

GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Empowering Marginalized Voices



Ajay Kumar | Dr. Vasudha. N | Dr. Rafat Anis



Global Academy

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GLOBAL ACADEMY

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Title: Gender Equality and Women's Rights: Empowering Marginalized Voices

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First Published, 2025

e-ISBN: (Turkey)

Yayımcı Hukuki Adı (Publisher Legal Name)

GLOBAL ACADEMY YAYINCILIK VE DANIŞMANLIK HİZMETLERİ SANAYİ
TİCARET LİMİTED ŞİRKETİ

Published by:

GLOBAL ACADEMY

PUBLISHING AND CONSULTING SERVICES INDUSTRY AND
TRADELIMITED COMPANY

GLOBAL ACADEMY YAYINCILIK VE DANIŞMANLIK HİZMETLERİ
SANAYİ TİCARET LİMİTED ŞİRKETİ

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Preface

The fight to recognize gender equality and women's rights as fundamental human rights has been long and challenging. Over time, this struggle has expanded to include the voices of marginalized communities, particularly LGBTQ+ individuals, offering a broader understanding of the intersections between gender, sexuality, culture, and socio-political structures. This book, "Gender Equality and Women's Rights: Empowering Marginalized Voices," delves into these complex narratives, shedding light on diverse perspectives, examining systemic inequalities, and suggesting pathways toward a more inclusive future.

The journey toward gender equality has never been straightforward; it is shaped by history, politics, culture, and socio-economic factors that vary across regions. Women have historically been confined to restrictive roles, their voices silenced by patriarchal structures. Yet, they have continually resisted, carving out spaces for themselves and future generations. From grassroots movements to global leadership, women have risen to challenge injustice, demand their rights, and reshape the narrative surrounding gender and power. The notion that "women's rights are human rights" may seem simple today, but making this belief a reality has been fraught with challenges. Across the globe, women still face barriers to education, employment, political participation, and healthcare. Legal frameworks protecting women's rights exist, but their implementation often falls short. The gender pay gap, lack of representation in leadership roles, and persistent stereotypes reveal the long road still ahead.

As we analyze the shifting gender roles in contemporary society, we see a growing acceptance of diverse identities and expressions. Yet, traditional norms continue to exert influence, creating tension between progress and preservation. Women breaking glass ceilings in corporate offices still find themselves burdened with disproportionate household responsibilities, a reminder that true equality extends beyond public spaces and into private lives. In the economic sphere, gender inequality manifests in several forms — from unequal pay and limited job opportunities to exclusion from financial decision-making. In countries like India, women's participation in the workforce remains low due to structural barriers, lack of access to education, and societal expectations. Addressing these disparities requires both policy-level changes and a transformation in societal attitudes.

Family and society play a crucial role in perpetuating gender norms. In many cultures, the family unit upholds patriarchal values, shaping perceptions of gender from an early age. LGBTQ+ individuals often face discrimination and alienation within their families and communities, creating an environment of silence and shame that prevents them from living authentically. The fight for equality must therefore address these deeply entrenched beliefs, fostering environments where diverse identities are accepted and celebrated. This collection does not limit itself to the binary discourse of gender but embraces the

complexities within the LGBTQ+ community. Queer representation in literature and cinema offers a powerful lens to examine identity, challenging stereotypes and reshaping narratives. Stories of queer love, struggle, and triumph disrupt the heteronormative gaze, demanding visibility and recognition.

India's LGBTQ+ community has fought tirelessly for legal rights and social acceptance. The decriminalization of homosexuality marked a significant step forward, but legal victories alone cannot erase decades of discrimination. True equality requires societal transformation, where acceptance is not merely tolerated but embraced. One of the lesser-discussed identities within the LGBTQ+ spectrum is asexuality. Often misunderstood and overlooked, asexual individuals face unique challenges in asserting their identity in a society that heavily emphasizes sexual relationships. This book aims to shed light on these experiences, advocating for a more nuanced understanding of sexual diversity. In Kashmir, transgender individuals occupy a unique socio-economic space, grappling with challenges that stem from both their gender identity and the region's political instability. They make a substantial contribution to the local economy in spite of these obstacles, frequently through community-based work or traditional artistic endeavors. Their stories are a testament to resilience in the face of adversity, highlighting the need for greater recognition and support.

The legal landscape for transgender individuals in India has seen gradual improvement, but the gap between policy and practice remains wide. Legal recognition alone does not guarantee societal acceptance, and transgender persons continue to face discrimination in education, employment, and healthcare. Bridging this gap requires a holistic approach, combining legal reforms with grassroots advocacy and community engagement. Indian philosophy offers intriguing insights into gender equality. Ancient texts like the Vedas and Puranas contain narratives that challenge rigid gender binaries and celebrate diversity. Revisiting these texts from a contemporary lens reveals a rich tapestry of thought that can inform modern discourse on gender and identity. Furthermore, the psycho-social and educational challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals highlight the need for inclusive environments where diversity is not just acknowledged but celebrated. Mental health support, inclusive curricula, and safe spaces are crucial in fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment.

This book is a collective effort to amplify marginalized voices, confront injustices, and celebrate those who continue to fight for equality. As editors, we hope this collection sparks dialogue, deepens understanding, and inspires action, encouraging readers and future generations to engage with these issues with empathy and a renewed sense of purpose. The journey toward gender equality and the empowerment of marginalized voices is a shared responsibility. Through these pages, we invite you to join us in this journey — to listen, learn, and advocate for a world where everyone, regardless of gender or sexuality, is afforded the dignity and respect they deserve. We welcome any form of suggestions from the reader with the course of the subject and their feedback to the work.

Editors

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Emergence of Women on the Global Stage: From Political Evolution to Shaping the 21st Century

Aman Bora*

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the evolution of women's roles on the global stage, highlighting their transformative impact across political, social and economic spheres since the late 19th century. It chronicles their journey from historical marginalization to becoming influential decision-makers, peace negotiators and advocates for justice. Key milestones include the waves of feminism, the suffrage movement, the establishment of international women's rights frameworks and the growing presence of women in leadership positions. The chapter also addresses the ongoing challenges in achieving gender parity, particularly in economic empowerment and political participation. Additionally, it explores the various policies, institutions and mechanisms designed specifically to uplift women. Ultimately, it demonstrates how women's participation is redefining leadership and fostering a better society in an interconnected world.

Keywords: feminism, gender parity, activism, women's rights, justice, gendered quotas

1. INTRODUCTION

"It is justice, not charity, that is lacking in the world," said Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Her words still hold significant relevance today, as many of the issues of the past centuries remain present in the 21st-century society. Over the past century, women's rights and roles have advanced significantly, with their contributions in the international arena

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becoming increasingly crucial for global peace, economic development and social equity. Women's leadership today is associated with the creation of more inclusive and effective policies that tackle complex global challenges, including climate change, poverty and health issues. Their participation in peacebuilding initiatives enhances the likelihood of enduring peace, while their economic contributions drive sustainable development. Despite these advancements, women continue to face considerable challenges on the global stage, such as under-representation, economic disparity, workplace discrimination and violence both inside and outside the residence.

The representation of women in the political sphere has been successful and continues to evolve. They have stood shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts and have successfully broken stereotypes. This active political representation has positively impacted their contributions and roles in other leadership spheres too. Verge et al. (2018) found in their study in Spain that increased female representation has influenced the legislative agenda, resulting in a greater focus on social issues (pp. 53-54). In today's globalized world, more women are engaging in politics than ever, with the year 2018 even recognised as 'The Year of the Woman' (Hessami & Da Fonseca, 2020, p. 7). However, there is still a divide in the world when we see the representation of women in the leading position. It varies from country to country and region to region. Thus, changing their influence in both domestic and global policymaking.

Women's leadership and political participation still face significant challenges at both local and global levels. They remain underrepresented as voters and in leadership roles across various sectors, including political offices, the civil service, the commercial industry and academia (UN Women, 2024a, pp. 1-3). As of June 1, 2024, twenty-seven nations have 28 women occupying the positions of Head of State and/or Government. At the present pace, attaining gender parity in the top ranks of power will require an extra 130 years (UN Women, 2024c). According to data from UN Women (2024b), women hold only 23.3 percent of cabinet positions overseeing key ministries as of January 1, 2024. Furthermore, only 15 countries have women occupying 50 percent or more of the Cabinet Minister positions in critical policy areas. Throughout history, as Tickner & True (2018) have truly stated, women's movements have predominantly been overlooked despite their significant role as champions and architects of the League of Nations and subsequently, the United Nations (p. 12).

This chapter explores the remarkable journey of women as they have broken through historical barriers to become powerful forces on the world stage. It examines how women have not only fought for a voice in political arenas but also led transformative changes in international policies. Through their efforts, women have redefined leadership and brought fresh perspectives to critical issues such as peace, human rights, and economic progress. We will assess the claim made by Fellegi et al. (2023) regarding the resistance to recent advancements in women's rights and the increase in violence against women in politics within liberal democracies. This chapter celebrates the resilience, achievements and impact of women who are shaping the global agenda today and inspiring future generations to create a more inclusive and equitable world.

2. EVOLUTION OF WOMEN'S ROLES

2.1 Pre-20th Century

In the pre-20th century world, the role of women was limited, they were predominantly marginalised from formal political positions and decision-making procedures. They were unable to vote or occupy public office in the majority of regions globally. Women's principal roles were frequently focused on domestic responsibilities. Only royal or noble women would have the power and women like Empress Catherine the Great of Russia and Queen Elizabeth I of England showed their influence by wielding significant political power and influence through their positions. Mary Wollstonecraft's 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman' (1792) articulated a seminal and lasting case for gender equality. Following the tumultuous decade of the French Revolution, her reasoning offered a systematic examination of the status of women across history and geography (Wolfson, 2023).

On July 19-20, 1848, The inaugural women's rights convention, spearheaded by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the 'Seneca Falls Convention', took place in New York with 300 participants and endorsed the 'Declaration of Sentiments', which ignited decades of activism, ultimately culminating in the ratification of the 19th Amendment (the US constitution), conferring upon women the right to vote (Holcomb, 2023). The Declaration of Sentiments asserts, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men and women are created equal, that their creator endows them with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (Vogelstein, 2017).

Globally women were anticipated to oversee domestic responsibilities, rear children and assist their spouses. Women's access to education and employment possibilities was constrained. Women possessed lower legal rights as compared to men. They could not frequently independently possess property, engage in contractual agreements or retain custody of their children in the event of a divorce. Although women were largely excluded from formal diplomacy, they played crucial roles as informal advisors and mediators in their respective courts. Notwithstanding these constraints, women were instrumental in numerous social reform campaigns, including slavery, temperance and women's suffrage. These movements established the foundation for further progress in women's rights.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries in America, a distinct concept of womanhood known as "The New Woman" emerged, significantly influencing public perceptions of women's societal roles. The New Woman represented a generation of women who developed between 1890 and 1920, challenging traditional gender norms and conventions. They established a new public identity through work, education, politics and entertainment, while also reflecting a modern aesthetic that contrasted with Victorian ideals. This figure became intimately linked with the emergence of feminism and the movement for the right of women to vote. (Rabinovitch-Fox, 2017). Feminism is a movement that promotes equal political, judicial, social and financial opportunities for women to males. The term was first recorded in 1837 in France, where the socialist Charles Fourier used "feminisme" to denote women's freedom in a

utopian future (Grogan, 1992, p. 20). By the early 1900s, feminism was linked to the women's suffrage movement, but it later gained even greater significance.

2.2 Early 20th Century

The early 20th century witnessed women acquiring suffrage in numerous nations, which began to change their role in public and international affairs. Women's involvement in international organizations started to formalize, with figures like Jane Addams advocating for peace and social reforms. In the year of 1911, International Women's Day was celebrated in Switzerland, Denmark, Austria and Germany, with over one million protesters advocating for women's suffrage, public office eligibility, vocational training and workforce equality (Vogelstein, 2017). During the early 20th century, women significantly contributed to many international organisations, championing social justice, peace and women's rights. Some of the major organizations were:

- International Council of Women (ICW): Established in 1888, the ICW was among the first international women's organisations. It sought to unite women's organisations from other nations to address shared concerns such as suffrage, education and social transformation.
- International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA): Founded in 1904, the IWSA (subsequently rebranded as the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship) concentrated on obtaining voting rights for women globally. It was significant in the global suffrage campaign.
- The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF): Established in 1915 amid World War I, sought to advocate for peace and disarmament. It was among the initial organisations to associate women's rights with the peace movement.
- The Women's Peace Party (WPP): Established in 1915 by Jane Addams and fellow activists, emphasised 'peace as a women's issue' while championing women's rights and global peace (Jabour, 2017). Members of the Woman's Peace Party advocated for women's rights and global peace, believing that women's complete involvement in the political process was crucial to resolving worldwide conflict.

