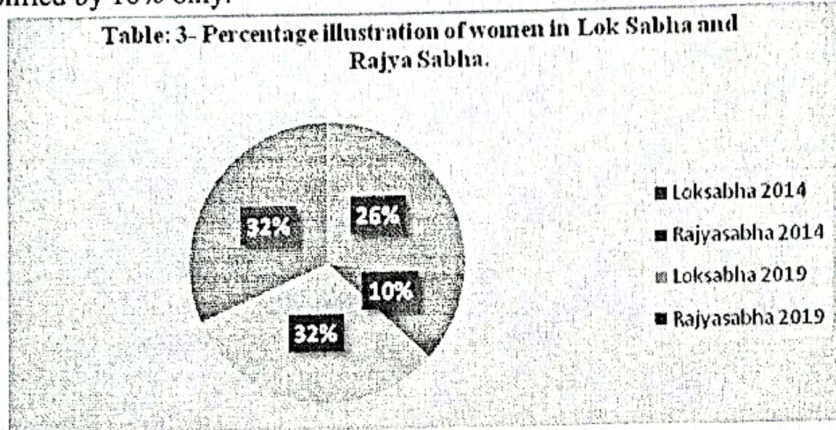
Source: MSME Annual Report 2017-18, Ministry of MSME, Government of India.

➤ Women in Politics

Consistent enrolment of women in the political sphere is critical for empowering women and achieving gender equality. India is a legal member of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was signed in 1979. However, India is still far behindhand in realizing the women's equal representation in political decision making power. As on Table 3 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 Ist Lok Sabha to present Lok Sabha is overall amplified by 10% only.

Table: 3- Percentage illustration of women in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.



As of January 2017, India was at 88th rank in "Women in Politics Map, 2017"³ 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.⁴ Currently, 78 women have acquired seats in the 17th Lok Sabha from the total number of 543 members of Lok Sabha.⁵ In Rajya Sabha, there are a total of 239 members as of September 2019, from which 26 are women.⁶

➤ Conclusion

The Sustainable Development Goals Agenda encouraged the mainstreaming of "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment." Women's development is directly linked to the country's Sustainable Development goal, and significant change will not occur unless the government, at all levels, increases its determination to report severe "gender disparities" and make policy and implementation efforts. The government of India, as a significant signatory to the Agenda 2030, is progressively implementing effective schemes to accomplish the goals. Considerable progress has ensured over the last decade. However, due to a lack of adequate awareness of the national plans and programs for the eradication of gender inequality in India, growth has slowed. In their family and society, Indian women were faced many problems. The process of their liberation through sustainable development has now given them hope to be optimistic. In order to achieve the SDGs by 2030, women in India will undoubtedly gain significant empowerment and equality.

In the end it could be concluded that, Economic, social and political concerns need to be approached in an integrated and holistic manner for the effective implementation of national schemes will help to achieve the Goal of Sustainable Development of women in India.

End Notes:

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