In the spring of 1915, around fifteen hundred female delegates from the US and Eleven European nations convened at The Hague for the inaugural International Congress of Women, which subsequently evolved into the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Vogelstein, 2017; Tickner & True, 2018, p. 3). The highlighting point was that these delegates were constituted of women from both sides of the conflict including the neutral states. The 1915 Hague Conference suggested substituting the term "balance of power" with "concert of nations" and promoted the creation of a worldwide police force to supplant the individual state militaries (Tickner & True, 2018, pp. 2-3).

These organisations facilitated opportunities for women to champion their rights while promoting worldwide collaboration and solidarity among women from various nations. Feminist pacifists sought a peaceful globe defined by national self-determination, worldwide disarmament, and unrestrained trade. It also required identical political rights for them. Through WPP, women contributed a distinctive viewpoint to international affairs (Schott, 1985). Highlighting the disproportionate suffering of women during wartime, feminists in foreign

relations pursued increased influence in international affairs despite being denied the right to vote domestically (Jeffreys-Jones, 1995). Ultimately, female pacifists aspired to establish 'a world without war' (Early, 1997). The 1920s witnessed sustained peace initiatives by women, expanding upon their wartime endeavours to advocate for peace at local, national and international levels.

2.3 Post-World War II Era

The foundation of the United Nations was the most significant event following the conclusion of the Second World War. The founding of the UN in 1945 represented a pivotal transformation. Eleanor Roosevelt was instrumental in establishing the United Nations and advocating for human rights. She had a significant role in the formation of the UN. After World War II, President Harry S. Truman appointed her as a representative to the UN General Assembly in 1946 (Shvangiradze, 2023). Her main achievement was her involvement in the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), ratified by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948. As the first head of the UN Commission on Human Rights, she utilised her authority and dedication to oversee the draughting process, ensuring that the declaration would uphold fundamental human rights for all citizens (Bill of Rights Institute, n.d.). The UDHR became the first international document to affirm "the dignity and worth of the human person and [the] equal rights of men and women." Nonetheless, it was not until the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women that women's rights were widely recognised as fundamental human rights (Vogelstein, 2017).

During the conflict, women assumed roles normally occupied by men. Following the war, numerous women persisted in employment, but frequently in lower-wage positions. The proportion of women in the workforce rose, with numerous employed in healthcare, education and administrative roles. Women advocated for equitable compensation, attaining certain victories in the 1960s, including equal remuneration for educators and public employees. The Commission on the Status of Women was established in 1946 to address global women's issues.

The post-war era witnessed the emergence of feminist movements. Women advocated for workplace equity, reproductive rights and political representation. Substantial advancements occurred in women's rights, encompassing the enactment of legislation against gender discrimination and the advancement of gender equality throughout multiple nations (Deslippe, 2018). Numerous women who had exited school to work during the war resumed their education in the 1950s and 1960s, resulting in improved employment prospects and increased salaries (Goldin, 1989; Jaworski, 2014, p. 191). Women commenced participation and achieved distinction in professional domains such as law, healthcare and academia, dismantling conventional gender barriers.

2.4 1970s-1980s

This period saw increased activism for gender equality, including efforts to integrate women into political and diplomatic roles. Second-wave feminism, originating in the 1960s and persisting until the 1980s, significantly influenced women's empowerment worldwide. Betty Friedan, author of 'The Feminine Mystique 1963' and co-founder of the National Organisation for Women (NOW), is frequently acknowledged for igniting the second wave of feminism in the

United States (Muñoz, 2021). This movement expanded the focus of feminism beyond the legal rights achieved during the first wave, such as voting rights, to address a broader range of issues affecting women's lives.

Second-wave feminists advocated for workplace equality, resulting in notable legislative reforms such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and 1964 Civil Rights Act in the United States and the Equal Pay Act of 1970 in the United Kingdom. Bailey et al. (2024) claimed the two US acts to be a landmark in filling the gender pay gap. The concepts and achievements of second-wave feminism are disseminated globally, impacting women's movements in numerous nations. This worldwide influence promoted international unity among women and motivated local initiatives to tackle particular cultural and societal challenges. The United Nations proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year and convened a global meeting in Mexico City regarding the status of women. The UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the Commission on the Status of Women held the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City from June 19 to July 2, 1975, resulting in a World Plan of Action for women's advancement and the proclamation of the United Nations Decade for Women from 1976 to 1985 (Vogelstein, 2017; Quataert, 2018).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), also known as an "international bill of rights for women," was ratified by the UNGA in 1979. It has profoundly influenced the progression of women's rights globally. CEDAW has motivated many nations to revise or establish legislation to advance gender equality. Numerous countries have enacted legislation to combat domestic abuse, gender-based discrimination, and human trafficking (OHCHR, n.d.). Judicial systems in multiple nations have utilised CEDAW as a foundation for decisions that safeguard women's rights. This has contributed to the establishment of legal precedents that promote gender equality. This has resulted in increased campaigning and activism for gender equality (Khanna et al., 2016, pp. 3–6). Byrnes and Freeman (2012) also found that the convention has promoted global collaboration and discourse on women's rights, urging nations to exchange best practices and assist one another in executing gender equality initiatives (p. 50). However, Howard-Hassmann (2011) identified three deficiencies in CEDAW: abortion rights, assaults on women and the fundamental liberties of lesbians (p. 435). If we reflect upon the present world, we will witness that these shortcomings are still there globally. Even the most developed and self-proclaimed human rights protector, the USA, is still dicey on abortion rights. Still, subsequent conferences, such as the 1980 Copenhagen Conference, highlighted women's roles and issues on a global scale.

Between 1960 and 1980, numerous women ascended as prominent leaders internationally. Indira Gandhi served as Prime Minister of India, the largest democracy in the world, from 1966 to 1977 and again from 1980 till her assassination in 1984. Gandhi was the first and, to date, the only female Prime Minister of India. Indira Gandhi asserted that women possessed equal leadership capabilities as men. She frequently emphasised that leadership attributes are not determined by gender but rather by personal ability and resolve (Steinberg, 2008). Her leadership, especially in the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War, exemplified that women could manage the pressures and duties of high office with equal efficacy to males. Benazir Bhutto was Prime Minister of Pakistan on two occasions:

initially from 1988 to 1990, and then again from 1993 to 1996. She was the first female leader to head a democratic government in a predominantly Muslim nation (Burns, 2007).

2.5 1990s

In 1990, Cynthia Enloe asked “Where are the women?” in her book ‘Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics.’ It profoundly influenced the domain of international relations by emphasising the frequently neglected role of women in global politics. Enloe’s work contests conventional viewpoints by highlighting the significance of gender analysis in comprehending international events and policies. The 1990s witnessed a surge of female pioneers and a consistent increase in women’s representation. In the 1980s, merely six women held the position of their country’s first head of state. By the 1990s, this figure increased to sixteen (George, 2019). The 1990s were a dynamic period for political leadership globally, marked by significant changes and the emergence of influential female leaders. The Third Wave of Feminism emerged in the early 1990s, promoting independence and variety. This wave of feminism was propelled by the heightened economic and professional empowerment of women during the second wave. It tackled matters including sexual harassment, reproductive rights, and the representation of women in media. This movement was defined by its intersectional approach, taking into account the influences of class, race and sexual orientation alongside gender.

Kimberlé Crenshaw’s 1989 article ‘Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics’ presented the notion of intersectionality, emphasising the interplay of gender, race and other identities in shaping distinct experiences of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989, pp. 139-167). In her book ‘Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity’ 1990, Judith Butler contested conventional understandings of gender and identity, presenting the notion of gender fluidity and performativity. Naomi Wolf’s ‘The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women’ (1990) critiques the abuse of societal beauty standards to control and oppress women.

The third wave highlighted the importance of policy-oriented action, strengthening feminist movements and rights advocacy in the Global South, and the establishment of women’s studies as an academic subject. A significant aspect of the third wave on a global scale was its alignment with the ongoing and incomplete integration of feminists and feminist ideologies into mainstream politics (Molyneux et al., 2021, p. 8). Movements such as ‘Riot Grrrr!’ and the notion of ‘girl power’ gained prominence, motivating women to assert their uniqueness and sexuality (Hunt, 2019). It amalgamated feminism, punk music and politics, frequently linked to third-wave feminism.

In the US, the landmark law known as the Violence Against Women Act (1994) was enacted to combat domestic abuse, sexual assault, and stalking (Gover & Moore, 2020). Since its implementation, the prevalence of assault by intimate partners against women in the US has markedly declined. From 1993 to 2008, such violence dropped by 53% (Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review, 2022). The law has influenced similar legislation globally. Countries have embraced and modified their framework to combat domestic abuse, sexual

assault and stalking, resulting in enhanced protections for women worldwide. It has also served as a model for international efforts to protect and empower women (Maier, 2024).

The activism was going on one side while many female leaders came out and proved an inspiration to the coming generation. Mary Robinson was the first female President of Ireland, holding office from 1990 until 1997. Her presidency was characterised by an emphasis on human rights and social issues. She advocated for various topics, including women's labour rights, the legal accessibility of contraceptives, and LGBTQ+ rights in Ireland (Lindsay, 2019). Violeta Chamorro was elected President of Nicaragua in 1990, becoming the inaugural female officeholder in the nation. Her leadership was pivotal in the switch from civil conflict to peace (McCoy, 1991, p. 117).

Then came the historic UN Fourth World Conference on Women 1995, held in Beijing, China, attracting 17,000 official participants and 30,000 activists. The conference concentrated on gender-based violence, poverty, economic inclusion and human rights. The former U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton prominently asserted that "women's rights are human rights," a statement that had a global impact. The conference ended with the unanimous approval of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by 189 countries. Global assessments have been conducted every five years to evaluate progress towards its implementation (Tyler, 1995; Vogelstein, 2017; Clinton, 1996, pp. 98–101).

Different countries also implemented policies at their domestic level to enhance women's involvement in decision-making and protection of their rights. Post-apartheid in 1996, South Africa adopted a new constitution that had robust protections for gender equality and women's rights. The formation of the Commission for Gender Equality was to advance and safeguard gender equality across all sectors of society (CGE, n.d.). After the 1994 genocide, Rwanda took significant measures to rebuild and promote gender equality, instituting gender quotas that guarantee women occupy a minimum of 30% of decision-making roles. Brown (2015) claims that the genocide acted as a catalyst resulting in the nation enacting policies to enhance women's involvement in politics, resulting in one of the greatest proportions of women in parliament worldwide (p. 243).

In the 1990s, women's political activism experienced significant growth and impact in various regions and sectors. This decade witnessed a significant rise in the total number of women occupying political positions. For example, the 1992 US elections were called the 'Year of the Woman' as the number of women in the Senate tripled (Yarrow, 2018). During the 1990s, legislative quotas for women became a significant tool to enhance female political representation globally. In 1991, Argentina became the first Latin American nation to implement nationwide gender quotas. A significant statute, referred to as Ley de Cupos, mandated a minimum representation of 30 percent of women on the election lists of each party (Americas Quarterly, 2009). Many countries implemented identical measures following Argentina's example. Paxton and Hughes (2015) discovered in their study of 145 nations between 1990 and 2010 that by 2010, more than 60 nations had implemented various forms of gender quotas into their election legislation or constitutions and that quotas enhanced women's legislative representation and also exhibited growing efficacy over time (p. 331). They also asserted that quotas had evolved into a potent instrument for altering

the gender composition of the national legislative (p. 354). The UN Women 2021 report confirmed this information; additionally, Molyneux et al. (2021, p. 12) added the report indicated that women in political office were considered responsible for the stagnation in the advancement of the rights of women and gender equality, occasionally with justifiable reasons.

United Nations Security Council of Resolution 1325

On October 31, 2000, the UNSC overwhelmingly adopted historic Resolution 1325. It emphasises Women, Peace and Security (WPS) (United Nations, 2000). Mayanja (2010) claims that through the resolution for the first time, a Security Council resolution shifted from its usual emphasis on halting conflicts to confronting the debilitating, more insidious and enduring consequences of military violence against women. The resolution acknowledged the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on female and pushed for their equitable involvement and thorough engagement in all efforts to uphold and advance security and peace.

The Resolution 1325 has profoundly influenced the international perspective on WPS. The resolution improved women's involvement in negotiations for peace, peacekeeping efforts, and post-conflict reconstruction activities, as noted by Mayanja (2010) on the tenth anniversary of the resolution's adoption. Women have increasingly engaged in decision-making positions at multiple tiers. Numerous nations have established National Action Plans (NAPs) to execute the resolution's goals.

During the discussion on the 20th anniversary of the UNSCR1325 of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Ulla Schmidt noted that the resolution has served as a spark for enhancing gender equality and advocating for women's rights in the realms of security and peace. However, despite two decades having elapsed, women are still marginalised in peace and security positions; gender viewpoints are frequently overlooked. A disparity exists between commitments and concrete measures, characterised by inadequate finance and execution at the national level. In 2019, women constituted merely 12% of the armed forces of NATO member nations. Attila Mesterhazy asserted that education, media and international coordination are essential for enhancing awareness and promoting the WPS agenda. Schmidt asserted that the COVID-19 epidemic has disproportionately impacted women, exacerbating obstacles to gender equality. Nonetheless, it underscored the significance of maintaining WPS principles throughout emergencies (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2020).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Goal 3

It comprised eight international development objectives that all United Nations member nations and several international organisations committed to accomplishing by 2015. They were founded after the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000. Goal 3 of the MDG was to advance gender equality and empower women. It contains initiatives aimed at eradicating gender inequality in primary and secondary education, ensuring equitable educational opportunities, and empowering women through literacy initiatives, political engagement, and economic prospects. The influence of the MDGs over 15 years was substantial and revolutionary. Advancements were achieved in narrowing the gender

disparity in schooling and enhancing women's access to political engagement and economic prospects. The MDG Goal 3 is one of the few met in 15 years (Ritchie & Roser, 2018). However, women continue to encounter prejudice in domains such as employment access, economic asset ownership, and decision-making, both in public and private spheres. Women in developing nations are statistically more prone to endure poverty compared to men (Abernethy, 2015).

3. *The 21st century*

The third wave progressed in the 2000s, highlighting intersectionality and the perspectives of women of colour, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other marginalised communities. The concept of intersectionality gained prominence, highlighting how various kinds of discrimination, such as class, race and gender, intersect and overlap. This approach broadened the feminist movement to be more inclusive of diverse experiences and identities.

Since 2000, women's movements have made remarkable progress on the global stage. Women's movements have intensified, championing gender equality, reproductive rights, and the cessation of gender-based violence. Entities such as UN Women have significantly contributed to elevating these voices. Women have increasingly held high-profile roles in international organizations, including as heads of state, foreign ministers and UN leaders (e.g., Angela Merkel, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Christine Lagarde).

In 2003, women marched in the US and opposed the Iraq War, calling for a peaceful resolution. It was an integral part of a broader global anti-war movement which was going on around the world and women were a significant part of it (Chan, 2003). These demonstrations were orchestrated by various feminist and peace organisations, including Code Pink and the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) in the US. The most significant of these protests occurred on March 22, 2003, attracting hundreds of thousands of participants nationwide. Globally, women were advocating, taking action and voicing their support for peace (Hudnall, 2003, p. 103). The movement highlighted the intersection of women's rights with anti-war activism, emphasising the disproportionate impact of war on children and women.

Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace (WLMAP) 2003

A prolonged civil war forced numerous Liberian women to launch a movement. The campaign employed many techniques, including a sex strike to urge men to participate in peace talks and a sit-in by women during negotiations, who threatened to disrobe to shame and dissuade male delegates from leaving without an agreement. The WLMAP, established by social activists Comfort Freeman, Leymah Gbowee and Crystal Roh Gawding, attained international acclaim for facilitating peace negotiations in Accra, Ghana, between former President Charles Taylor and the rebel groups the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MDL) and Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) (Ntreh, 2020). The movement successfully concluded a Second Liberian Civil War (Navarro, 2010; Barbosa, 2024) and resulted in the election of the President of Liberia and also Africa's first female head of state, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Waweru, 2017). In recognition of their non-violent efforts to ensure women's safety and their rights to full engagement in peace-building initiatives, Leymah

Gbowee was one of three women who jointly won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011. She jointly received the award alongside President Sirleaf and Yemeni women's rights advocate Tawakkul Karman (The Nobel Prize, 2011).

On April 25, 2004, the March for Women's Lives was organized in Washington, D.C. to advocate for reproductive rights, including abortion rights, contraception, and access to comprehensive reproductive healthcare (National Organization for Women, 2014). The demonstration was among the largest in U.S. history, featuring over 1.3 million participants. It was a compelling exhibition of unity and support for women's health and rights. The march brought national and international attention to issues such as abortion rights, access to birth control and comprehensive reproductive health care.

The Rise of Activism

Civil rights activist Tarana Burke established the #MeToo movement on Myspace in 2006, which has become one of the most significant and influential advancements for gender equity concerning sexual abuse worldwide. This movement achieved global significance in 2017 which we will discuss later in the chapter. It underscored the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment, encouraging women to reveal their stories and seek retribution from perpetrators.

A unique kind of activism was seen in the Asian nation, India, where females took matters of justice into their own hands. The 'Gulabi Gang', also known as the 'Pink Gang', was founded in 2006 by Sampat Pal Devi in the Banda region of Uttar Pradesh, India (Ranjan & Chadda, 2024, p. 402). This all-female vigilante organization was formed to address issues such as domestic violence, corruption, and other injustices faced by women in the region. The Gulabi Gang has heightened awareness of gender equality and women's rights in India and worldwide (Singh, 2024). Their bold activities and public exposure have highlighted the challenges encountered by women in rural regions. In 2008, Iceland elected Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir as its first female PM and the world's first openly LGBTQ+ head of government.

By 2010, significant advancements had been achieved in women's international human rights compared to 1970; the assertion that human rights were not synonymous with women's rights was no longer tenable (Howard-Hassmann, 2011, p. 446). In July 2010, the UNGA unanimously ratified Resolution 64/289, establishing UN Women. UN Women was established through the amalgamation of four pre-existing UN entities: the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). The creation of UN Women marked significant progress in the global effort to promote gender parity and empower women. It unified resources and mandates to enhance impact and fortified the UN's capacity to champion women's rights and combat gender-based discrimination (United Nations, 2010). The establishment of this particular department was crucial because, despite numerous policies and initiatives aimed at enhancing their participation and impact on the global stage, women were still significantly underrepresented.

Despite clear evidence of women's anti-war sentiments and their desire for peace, their involvement in the peace process remained minimal. Between 1990 and 2011, in 31 peace processes including the UN, a mere two percent of primary mediators were women, four percent were witnesses and signatories and nine percent were negotiators at the peace table (Tickner & True, 2018, p. 7). Bigio and Vogelstein (2018) claim that women are consistently under-represented in peacekeeping missions, despite evidence indicating that their involvement enhances mission efficacy and promotes stability.

From 2011 forward Women across the Arabian Peninsula and North African capitals are fervently advocating for their rights within the context of the pan-Arab movement. The Arab Spring of 2011 served as a stimulus for substantial women's movements throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) area (Cooke, 2016). The outrage propels women into the worldwide spotlight, contesting views of them as subservient. Women significantly contributed to the upheavals, and their participation expanded in the subsequent years. Shalaby (2016) claims that women's political engagement markedly escalated in nations such as Tunisia and Egypt. In Tunisia, women's parliamentary representation increased to 31% following the revolution. In Egypt, women participated actively in protests and political movements, however, their representation in formal politics has encountered obstacles.

The 2010s witnessed the emergence of fourth-wave feminism, which introduced concepts such as 'manspreading' and 'mansplaining,' along with movements like #MeToo. Women such as Gayle King, Nancy Pelosi and Greta Thunberg have emerged as prominent leaders, contesting conventions and championing reform (Elting, 2019).

The fourth wave of feminist movements has expanded the demographic incorporated into the movement, contrasting with earlier movements that focused on white middle-class women. The second wave, at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, expanded to include voting rights, domestic abuse and reproductive rights, marginalizing women of colour (Nguyen, 2019). Contemporary feminism has evolved to be more inclusive, addressing not only the rights of women but also the issue of sexual violence that impacts all identities. The internet has initiated a new era, the fourth wave of feminism. The emergence of social media has enabled women to disseminate their narratives, galvanise support and illuminate concerns such as sexual harassment, body shaming, and rape culture. They are actively advocating for the recognition of historically silent experiences of gender-based violence and discrimination through digital campaigns and blogging (Shiva & Kharazmi, 2019, pp. 129, 141).

This movement has increased consciousness about the hardships of women of colour, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, fostering a more inclusive feminist agenda. The #MeToo movement is presently occurring within the context of fourth-wave feminism. In 2017, the campaign received worldwide attention when actress Alyssa Milano tweeted #MeToo, encouraging others to share their stories of assault and sexual harassment. In a year, over 19 million tweets utilised the hashtag, underscoring the movement's extensive reach and impact. Following the #MeToo movement, over 200 prominent men in the United States encountered allegations, resulting in terminations and resignations (Gordon, 2023). The movement has increased

public consciousness about sexual harassment and assault, encouraging more people to speak out and seek help.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Goal 5

Seventeen global objectives were developed by the UN in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These objectives provide a comprehensive framework for addressing social, economic and environmental issues to achieve a sustainable future. The aim is for all people to enjoy prosperity and peace by 2030 (UNDP, n.d.). SDG Goal 5 seeks to attain gender parity and empower all women and girls. The objectives encompass the eradication of all types of discrimination against females, the cessation of violence and detrimental behaviours, equal access to economic resources, the assurance of complete participation in leadership positions and access to reproductive health services. In the 21st century, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and subsequently the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has incorporated explicit targets for gender equality.

But let's look at the SDG Implementation Progress Report of 2024 (United Nations, 2024). Progress towards gender equality (Goal 5) is stagnating, with harmful traditions such as female genital mutilation and child marriages declining at an inadequate pace. Achieving gender parity in leadership roles, particularly in managerial positions, may require 176 years. More than fifty percent of nations lack anti-discrimination legislation and gender quotas in their legislative bodies. Child marriage persists, with one in five women wed before the age of 18, and female genital mutilation impacts over 230 million women. Women persist in undertaking 2.5 times more unpaid household labour than males, while their involvement in political and management roles remains constrained. Disparities in land rights endure, and women are 8% less likely to possess mobile phones compared to men. Only 26% of nations have established comprehensive gender budgeting systems. Immediate actions are required to rectify these inequities.

On January 21, 2017, the Women's March on Washington, DC, emerged as the largest global rally advocating for women's rights with 3.5-5.5 Million people. Associated marches, varying in scale from several dozen to several hundred thousand participants, occurred in urban areas globally, including Nairobi, Krakow, Belgrade, Bangkok, Paris, Buenos Aires, Accra and even Antarctica. Multiple marches were accompanied by training workshops for women seeking political roles, youth initiatives, and discussions on issues such as wage inequality and freedom from violence (Vogelstein, 2017). The 21st Century has seen the rise of digital activism.

Many incidents of women's activism have been witnessed at the end of the second decade of the 21st century. In June 2018, Saudi Arabia formally rescinded the longstanding prohibition on women driving, signifying a pivotal advancement in the nation's endeavours to enhance women's rights (BBC News, 2018). In March 2021, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala became the first African and the first woman to serve as Director-General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (CBS News, 2021). Her selection represented a notable milestone, indicating an increasing acknowledgement of the significance of diversity and inclusion in global leadership positions.

4. EMERGING TRENDS

4.1 Political Representation

Time has really changed in the information era and to the point, it has evolved drastically. The political representation of women is increasing steadily today, with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) playing a key role. The internet, especially social media, has facilitated increased inter-communication among women. It is not like the previous decade where only a specific section of the women could have their voices heard. Today globalisation and inter-connectivity have made every voice global. Women's activism is not limited to the developed society. The efforts of women in the 20th century have empowered the 21st-century generation. Women are more actively engaging in the political structure of even the developing nations. Gendered quota can be credited for the same.

This increasing female representation in policy-making and decision-making is bringing out new perspectives which have been long undermined. In their analysis of 159 developing nations Asiedu et al. (2018) discovered that developing nations with a greater proportion of female MPs are more inclined to enact and enforce comprehensive legislation addressing sexual assault, divorce and domestic abuse, hence advancing gender-sensitive policies (pp. 1, 33). Similarly, in their case study of Rwanda, which had the highest representation of women in parliament at the time, Devlin and Elgie (2008) determined that increased women's presence facilitated the more frequent and accessible discussion of women's issues. Nevertheless, relative to other regions globally, the influence of the increased presence of women in policy-making was not evident (p. 251). However, like women leadership elsewhere globally, they perceived their heightened interest in grassroots politics than men (p. 250). O'Brien and Piscopo (2018) assert that female politicians, while widening legislative agendas concerning women, also advocate for children, vulnerable groups and the most marginalised populations (p. 54).

Verge et al. (2018) discovered in their analysis of Spain's parliament that female MPs engage more frequently with civil society organisations than their male counterparts; yet, they are not perceived as contributing to more collaborative and less confrontational parliamentary procedures (p. 56). Research indicates that an increased proportion of female legislators is associated with more development aid and public health spending among nations. Conflict behaviour and defence expenditure, however, seem to diminish with an increase in the share of female representation (Hessami & Da Fonseca, 2020, p. 4).

4.2 Women in the Peace Process

Throughout time, there has been a realisation that women can play a crucial role in the peace process. Various efforts have been taken at both the domestic as well as at international levels for the same. Some of the efforts at the highest international level had been made by the UNSC. Resolutions 1325 (2008), 1820 (2008), 1889 (2009) and 2122 (2013) advocate for women's representation in conflict prevention, resolution and management (UN Women, 2015). They promote female leadership, mitigate negative social perceptions, and ensure comprehensive engagement and protection in post-conflict endeavours. These resolutions seek information on progress in promoting women's participation

in peace initiatives. The participation of women in official peace agreements increased from roughly 20% before to 2000 to over 50% in 2015 (Adjei, 2019, p. 135).

“If the goal of a peace process is only to end violence, then women — who are rarely the belligerents — are unlikely to be considered legitimate participants. If the goal is to build peace, however, it makes sense to gain more diverse inputs from the rest of society” (Marie O’Reilly et al., 2015, p. 1).

Various studies have identified a strong association between peace agreements negotiated by female delegates and the longevity of peace. The involvement of women in peace discussions, with a voice and influence, results in superior agreement content, increased implementation rates, and more enduring peace (Krause et al., 2018, p. 1005; Stone, 2014; Avonius et al., 2020, p. 3). Research indicates that peace processes that involve women as signatories, witnesses, mediators or/and negotiators have a 20% greater chance of producing peace treaties that last at least two years. Additionally, the likelihood of a peace agreement lasting 15 years increases over time, with a 35% improvement in probability (O’Reilly et al., 2015, p. 49).

The African Union acknowledges the value of women as mediators in conflict resolution and is establishing a network of female experts for deployment. Norway and Sweden have also developed a professional network to support female peace negotiators and Sweden (Tickner & True, 2018, p. 7). The absence of women’s involvement in security and peace has significant ramifications for international relations, particularly as emerging data indicates that women and women’s organisations positively influence peace processes.

5. CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

Despite significant societal advancements, gender-based discrimination and violence persist at all levels. Women encounter numerous challenges and often have to work harder than men to access the same opportunities. These challenges vary around the world, with some places lacking even the most basic women’s rights. Despite increasing literacy rates, women constitute approximately two-thirds of the global illiterate population. They constitute two-thirds of the global impoverished population (subsisting on \$1 daily or less), execute two-thirds of the world’s labour and produce fifty percent of the food, however obtain only ten percent of the revenue and hold one percent of the assets (Haan, n.d.).

More than 2.5 billion women and girls globally experience gender-based violence, encompassing intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, and human trafficking. Discriminatory legislation and insufficient legal protections aggravate these problems (United Nations, 2019, p. 9). According to the UN Women (2023), women are under-represented in leadership posts, occupying merely 27% of parliamentary seats and 28% of executive jobs. The absence of representation constrains their impact on decision-making processes. By 2030, it is anticipated that over 340 million women and girls will reside in extreme poverty, exhibiting notable differences in labour force participation and income. Annually, 245 million women and girls endure physical and/or sexual violence, with numerous nations lacking complete legal safeguards. Substantial disparities persist in education, healthcare, food security and access to clean energy for women and girls.

It is not the patriarchy however in all the cases that are being the hurdle to the progress of the women in the society. Hessami & Da Fonseca (2020, p. 3) point out that women may exhibit a diminished propensity to pursue candidature in a competitive environment. Academic research indicates that women exhibit a lower propensity than men to engage in competitive environments. Women encounter greater challenges in achieving a work-life balance, as seen by prevailing family structures among Members of Parliament (Verge et al., 2018, pp. 56–57). The growing representation of women has altered perceptions of female leaders and challenged the male bias prevalent in legislative bodies. However, the capacity of female legislators to alter policy and shape attitudes and behaviours may elicit retaliation from both the public and their peers, suggesting that patriarchal societies would react inconsistently—and even antagonistically—to women’s increased use of their political rights (O’Brien & Piscopo, 2018, p. 54). Entrenched cultural and social conventions sustain gender stereotypes and biases, resulting in the discrimination and marginalisation of women. These conventions frequently constrain women’s options and prospects in multiple facets of life. Women and girls in numerous regions encounter obstacles to obtaining decent education and healthcare. Overcoming these difficulties necessitates a unified endeavour by organisations, governments and individuals to advance gender equality and empower women worldwide.

6. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The progress in women’s economic, political and social rights, along with their representation across all important fields in the last century, has far surpassed that of the previous centuries. The activism and vocal demands for their rights played an important role. Initially, print media and now digital media have been crucial in spreading words and ideas globally. To bring women to the policy-making table, Gender quotas played a significant role by increasing the representation of female legislators and expediting political and social transformation (O’Brien & Piscopo, 2018, pp. 57–58; Asiedu et al., 2018, p. 33). Feminism and Feminists have made significant contributions in highlighting the unequal gendered power structures that adversely affect the lives of many individuals, including both women and men (Tickner, 2018, p. 168). Society must move beyond the patriarchal mindset and recognize that women can play a significant role in creating a peaceful and transformative future. We need to understand that it is not only morally and ethically essential but a necessity for a harmonious future.

Apart from political representation, economic representation is also necessary. Just eliminating the gender disparity in the workforce might contribute an astonishing \$28 trillion to the global GDP (cfr, n.d.). Education and financial and digital inclusion of women are necessary. Cultural attitudes, legislative constraints, and inequitable access to financial resources and education impede women’s engagement. As per a World Bank report, globally, women possess less than two-thirds of the legal rights granted to men, with notable deficiencies in legal safeguards and supportive structures, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East (World Bank, 2024, pp. xiii, 68). To attract more women to multistakeholder initiatives and Internet governance, it’s crucial to highlight the value of women’s leadership. Jongen (2023) found that women serve as role models, with female respondents identifying more inspiring

women leaders than their male counterparts, emphasizing the importance of role models in global governance (pp. 331–332).

We have witnessed from the above analysis that the participation of women in global governance and international relations plays a crucial role in enhancing peace, security, economic development and human rights. Research shows that countries with greater gender equality are less likely to engage in military interventions, and the involvement of women in peace negotiations increases the chances of lasting peace. Their engagement leads to inclusive economic policies that address global challenges like climate change and poverty, resulting in better healthcare, education and social services. Moreover, women in leadership inspire future generations, challenge stereotypes and promote increased female representation in decision-making roles, ultimately benefiting society as a whole.

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The Rights of Women as Human Rights: Progress, Challenges and the Future

Dr. Md Kamal Hossain

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the evolution of women's rights through the lens of human rights, tracing the historical milestones and the progress made in securing gender equality on a global scale. Starting with foundational movements, such as the suffrage campaigns and the UDHR, the study highlights key international treaties and conventions, including CEDAW, that have shaped the legal and social frameworks advancing women's rights. Despite significant advancements, the research delves into persistent challenges such as gender-based violence, economic inequality, political underrepresentation, and legal restrictions on reproductive rights that hinder true equality. Through a critical analysis of global case studies, the paper also examines the intersection of women's rights with race, class, and culture, arguing that these factors compound the oppression of women, especially in marginalized communities. The research concludes by forecasting the future trajectory of women's rights within the framework of human rights. It emphasizes the need for strengthened political will, more inclusive policies, and international cooperation to address ongoing disparities and to build a more equitable future for all women.

Keywords: CEDAW, Political representation, Gender equality, Intersectionality, Human rights, Reproductive rights, economic inequality.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of women's & human rights is foundational to global efforts objective is achieving gender equality. Historically, women's rights were often marginalized, seen as exclusive from the broader framework of human rights, and it was not until the latter half of the 20th century that the international community began to recognize the full spectrum of women's issues as central to human rights discourse. The UDHR (1948) marked a pivotal moment, asserting the principle that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," thus laying the groundwork for the future recognition of women's rights within international law. For the first time, it establishes universal protection for human rights and has been translated into over 500 languages (**un.org**).

Progress has been significant in the decades since, with numerous international treaties, conventions, and legal reforms helping to secure rights related to education, employment, political participation, & Defence from violence for women across the globe. Global efforts to strive for gender-based bias have been greatly aided by landmarks like the BDA in 1995 and the CEDAW, adopted in 1979, which is frequently referred to as a universal bill of rights for women. It describes the definition of discrimination against women and presents a strategy for national action to eradicate it. It includes a preamble and thirty articles (**un.org**).

However, the journey toward full gender equality is far from complete. Today, women around the world still face widespread discrimination and violence, unequal access to economic and political opportunities, and legal barriers to reproductive and healthcare rights. The situation is exacerbated by social factors such as race, class, ethnicity, & geography, which create compounded layers of disadvantage for many women, particularly in developing countries and marginalized communities.

This paper seeks to critically examine the progress made in advancing women's & human rights, identifying the achievements as well as persistent challenges that remain. It will explore key areas where women continue to be underrepresented or face systemic inequality, including education, political participation, economic empowerment, and access to healthcare. The study will also consider the role of international organizations, governments, and civil society in shaping a future where women's rights are fully realized and protected by the broader skeleton of human rights.

By situating women's rights firmly global human rights agenda, this research emphasizes the tenor of continued advocacy, policy reform, & international cooperation to mean the multifaceted challenges women face in achieving true equality.

OBJECTIVES

- To examine the historical development of women's & human rights.
- To identify & evaluate the current progress made in ascertaining women's rights globally.
- To explore the enduring obstacles that prevent complete gender equality from being achieved.

- To critically assess the role of international bodies, governments, and civil society in proceeding with women's rights.

METHODOLOGY

This research paper utilizes a qualitative methodology to explore the complexities of women's & human rights, focusing on in-depth analysis and interpretation of key themes and issues. Document analysis has been employed to examine foundational international treaties, such as the UDH and CEDAW, as well as global reports and declarations like the BPA. These documents have been critically analysed to trace the historical evolution of women's rights & the legal frameworks that support them.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN & HUMAN RIGHTS

The recognition of women & human rights is a relatively recent development in the broader history of human rights. Historically, the rights of women were either excluded or marginalized in legal frameworks, and it wasn't until the late 19th and 20th centuries that the fight for gender equality began to gain significant momentum.

Early Movements and Suffrage

The roots of modern women's rights movements trace back to the 18th and 19th centuries when early feminists began advocating for equal treatment. Scholars like Mary Wollstonecraft, who published her groundbreaking book "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" in 1792, laid the intellectual foundation for the "recognition of women's rights". The focus during this period was primarily on civil rights, particularly the "right to education, property, and participation in public life".

One of the most prominent movements in the early 20th century was the fight for women's suffrage. Beginning in countries like "New Zealand" (which granted "women the right to vote" in 1893), the movement spread globally, culminating in significant victories in Western democracies such as the U.S. with the 19th Amendment (1920) and the UK with the Representation of the People Act (1918). While these victories were significant, they mostly benefited women of particular classes and ethnicities, leaving many women, particularly those in colonized or marginalized societies, without the full recognition of their rights.

The 'Post-War' Era and the Emergence of 'Human Rights'

The aftermath of 'World War II' marked a turning point in the 'global conception of human rights', including women's rights. The horrors of the war underscored the need for a universal framework to protect individual rights, leading to the establishment of the UDHR in 1948. While the UDHR did not explicitly focus on women, its 'principles of equality & non-discrimination' created a foundation upon which women's rights could be built. 'Article 2 of the UDHR' stated that "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms outlined in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind," including sex, thus implicitly including women.

Key International Treaties and Conventions

The post-war period also saw the rise of feminist movements around the world, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, which advocated for more explicit legal protections for women. This advocacy led to one of the most significant milestones in “the history of women’s rights—the CEDAW, in 1979”, the “United Nations General Assembly” endorsed it. CEDAW, which is frequently referred to as a global declaration of rights for women, established extensive legal requirements for member nations to end prejudice toward ‘women in all spheres of life’, including political involvement, work, and education. It was an important step in establishing ‘women’s rights’ as a component of the ‘universal human rights’ agenda and was among the first substantial international treaties to particularly address the particular difficulties encountered by women.

At the 4th International “Conference on Women in 1995”, the “Declaration of Beijing and the Platform for Action” was approved, further advancing women’s rights by setting strategic objectives for achieving gender equality. It was particularly influential in highlighting issues such as “violence against women, women’s economic empowerment, and the need for women’s political representation”. This platform continues to serve as a guiding document for gender equality initiatives worldwide.

Intersectionality & the “Global Expansion of Women’s Rights”

While much progress had been made, particularly in Western countries, feminist movements and ‘women’s rights’ advocates began to recognize that gender inequality was deeply intertwined with ‘other forms of oppression, such as race, class, and colonialism’. This led to the growing prominence of intersectionality as a framework for understanding ‘women’s rights. Women from marginalized communities such as Black women, Indigenous ‘women, and women in the Global South’—faced compounded forms of discrimination, which traditional human rights frameworks had often failed to address.

In response, women’s rights were expanded to encompass sexual rights, reproductive rights, and ‘safeguards against gender-based violence in international human rights’ discussions in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. These concerns were first brought to light by “the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women” and other initiatives of a similar nature, which contributed to the expansion of ‘women’s rights’ outside political & ‘civil liberties to include social’, cultural, and economic ‘rights.’

Contemporary Advances & Challenges

In recent decades, women’s rights have become an increasingly central issue within global human rights frameworks. “International organizations such as the United Nations”, along with NGOs and grassroots movements, have continued to advocate for stronger protections and “greater recognition of women’s contributions” in all sectors of society. Landmark resolutions, like UN “Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)”, which emphasizes the role of women in peace and security, illustrate the expanding scope of “women’s rights in international law.”

Despite these advances, significant challenges remain. Women continue to face widespread discrimination, violence, and inequality ‘in many parts of the

world, especially in terms of economic participation, political representation, and access to healthcare and education. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these inequalities, disproportionately affecting women, particularly those in marginalized communities.

The historical development of “women’s rights within the human rights framework” has been shaped by centuries of activism, legal reform, and international advocacy. While key milestones like “the UDHR, CEDAW, and the Beijing Platform for Action” represent major victories, the fight for true gender equality continues. The evolution of “women’s rights from a marginalized issue to a central component of the global human rights” agenda demonstrates the power of collective advocacy, but it also highlights the ongoing challenges and the need for sustained efforts to “ensure those women’s rights” are fully recognized and protected worldwide.

CURRENT PROGRESS IN SECURING WOMEN’S RIGHTS GLOBALLY

In recent decades, “significant progress has been made in advancing women’s rights” globally, particularly in areas such as education, political representation, economic participation, and protection from violence. International agreements, national laws, and grassroots advocacy have played pivotal roles in this progress. However, the extent of this progress varies significantly across regions and countries, with many challenges still to be addressed. Below is an evaluation of the key areas of progress and the ongoing issues in securing women’s rights.

Education

One of the most notable advancements in securing ‘women’s rights’ has been in education. Over the past few ‘decades, there has been a dramatic increase in female enrolment in primary and secondary education. ‘According to UNESCO, the global gender gap in primary education’ has nearly closed, with girls making up 49% of the total primary school enrolment as of 2020. Many regions, particularly in East Asia, Europe, and Latin America, have achieved or are approaching gender parity in education.

Increased access to education has been instrumental in empowering women by ‘providing them with greater opportunities for economic independence and social mobility.’ Countries like Bangladesh and Rwanda have seen remarkable improvements in female literacy and school attendance due to targeted education policies and initiatives such as free schooling and scholarships for girls.

However, significant disparities remain. “In parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East”, girls still face barriers to education, particularly in rural or conflict-affected areas. These barriers include child marriage, cultural norms, poverty, and a lack of infrastructure such as schools and safe transport. In Afghanistan, for example, the recent restrictions imposed by the Taliban have severely impacted girls’ access to education, rolling back decades of progress.

Political Representation

The global landscape of “women’s political representation” has also seen progress. “Women’s participation in politics” has grown steadily, with more women holding positions of power in national parliaments and governments than ever before. “According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the global

average for women's representation in national parliaments reached 26.5% in 2023, up from just 13% in 2000."(IPU)

Countries such as Rwanda (where women hold over 60% of parliamentary seats), New Zealand, and Finland have emerged as global leaders in women's political representation. These gains have been facilitated by gender quotas, legal reforms, and greater public awareness of the need for gender parity in governance.

However, despite these improvements, women remain significantly underrepresented in many regions, particularly in the 'Middle East', parts of 'Asia', and some Western countries. In the U.S., for instance, women make up about 28% of Congress, while in Saudi Arabia and Iran, women's political participation is still highly restricted. The political representation gap highlights the need for continued reforms, such as quotas and targeted efforts to dismantle patriarchal structures that limit women's access to leadership positions.

Economic Participation and Labour Rights

"There has been a marked increase in women's economic participation globally, as more women have entered the labour force in recent decades." Women now make up approximately 39% of the global workforce, with increasing participation in sectors that were once dominated by men, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Governments and international organizations have implemented initiatives aimed at closing the gender pay gap, ensuring equal opportunities in employment, and addressing workplace discrimination.

Countries such as Sweden, Norway, and Iceland have been at the forefront of advancing gender equality in the workplace, implementing policies that guarantee paid parental leave, affordable childcare, and equal pay. Iceland, in particular, has made strides with its equal pay certification law, which requires companies to prove they are paying women and men equally for the same work.

Despite this progress, women still face significant barriers in the workforce. The global gender pay gap remains at around 20%, with women often concentrated in lower-paying sectors or informal employment. Women are also more likely to take on unpaid caregiving responsibilities, limiting their economic mobility. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these inequalities, disproportionately impacting women's employment, especially in sectors like hospitality, retail, and healthcare. Women of colour, migrant women, and those in low-income communities were particularly affected, highlighting the ongoing need for structural reforms.

Reproductive Rights and Healthcare

Reproductive rights and access to healthcare have seen important advancements in 'many parts of the world'. Several countries have expanded access to contraception, 'sexual and reproductive health education, and 'maternal healthcare', resulting in improved outcomes for women and girls. Legalizing or expanding access to abortion services in countries such as Argentina, Ireland, and Mexico represent significant victories for women's bodily autonomy.

Organizations like the UNFPA and Planned Parenthood have worked tirelessly to improve access to reproductive healthcare and rights. These efforts have contributed to a decline in global maternal mortality rates, which dropped by 38% between 2000 and 2017, according to the WHO.

However, access to reproductive rights remains highly unequal. In some countries, such as Poland and the United States, recent legal and political challenges have led to the erosion of previously secured reproductive rights. For example, the “U.S. Supreme Court’s 2022 decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* severely limited access to abortion in many states.” Additionally, in parts of Africa and South Asia, limited access to contraception and safe maternal healthcare services continues to put women at risk, especially in rural areas.

Protection from Violence

Significant progress has been made in addressing gender-based violence, which remains pervasive human rights violations affecting women. Global movements like #MeToo have raised awareness of sexual harassment and assault, pushing governments and institutions to implement stronger protections and accountability mechanisms.

International frameworks such as the Istanbul Convention have set standards for “the protection of women from violence”, including domestic abuse, ‘sexual violence’, & trafficking. “Many countries have passed laws criminalizing domestic violence”, harassment, & other “forms of gender-based violence”.

Nonetheless, gender-based violence remains a global issue, with millions of women continuing to face violence in their homes, workplaces, and communities. According to the WHO, one in three women globally experiences sexual violence in their lifetime, often at the hands of an intimate partner. In conflict zones, such as Yemen and Syria, ‘sexual violence against women’ is used as a weapon of war, further highlighting the gaps in protection.

The global progress in securing women’s rights has been substantial, particularly in areas such as education, political participation, and legal protection from violence. International frameworks, legal reforms, and advocacy movements have helped advance women’s rights, leading to greater awareness and implementation of gender equality initiatives. However, significant challenges remain, especially in regions where cultural norms, economic barriers, and political instability continue to hinder women’s full empowerment. Persistent issues such as gender-based violence, reproductive rights restrictions, and economic inequality show that the fight for women’s rights is far from over, and continued efforts are necessary to achieve global gender equality.

PERSISTENT CHALLENGES HINDERING THE REALIZATION OF FULL GENDER EQUALITY

Despite decades of progress, significant challenges continue to impede the realization of full gender equality. These obstacles are multifaceted, deeply rooted in historical, cultural, economic, and political structures, and are often exacerbated by intersecting factors such as race, class, and geography. Below are some of the most persistent challenges that hinder the achievement of gender equality worldwide.

Gender-Based Violence

One of the most pervasive and persistent barriers to gender equality is gender-based violence (GBV), which affects millions of women worldwide. Sexual assault, domestic violence, trafficking in people, female genital mutilation (FGM), and child marriage are only a few of the various forms of this abuse. The WHO estimates that one in three women worldwide will at some point in their lives be the victim of physical or sexual abuse, frequently at their own hands of an intimate partner. In addition to violating women's fundamental human rights, this kind of abuse has a significant negative influence on their social engagement, economic independence, and physical and mental health.

While global movements like #MeToo have raised awareness of sexual harassment and violence, many countries still lack adequate legal protections or enforcement mechanisms. In some cases, cultural norms perpetuate victim-blaming, leading to underreporting of violence and a lack of accountability for perpetrators. In conflict zones, sexual violence continues to be used as a weapon of war, further undermining efforts to protect women and girls.

Economic Inequality and the Gender Pay Gap

Economic inequality remains a central challenge to achieving gender equality. While more women are entering the workforce, they continue to face structural barriers that limit their earning potential and economic security. "The global gender pay gap, which stands at around 20%, means that women are often paid less than men for the same work". 'Women are also more likely to be employed in lower-paying' sectors and are disproportionately represented in informal and precarious jobs, where legal protections and benefits are limited or non-existent. Moreover, women bear the majority of unpaid care work, including child-rearing, eldercare, and household tasks. According to the ILO, women perform about 76% of unpaid care work globally, a burden that restricts their ability to engage in paid employment or advance their careers. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue, as women were more likely to leave the workforce or reduce their working hours due to caregiving responsibilities. This "double shift" of paid and unpaid labour reinforces economic disparities and limits women's financial independence and social mobility.

Political Underrepresentation

Despite some progress in women's political participation, significant gender disparities remain in governance and decision-making roles. "As of 2023, women held only 26.5% of seats in national parliaments globally, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union" (IPU). In many countries, women continue to be excluded from key political positions, with limited access to the upper echelons of power, such as cabinet appointments, heads of state, or prime ministerial roles.

The underrepresentation of women in politics is often rooted in entrenched cultural attitudes and structural barriers that discourage women from pursuing leadership roles. Gender stereotypes that associate leadership with masculinity, combined with unequal access to financial resources and political networks, make it difficult for women to compete in political systems traditionally dominated by men. Women in politics also face unique challenges, including

sexism, harassment, and violence, which further undermine their participation in governance.

The lack of women in political leadership has significant consequences for policy-making. It leads to the marginalization of issues that disproportionately affect women, such as reproductive rights, childcare, and gender-based violence, and limits the diversity of perspectives needed to create inclusive policies.

Reproductive Rights and Healthcare Access

Access to reproductive healthcare is a fundamental component of gender equality, yet it remains a highly contested issue in many parts of the world. Women's ability to control their reproductive health is directly linked to their economic and social autonomy, but restrictions on access to contraception, safe abortion, and maternal healthcare services continue to hinder progress in this area.

In some countries, conservative cultural and religious norms drive restrictive reproductive laws, often criminalizing abortion and limiting access to contraceptives. For example, recent legal rollbacks in countries like the United States and Poland have severely curtailed access to abortion services, threatening women's bodily autonomy and reproductive rights. In other regions, such as parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, limited healthcare infrastructure and social stigma prevent women from accessing vital reproductive services, leading to high rates of maternal mortality, unsafe abortions, and adolescent pregnancies.

In addition to reproductive rights, healthcare disparities, particularly in maternal health, persist. Women in low-income and rural areas often lack access to quality healthcare services, leading to preventable complications and deaths. The United Nations estimates that in 2017 approximately 295,000 women died complications during pregnancy & childbirth, with the majority of these deaths occurring in developing countries. This highlights the urgent need for improved healthcare access and investment in women's health services.

Legal and Institutional Discrimination

In many parts of the world, legal and institutional frameworks continue to discriminate against women, undermining their rights and perpetuating inequality. Discriminatory laws and practices remain in place in areas such as property ownership, inheritance, divorce, and child custody, often leaving women economically dependent on men and vulnerable to exploitation.

In countries where customary or religious laws hold sway, women may face legal discrimination that prevents them from exercising full autonomy over their lives. For example, in some countries, personal status laws restrict women's rights to divorce, inherit property, or make decisions about their children's upbringing without the consent of male family members. These legal inequalities are often deeply embedded in patriarchal cultural systems, making reform difficult.

Even in countries with more progressive legal frameworks, the implementation and enforcement of gender equality laws are often weak. Women may face challenges in accessing justice, particularly in cases of domestic violence, sexual harassment, or workplace discrimination. Corruption, weak governance, and

cultural resistance to gender equality often hinder the effectiveness of legal protections for women.

Intersectional Discrimination

Gender inequality is further complicated by intersecting forms of discrimination based on religion, race, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, and disability. Women from marginalized groups often face compounded barriers that exacerbate their vulnerability to violence, economic exploitation, and social exclusion.

For example, Indigenous women, women of colour, and women in conflict-affected regions experience higher rates of violence and discrimination compared to their counterparts from more privileged backgrounds. Migrant women are often excluded from legal protections and face exploitation in informal labour markets, while LGBTQ+ women encounter systemic “discrimination in both the public and private spheres”. The intersection of these factors creates unique challenges that cannot be addressed by gender-focused policies alone, requiring a more nuanced and inclusive approach to achieving equality.

Cultural and Social Norms

Deeply ingrained cultural and social norms continue to reinforce gender stereotypes and perpetuate inequality. In many societies, patriarchal values dictate that women should prioritize caregiving and domestic responsibilities over education, employment, and personal development. These cultural expectations limit women’s opportunities for personal growth and professional advancement, confining them to traditional roles within the family and community.

In some regions, harmful practices like female genital mutilation (FGM) persist, child marriage and further entrenching gender inequality. According to UNICEF, approximately “650 million women alive today were married before the age of 18, with child marriage often leading to early pregnancy”, school dropout, and lifelong economic dependence on men. Efforts to combat these practices have met resistance from cultural and religious leaders, making it difficult to eradicate them.

The realization of full gender equality continues to be obstructed by persistent challenges rooted in violence, economic inequality, political underrepresentation, reproductive rights restrictions, legal discrimination, and deeply entrenched cultural norms. While significant progress has been made, particularly in education and political participation, these systemic issues remain pervasive. To address them, global efforts must focus on legal reforms, social and cultural transformation, and targeted policies that account for the intersectional nature of discrimination. Only by tackling these interconnected challenges can we move closer to achieving full gender equality for women and girls worldwide.

THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL BODIES, GOVERNMENTS, & CIVIL SOCIETY IN ADVANCING ‘WOMEN’S RIGHTS’

The advancement of women’s rights is a multifaceted issue that requires collaboration among international bodies, civil society organizations & national governments. Each of these entities plays a distinct yet interrelated role in promoting and protecting women’s rights and gender equality. However, their

effectiveness can vary significantly based on political will, resource allocation, and societal attitudes toward gender issues. Below is a critical assessment of the contributions and challenges faced by these three sectors in advancing women's rights globally.

International Bodies

International bodies, particularly the UN and its specialized agencies, have been instrumental in framing the global discourse on women's rights and setting normative standards. Key milestones include:

UDHR (1948): Established the "principle that human rights are universal", including the rights of women.

CEDAW (1979): Recognized "women's & human rights" and established an 'international' legal framework for 'promoting gender equality'.

"Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" (1995): Set strategic objectives for achieving gender equality, addressing issues "such as violence against women", political participation & economic empowerment.

Strengths

- **Standard-setting:** International bodies create norms and standards that shape national policies and legislation. CEDAW, for instance, serves as a benchmark for measuring progress in gender equality.
- **Advocacy and Awareness:** Organizations like UN Women advocate for women's rights globally, raising awareness and mobilizing support for gender equality initiatives.

Challenges

- **Implementation Gaps:** Despite the establishment of international norms, many countries fail to implement or enforce these standards effectively. Political and cultural resistance often hampers progress.
- **Resource Limitations:** International bodies often rely on voluntary funding, which can limit their ability to implement programs effectively. This reliance on donor funding can also lead to the prioritization of certain issues over others based on donor interests.

GOVERNMENTS

National governments play a crucial role in advancing women's rights through legislation, policy implementation, and resource allocation. Their actions can significantly impact gender equality in various areas, including education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

Strengths

- **Legislative Reforms:** Many governments have enacted laws to promote gender equality, such as laws against domestic violence, gender discrimination in employment, and child marriage. For instance, countries like Rwanda have achieved significant representation of women in parliament through gender quotas.

- **Policy Frameworks:** Governments can develop national action plans for gender equality, which provide a strategic roadmap for addressing gender issues and allocating resources effectively.

Challenges

- **Political Will:** In many cases, governments lack the political will to women's rights, often viewing gender equality as a low priority compared to other issues. This lack of commitment can stall progress and hinder the implementation of laws and policies.
- **Backlash and Rollbacks:** In recent years, some governments have rolled back existing rights and protections for women, particularly in areas like women's health and sexual rights. The erosion of rights in countries like Poland and the U.S. demonstrates the fragility of gains made in women's rights.

CIVIL SOCIETY

CSOs, including NGOs, community groups, & grassroots movements, play a vital role in advocating for providing support services and holding governments accountable.

Strengths

- **Grassroots Advocacy:** CSOs often work at the community level to raise awareness about gender issues, support victims of violence, and promote women's empowerment. They can mobilize communities, engage in public education, and push for policy changes.
- **Accountability and Monitoring:** Civil society organizations monitor government actions and policies, advocating for accountability and transparency. They often serve as a voice for marginalized women and can highlight issues that may be overlooked by formal institutions.

Challenges

- **Resource Constraints:** Many CSOs face funding challenges, limiting their ability to sustain programs and advocacy efforts. In some cases, reliance on international donor funding can lead to mission drift, where organizations prioritize donor interests over community needs.
- **Repression and Backlash:** In some countries, civil society faces repression and harassment, particularly those organizations advocating for women's rights. Governments may restrict their activities, intimidate activists, or label them as foreign agents, stifling dissent and limiting their impact.

The roles of international bodies, civil society & governments in advancing women's rights are interconnected and crucial for achieving gender equality. While international bodies set the framework and raise awareness, governments are responsible for implementing laws and policies, and civil society holds them accountable and advocates for change. However, persistent challenges, including political will, resource limitations, and cultural resistance, continue to hinder progress.

To effectively advance women's rights, a coordinated approach is essential. Strengthening collaboration among these entities, fostering inclusive dialogue,

and ensuring the voices of marginalized women are heard will be vital in overcoming barriers and achieving lasting gender equality. Only through concerted efforts and sustained commitment can the global community ensure that women's rights are recognized, protected, & fulfilled.

CONCLUSION

The journey toward recognizing women's rights has seen remarkable progress over the decades, marked by significant legal, social, and political advancements. International frameworks, legislative reforms, and grassroots movements have collectively contributed to raising awareness and fostering change. However, numerous challenges persist, including gender-based violence, economic inequality, political underrepresentation, and restrictive cultural norms that continue to undermine women's rights globally. As we move forward, it is crucial to adopt a holistic approach that not only addresses the systemic barriers hindering gender equality but also emphasizes the importance of intersectionality in understanding the diverse experiences of women. By strengthening collaboration among international bodies, national governments, and civil society, and by ensuring that the voices of marginalized women, we can pave the way for a future where women's rights are unequivocally recognized and upheld as fundamental human rights. The commitment to gender equality must remain unwavering, as it is essential for achieving broader social justice and sustainable development for all.

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The Evolution of Gender Roles in Contemporary Society

Garrima Chopra

ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates the complex nature of gender roles, focusing on the historical, cultural, and socio-political elements that shape women's identities and experiences. It draws on foundational works by feminist thinkers like Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, and Shulamith Firestone to uncover how traditional gender roles have been formed and reinforced through societal expectations, educational practices, and media portrayals. The discussion highlights the intersections of gender with race, class, and sexuality, underscoring the importance of a comprehensive understanding of women's rights movements, as emphasised by scholars such as Bell Hooks and Lillian Faderman. Furthermore, the chapter looks into how globalisation affects gender dynamics, considering how changes in economic and cultural contexts influence women's roles in both private and public arenas. By integrating various feminist viewpoints, this chapter seeks to shed light on the persistent challenges for gender equality and the ongoing evolution of women's roles in modern society.

Keywords: Gender Roles, Gender equality, women empowerment, feminist movements, female subordination

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Traditional Gender Roles

Throughout history, women have consistently found themselves assigned to subordinate roles within a male-dominated society, where their identities have often been defined in relation to men. Simone de Beauvoir, in her work *'The Second Sex'*, asserts that women have been relegated to the status of "the other," underscoring the idea that gender roles are socially created rather than determined by biology (Beauvoir, 1949). She observes that although women held more equitable positions in early societies, the emergence of patriarchy—especially with the introduction of private property—limited their roles to the domestic sphere and entrenched their dependence on men.

Similarly, the intellectual constraints imposed on women, highlighted that the lack of access to education and financial autonomy severely restricted their opportunities to engage in the arts and literature. She famously argues that without "a room of one's own," a symbol of personal space and financial freedom, women are unable to attain the same level of creative independence as men (Woolf, 1929).

Further the concept of patriarchy as a social construct that has historically shaped women's roles, primarily defining them through their reproductive capacities, which justified their exclusion from public life (Lerner, 1986). Lerner explains that this established gender hierarchy has been maintained through laws, religious beliefs, and cultural norms that reinforce male dominance, resulting in the intellectual and social marginalisation of women and perpetuating the patriarchal systems that have dictated their lives.

Cultural and Religious Influences

Throughout history, the roles assigned to women have been shaped and restricted by various cultural, religious, and legal systems that uphold patriarchal norms. In her work *'The Creation of Patriarchy'*, Gerda Lerner argues that cultural narratives and religious beliefs have often been employed to justify the subjugation of women, primarily defining their roles in relation to domestic responsibilities and reinforcing their financial dependence on men (Lerner, 1986). Similarly, the Manusmriti's impact on Hindu society establishes a patriarchal structure that views women as inferior to men and confines them to household duties, thus perpetuating their reliance on male guardians (Bose, 2001).

In the context of Islam, women's roles evolved from pre-Islamic times to the early Islamic period, noting that although initial Islamic teachings sought to elevate women's status, subsequent interpretations often reinforced patriarchal traditions, limiting their opportunities for independence and public engagement (Ahmed, 1992). Adding another dimension, Mary Douglas investigates how cultural notions of purity and pollution dictate women's behaviour, portraying them as embodiments of purity whose conduct must be regulated to sustain societal order (Douglas, 1966).

Furthermore, the practices of Muslim women in Egypt today, argue that their acts of piety—such as wearing the hijab—can be viewed as expressions of agency, allowing them to navigate intricate cultural expectations while

affirming their identities (Mahmood, 2005). This complex relationship between individual choice and societal norms highlights the diverse dimensions of women's agency, illustrating how traditional roles, despite being limited, can also provide opportunities for resistance and empowerment within different cultural and religious frameworks.

Early Gender Role Expectations

Historically, societal norms and cultural narratives have significantly influenced women's roles, often prioritising domestic duties at the expense of personal freedom. In 'The Second Sex', Simone de Beauvoir challenges the exaggerated biological distinctions between men and women, arguing that such differences are often manipulated to justify women's relegation to the home and to reinforce stereotypes of inferiority (Beauvoir, 1949).

'The Creation of Patriarchy', highlights how patriarchal teachings dictate that women must prioritise their identities as wives and mothers, which normalises their dependence on men and limits their autonomy (Lerner, 1986).

This subordination is also evident in the 'Laws of Manu', which imposes strict expectations on women's behaviour, placing them under male authority and connecting their value to family obligations (Laws of Manu, n.d.). In early societies, the division of labour restricted women to domestic roles, thereby minimising their involvement in public life and reinforcing their reliance on men (Lamphier, 1974). The societal pressures surrounding female sexual purity within marriage, suggest that these moral frameworks confine women's freedom and perpetuate gender inequality by associating their worth with chastity (Dabhoiwala, 2012).

Lastly, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza calls for a reassessment of religious interpretations that have historically sidelined women, advocating for recognition of their essential contributions and agency within Christian communities (Fiorenza, 1993). Together it illustrates the deeply rooted nature of gender roles that have historically constrained women, revealing the social constructs that have defined their identities.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Women's Suffrage Movement

The women's suffrage movement became a powerful agent for social change during the 19th century, drawing inspiration from earlier initiatives like abolition and temperance, as discussed by Sally Roesch Wagner in *The Women's Suffrage Movement* (Wagner, 2005). Activists leveraged their collective experiences from both public and domestic realms to confront existing gender stereotypes, motivated by ideals of equality and justice.

The vital role of civil disobedience and direct action, depicted suffragettes as bold reformers who endured considerable opposition, including imprisonment, in their quest for voting rights (Pankhurst, 1911). The grassroots organisers and recognizes the contributions of both women and men, demonstrating how the suffrage movement was linked to various other social reform efforts (Eleanor & Ellen, 1987).

The political and social hurdles encountered by suffragists, noting the internal divisions and resistance from conservative groups, while also acknowledging the achievements that ultimately led to women's enfranchisement (Holton, 2007).

Millicent Garrett Fawcett, a key leader in the movement, stresses the importance of patience and the power of education, advocating for rational dialogue to persuade society of women's right to vote (Fawcett, 1920).

To Believe in Women underscores the movement's intersectionality, illustrating how diverse coalitions of women came together to support suffrage, thereby enriching the discourse on women's rights and broader reform (Faderman, 1999).

This shed light on the intricacies of the suffrage movement, revealing the myriad strategies and philosophies that influenced the battle for voting rights and highlighting the lasting significance of these activists in the ongoing dialogue about gender equality.

Second-wave feminism

The writings of various feminist thinkers provide valuable insights into the intricate challenges related to women's oppression and the feminist movement as a whole. In 'The Feminine Mystique' Betty Friedan critiques the societal standards that confine women to domestic roles, suggesting that these limitations result in deep dissatisfaction and a loss of identity (Friedan, 1963). Similarly, Simone de Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex' delves into the historical and cultural constructs of womanhood, arguing that women have been positioned as the "Other," which perpetuates their subordinate status in society (Beauvoir, 1949). In 'The Dialectics of Sex' Shulamith Firestone critiques the conventional family structure, asserting that it is fundamentally oppressive and calls for a transformative approach to gender relations and reproductive rights (Firestone, 1970).

The necessity of solidarity among women, pointing out the systematic oppression they face and advocating for collective efforts to address gender inequality (Morgan, 1970). Kate Millet, in 'Sexual Politics', critiques the patriarchal frameworks that dominate society, arguing that an understanding of sexual politics is essential for grasping the full extent of women's oppression (Millet, 1970). An inclusive definition of feminism incorporates considerations of race, class, and gender, emphasising the role of feminism in achieving social justice (Hooks, 2000).

The societal resistance to feminist progress during the 1980s demonstrates how media and political agendas aimed to undermine women's rights and roles (Faludi, 1991). Marilyn French, in 'The Politics of Reality', emphasises the importance of confronting patriarchal oppression and advocating for reproductive rights. Additionally, the pervasive nature of rape as a means of enforcing female subordination (Brownmiller, 1975).

Together, these works reflect the second wave of feminism's emphasis on raising consciousness, advocating for reproductive rights, and challenging the patriarchal systems that contribute to women's oppression, thus underscoring the persistent fight for gender equality.

LGBTQ+ Rights Movements

The LGBTQ+ rights movement has undergone significant changes over time, as illustrated in various influential texts. In 'The Gay Revolution', Lillian Faderman provides a comprehensive overview of the LGBTQ+ rights movement, highlighting crucial events and the persistent quest for acceptance and equality (Faderman, 2015). The 'Stonewall Reader', edited by the New York Public Library, voices the experiences of activists involved in the Stonewall Riots, an event that served as a turning point for the contemporary LGBTQ+ rights movement, while also stressing the significance of grassroots activism (New York Public Library, 2019).

Linda Hirshman's 'Victory' delves into the legal struggles and social transformations that have propelled major advancements in LGBTQ+ rights, with a particular focus on the battle for marriage equality (Hirshman, 2012). In 'Renaissance: The Emergence of LGBTQ+ Culture' Susan Stryker examines the cultural revival of LGBTQ+ identities and communities, highlighting how increased visibility and representation have influenced societal perceptions (Stryker, 2008). Finally, *Out of the Closets* by Karla Jay and Allen Young presents both personal narratives and historical insights into LGBTQ+ experiences, emphasising the journey of coming out and the varied realities within the community (Jay & Young, 1972).

#MeToo Movement

Investigative work uncovered allegations of sexual harassment against Harvey Weinstein, which played a pivotal role in sparking the #MeToo movement by amplifying the voices of survivors (Kantor & Twohey, 2019). Similarly, Ronan Farrow's 'Catch and Kill' investigates sexual misconduct in Hollywood, revealing how influential figures use their power to suppress both victims and reporters, thus highlighting the culture of secrecy and abuse (Farrow, 2019). In 'The #MeToo Movement', Laurie C. Hillstrom takes a wider view of the movement, tracing its development, prominent leaders, and the profound effects of survivors coming forward to confront sexual violence (Hillstrom, 2019). Soraya Chemaly's 'Rage Becomes Her' offers a feminist perspective on women's anger, showing how society often disregards or belittles women's rage, and advocating for the recognition of anger as a force for empowerment and societal transformation (Chemaly, 2018). Together, these works emphasize the critical role of investigative journalism and activism in challenging widespread sexual abuse and oppressive gender dynamics.

GENDER ROLES IN MODERN SOCIETY

Workplace

Sheryl Sandberg, in 'Lean In', encourages women to pursue leadership roles and overcome both personal and societal challenges that limit their advancement in the workplace. She motivates women to confidently step up in their careers, despite the existing barriers (Sandberg, 2013). In 'The Fix', Michelle P. King addresses the structural problems within organisations, emphasising that workplace culture, not women's abilities, hinders gender equality. She advocates for systemic changes to eliminate biases and create more inclusive environments (King, 2020). Similarly, Mary Portas, in 'Work Like a Woman',

calls for workplaces to embrace values such as empathy and collaboration, advocating for a departure from the traditional male-dominated corporate culture to one that promotes fairness and equality (Portas, 2019). Together, these authors argue that substantial changes in organisational culture are essential to support and empower women in their professional journeys.

Media and Popular Cultures

Rosalind Gill, in *Gender and the Media*, discusses how media continues to reinforce gender inequality by portraying women in stereotypical and often objectifying roles, which in turn perpetuates societal norms regarding femininity and beauty (Gill, 2007). Similarly, Andi Zeisler, in *Feminism and Pop Culture*, examines the connection between feminism and popular culture, noting that while pop culture has helped spread feminist ideas, it frequently waters them down to fit into mainstream narratives, losing much of their original radicalism (Zeisler, 2008). Naomi Wolf, in *The Beauty Myth*, critiques how cultural and media-driven beauty standards are used as mechanisms to control women, tying these ideals to the broader oppression and constraints on women's autonomy and roles (Wolf, 1991). Collectively, these authors illustrate how media and popular culture play pivotal roles in shaping gender expectations and influencing women's social status.

Education

In *Gender and Education*, Madeleine Arnot examines how schools contribute to reinforcing traditional gender roles and maintaining inequality. She highlights how societal biases are reflected in teaching methods, curriculum, and the overall structure of education, shaping the experiences of both boys and girls. Arnot argues that these gendered practices influence students' identities and limit opportunities for both genders. She calls for reforms aimed at creating a more gender-inclusive educational environment that challenges these stereotypes and promotes equality (Arnot, 2002).

INTERSECTIONALITY

Angé Marie Hancock emphasises the importance of intersectionality as a framework for understanding how various social categories, including race, class, gender, and sexuality, interact to create unique experiences of oppression and privilege. She argues that a singular focus on one aspect of identity, such as race or class, is insufficient for grasping the complexities of individuals' lived experiences in society (Hancock, 2007).

Race and Class

Hancock discusses how class and race intersect to shape individuals' opportunities and life chances. She explains that socioeconomic status can significantly influence one's racial identity, where individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may experience intensified forms of discrimination compared to their more affluent counterparts. This interplay complicates the understanding of both class and race as separate categories (Hancock, 2007).

Culture and Geography

In exploring the intersections of culture and geography, Hancock highlights how cultural norms and geographic contexts can influence social identities. She notes that cultural practices may vary significantly across different regions, leading to diverse expressions of identity and community. Geography can also affect access to resources and opportunities, further complicating the experiences of individuals from various backgrounds (Hancock, 2007).

Impact of globalisation

Hancock also addresses the impact of globalisation on intersectionality, suggesting that global interconnectedness has altered the dynamics of identity and power. As cultures merge and influence one another, individuals may navigate increasingly complex social landscapes, where traditional identity categories are reshaped. Globalisation can amplify inequalities while also providing platforms for marginalised voices to be heard (Hancock, 2007).

CHALLENGES TO GENDER NORMS

Changing Norms in the Workplace

Feminist literature has played a pivotal role in transforming workplace standards. In *Lean In*, Sheryl Sandberg highlights the importance of women actively seeking leadership positions and the need to confront biases in the workplace that obstruct female progress (Sandberg, 2013). Likewise, Michelle P. King, in *The Fix*, sheds light on the institutional barriers that sustain gender inequality and calls for comprehensive reforms to foster inclusive work environments (King, 2021). Additionally, Mary Portas, in *Work Life for Women*, champions the idea of flexible work arrangements that empower women to effectively balance their careers and personal responsibilities, challenging outdated norms that favour rigid structures over employee well-being (Portas, 2018).

Education and Socialisation

Madeleine Arnot, in *Gender and Education*, explores how educational institutions often reinforce gender stereotypes, affecting the experiences of both boys and girls. She asserts that the content and methodologies of teaching can perpetuate traditional gender roles, thus shaping the socialisation of children from an early age (Arnot, 2002). This argument resonates with Rosalind Gill's observations in *Gender and Media*, where she emphasises the significant role of media portrayals in shaping societal gender expectations, complicating the educational influence (Gill, 2007).

Rise of Non-Binary and Fluid Identities

The rise of non-binary and fluid gender identities poses a challenge to conventional gender categories. Judith Butler, in her influential work, suggests that gender is performative, indicating that identity is not a static quality but a series of actions and expressions that can differ (Butler, 1990). This idea is supported by narratives that focus on the experiences of non-binary individuals, emphasising how these identities disrupt established norms and encourage a broader, more inclusive comprehension of gender.

Men and Gender Roles

The conversation about men and their roles in society has undergone significant changes. R.W. Connell, in *Masculinities*, critiques the conventional notions of masculinity, arguing that they impose limitations on men similar to the constraints traditional femininity places on women (Connell, 1995). This perspective is essential for understanding how societal expectations shape men's actions and roles in both private and public settings. Furthermore, Michael Kimmel's *Guyland* investigates the societal pressures that young men face to conform to a specific ideal of masculinity, often characterised by aggression and emotional restraint, thereby perpetuating detrimental stereotypes (Kimmel, 2008).

FUTURE PREDICTIONS

Evolving Roles

The roles of individuals across genders are continuously transforming within modern society, reflecting shifts in cultural expectations and the quest for equality. Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble*, emphasises that conventional gender binaries are increasingly contested, paving the way for a broader interpretation of identity (Butler, 1990). This transformation suggests that future gender roles will likely be less constrained by traditional norms, fostering an environment where people can express their gender identities more genuinely. Moreover, the emergence of non-binary identities indicates a potential societal acceptance of a more inclusive view on gender roles, as noted by R.W. Connell in *Masculinities* (Connell, 2005).

Technology and Gender

Technological advancements significantly influence gender dynamics. Rosalind Gill's analysis in *Gender and Media* points out that digital platforms have the power to either perpetuate or disrupt established gender stereotypes (Gill, 2007). With the rise of social media and virtual communities, marginalised perspectives gain visibility, enhancing awareness of gender-related issues and facilitating collective mobilisation. As technology continues to progress, its effects on gender identities and roles will be profound, necessitating that policymakers address these implications for achieving gender equality.

Policy Changes

The advancement of gender equality heavily relies on effective policy changes that confront systemic discrimination. Linda Hirshman, in *Victory*, highlights how legal victories, particularly in the fight for marriage equality, have catalysed significant shifts in societal views towards gender roles (Hirshman, 2020). Future legislation is expected to focus on comprehensive strategies to address challenges such as workplace discrimination, parental rights, and reproductive choices, acknowledging the critical need for equality across various life domains. As feminist movements persist in advocating for equitable policies, there exists potential for transformative changes within both the public and private sectors.

Global Impact

The influence of feminism extends worldwide, as movements across diverse cultures inspire one another. Lillian Faderman's *The Gay Revolution* demonstrates

how the struggles for LGBTQ+ rights intersect with broader feminist objectives, underlining the significance of solidarity among various groups (Faderman, 2015). As globalisation continues to interconnect communities and individuals, feminist movements are poised to gain traction, promoting gender equality on a global scale. This interconnectedness will foster cross-cultural discussions, encouraging the exchange of strategies for combating gender-based oppression around the world.

The transformation of gender roles illustrates significant shifts in societal beliefs, policies, and cultural viewpoints. Historically, traditional norms have been contested, leading to a more inclusive understanding of gender identity and expression. As explored in pivotal feminist literature, including Lillian Faderman's 'The Gay Revolution' and Judith Butler's 'Gender Trouble', the concept of gender has evolved beyond a strict binary framework, recognizing it as a spectrum that allows for diverse expressions.

The emergence of non-binary and fluid identities marks a crucial change from conventional classifications, encouraging individuals to articulate their experiences outside of traditional male and female categories. Moreover, technological advancements have played a crucial role in fostering discussions around gender, creating spaces for underrepresented voices and heightening awareness of issues like inequality and harassment in professional settings. Authors such as Sheryl Sandberg in 'Lean In' and Michelle P. King in 'The Fix' highlight the urgent need for equitable workplaces that empower all genders, pointing to the importance of implementing policies that promote inclusivity and work-life balance.

Additionally, the global implications of these changes are significant; as movements for gender equality flourish across the world, there is an increasing acknowledgement of how class, race, and gender intersect. The challenges to established gender norms extend beyond local contexts and are shaped by global interactions and cultural exchanges. In summary, the continuous evolution of gender roles signals a dedication to inclusivity and justice, underscoring the necessity for ongoing advocacy, education, and policy reform to dismantle oppressive systems and honour diverse identities.

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Gender Inequality in the Economic Sphere: With a Special Focus on Women

Dr. Rajesh Maurya* & Dr. Dharani Rai**

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, men have often held strong biases and discriminated against women. However, today, women are just as capable as men. They can achieve success through quality education and hold important positions in small, medium as well as large industries. Women are also actively involved in politics, holding positions such as Prime Minister and President. Despite these advancements, gender inequality still exists, especially in the economic sector. Therefore, it is crucial to address and understand gender inequality.

In the context of gender inequality, we examine economic factors such as differences in income, wages and employment opportunities between men and women. Discrimination is evident in aspects like participation in the labour force. Therefore, establishing gender equality is crucial for economic development and for women to have a fundamental right to their livelihood. According to M. Gulam (2005), gender equality entails equal rights between men and women to access valuable goods and resources. This encompasses a fair distribution of economic interests and rights, as well as recognition and rewards (1).

It is common to find gender inequalities in the social structure of any country. Different traditions, customs, superstitions, religious rituals etc. have been factors that have maintained gender inequalities in society for a long time. Not only this, but the male-dominated society has given them (traditions), Women have played an important role in maintaining the customs and traditions because they

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(men) had to maintain their supremacy in the society as compared to women. Whereas, various scholars, philosophers and economists of the world have expressed the opinion that, **in the economy of any country, sidelining women prevents the economy from growing and prospering. That is, without women, no economy can function to its full potential (2)**. When women are involved in making decisions in the economic sector, not only will the economic outcomes improve, but resources in the economy will also be better allocated. This means that the scarce resources will be used appropriately and preserved for future generations. Various scholars and economists have expressed the concept that women use and invest resources more efficiently.

This research paper examines gender inequalities, particularly in the economic sector. We aim to understand the disparities between men and women, the reasons behind discrimination and the factors responsible for gender inequality.

THE CONCEPT OF GENDER INEQUALITY

If we look at this concept carefully, it is made up of two words, i.e. gender + inequality. Here gender means whether the person is a woman or a man, their identity is determined through different roles or responsibilities in the family or society. As the United Nations has clarified **the identity of women** and men can be understood through comparative or differential roles, responsibilities or rights (3). By inequality, we mean gender discrimination, meaning the process of discrimination between men and women in terms of interests or rights. Thus, gender inequality means discrimination or inequalities found between men and women living in the family and society, in relation to business and rights, salary, employment opportunities, education, health and participation in the labour force, etc. This inequality (gender) is fatal for the economy of the family, society and the country. That is why, in recent studies, issues related to women are being given special importance. In this context, attention is being drawn to the concept of gender equality.

In general terms, gender equality means the distribution or division of resources and valuable goods, rights, opportunities and rewards, especially in the economic field, between women and men in an equal manner. Let us tell you that – in this (gender equality); women and men do not have to be made equal, rather women should have the same rights and opportunities as men. Such as: **The issues related to women's rights, such as empowerment, encompassing their right to education, participation in socio-economic and political spheres, decision-making in the family, involvement in religious and cultural events, earning income and employment rights (4)** have to be divided equally.

Which factors are responsible for the inequalities prevailing between men and women in society and family? For this, I would like to tell you that centuries-old social traditions are responsible. Customs and stereotypes are responsible. In such a situation, to eliminate these gender inequalities, **strong changes will be needed in society and women will have to raise their voices together and permanently (5)**. Only then will we be able to eliminate gender inequalities?

Some scholars and economists of the world say that not only traditions, customs and stereotyping are responsible for gender inequalities, but also **formal and informal laws, discriminatory social institutions and social norms etc., which**

restrict women's access to rights and amenities. Thus, these factors have restricted women from advancing in the society (6). If we want to address gender inequalities in society and confront discriminatory social institutions, women will require two key factors: first, education, and second, political power. Education will help in giving women the power to think and understand as well as in giving them awareness about- What is the standard of living of women in other developed countries? Which laws are there for them? And how they (women) can get their rights from men, while under political power, if women get involved in the central process of governance (Prime Minister, President and other ministers) then they are informed about the rights in the Constitution, and easily they (women) will be able to face the male-dominated society.

The presence of gender inequality in any country, society and family is not only against the fundamental rights of women but also affects the economy and is also fatal for economic development. Because, if a country is moving on the path of progress in its economic development, then both men and women have equal contributions to it. Regarding gender discrimination, some economists have done a study in which it was found that **gender inequalities are the worst for development, especially economic development (7).** In the economy or economic development, ignoring women would, in fact, prevent the economy from moving forward.

From the above analysis, it is known that in reality, the presence of gender inequality in the family and society is a big obstacle in the economic progress of that country. We can infer this from the fact that when human capital resources are studied in economics, both men and women are included, which is an indicator of economic development. That is why gender inequality has been presented as fatal or bad in the context of economic development.

GENDER INEQUALITIES IN EMPLOYMENT AND PAY

In this part of the research paper, we will look at the inequalities prevailing between men and women in the field of wages and employment.

We know that women perform many tasks while living within the four walls of the house. In this regard, women are rarely allowed to go out of the house. Although at present most highly educated women are living their lives while occupying many high positions, the number of such women is very low. That is, it is not even half of the total population. **According to C. Lagarde (2013) -** Women constitute almost half of the total population of any country, but still, they remain an underutilized resource. That is, they (women) constitute less than one-third of the actual workforce (8). Women's low contribution to external income-earning activities, particularly in the field of wages and employment, is the reflection of gender inequality. In 2016, **a high-level panel of the United Nations reported that when it comes to** the number of working women, there were about 700 million fewer paid women in employment than men and that those women who were employed were faced with low-income, poor working conditions, and limited career prospects (9). If we solve these problems such as low income and poor working conditions, it is certain that women, working to their full potential, can boost the economy and economic growth. However,

this is not true. In reality, women are less supported by men in the economic sector. Estimations have been made. Many scholars worldwide have made it clear that if women are involved in the economic sector and employed, there are much better chances of them investing. That is to say, the majority of the income earned by women is spent on their children's education and health, which makes it possible to create skilled human capital for the future.

The difference between men and women in wages and employment is the reason for the distortions prevalent in the labour market. This includes poor working conditions, lack of maternity leave and mistreatment. Apart from this, discrimination found in hiring practices is also another reason. **Esteban Ortiz, Ospina Zoe Hasil and Max Rosser (2019) mention in their paper that if** there is a high possibility of discrimination and mistreatment of women in hiring practices in different occupations and industries, then the possibility of their (women) participation in the labour market decreases considerably (10). At present, due to the trend of increasing education among women, some women raise their voices, but their number is negligible. Most women, even after getting a better education, live their lives calmly, or we can say, tolerate and work with adverse conditions of work.

Another reason for the inequality in wages and employment between men and women is the disparity in education, particularly in specialized fields such as engineering, doctorates and management. **Azmat and Boring (2020) clarify that** among women, educational inequalities, especially in specialized education, contribute to the underrepresentation of women in higher-paying management positions (11). This gap not only limits women's economic potential but also hampers the overall economic progress and development of the country. It has been observed that educational programs in fields such as engineering, mathematics and physics, which are essential for higher-income earning careers, are not sufficiently pursued by female students. Even though enrolment levels for women are improving, they often lag behind men in these key areas. This shift is becoming more noticeable in today's global era, where significant inequalities in income and wages between genders persist. **According to C. Brown and M. Corcoran (1997),** many businesses now require expertise in engineering, technology, and mathematics—fields that offer high salaries (12). However, a substantial gap in women's participation in these fields remains, largely due to societal and familial pressures. Social norms and the patriarchal mindset of many parents still restrict women's access to this type of education. In the Indian context, many parents still provide education to their daughters primarily to improve their marriage prospects. This mindset contributes to the significant gender gap in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education. In recent years, the rapid changes in the labour market, particularly in technology and digital education, have led to stark differences in income and salary. Men who receive this type of education tend to earn higher salaries than women, largely because the overall enrolment of women in such fields remains lower.

These social institutions—such as traditions, customs and stereotypes—continue to limit women's access to education and jobs, negatively impacting the country's economic growth and productivity. Economists and scholars argue that these societal structures reduce women's participation in the labour

force, subsequently lowering national income and hindering GDP growth.

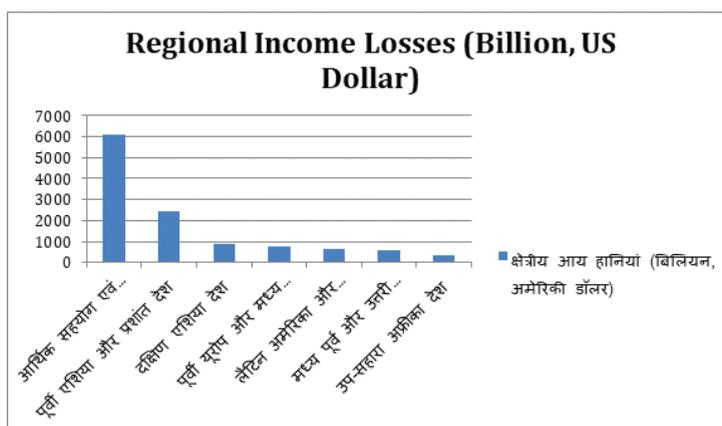
At a global level, the economic loss due to the low participation of women in the labour force is estimated to be around 12 trillion US dollars, with potential losses reaching as high as 16% at the global level. A table highlights the regional income losses due to women's underrepresentation in the labour force across different countries worldwide (13).

Estimates of Global and Regional Shelter Losses from Low Women's Labour Force Participation

No.	Regional countries at the global level	Regional shelter losses (US \$ billion)
1.	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries	6116 Billion US Dollars
2.	East Asia and Pacific Countries	2440 Billion US Dollars
3.	South Asia Countries	888 billion US Dollars
4.	Eastern Europe and Central Asia Countries	733 billion US Dollars
5.	Latin America and Caribbean Countries	658 billion US Dollars
6.	Middle East and North Africa Countries	575 billion US Dollars
7.	Sub - Saharan Africa Countries	340 billion US Dollars

Source: Ferrant, G. and Kolev, A. (2016) Does Gender Discrimination in Social Institutions Matters For Long Term Growth:-Cross-Country Evidence, OECD Development Centre, Working Paper, Number 330.

The above table shows the global and regional shelter losses. Looking at the data, it is seen that the highest regional s losses are estimated to occur in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, while the lowest is estimated to occur in sub-Saharan African countries.



CONCLUSION

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that for a better society and country, it is very important to eliminate gender inequalities prevalent in the society for development (economic). This is necessary because when we

study the concept of human capital resource in economics, we study the per capita income, age and health status of both men and women equally. From this point of view, efforts should be made to eliminate the social norms and institutions operating in the society and family through legal processes and national programs and schemes run by the government. So that along with getting the basic rights, they (women) can also achieve economy and economic development.

Many scholars and economists around the world say that if discriminatory social institutions and evils prevalent in society are eliminated, then the global economy can benefit economically from it. Women should have equal rights as men. This will not only lead to empowerment but will also enhance the monetary standard of living of the family, as women will pass on the major part of their self-earned income to the family. They spend money on children, i.e. on health and education. Due to this, better human capital formation is possible in the future. Overall, women are deprived of their fundamental rights. To provide equal participation in wages and employment is extremely important for the economy and economic development.

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Gender Equality in Indian Philosophy: In the Context of the Vedas and Puranas

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ABSTRACT

The philosophy of gender equality found in the Indian Vedas and Puranas serves as the foundation of our culture, society, and religious values. During the Vedic period, women were granted equal rights to respect, education, and participation in religious activities alongside men. Scholars like Gargi and Maitreyi exemplify how women enjoyed equality in knowledge and discourse. The Upanishads and Brahman texts emphasized the essential role of women's participation. The concept of "Ardhanarishvara," representing the union of Shiva and Shakti in the Puranas, portrayed man and woman as complementary to one another. The stories of various gods and goddesses illustrate that man is incomplete without women in society. Female figures such as Lakshmi, Durga, and Saraswati symbolize wealth, power, and knowledge, underscoring the importance of women. Although the status of women declined in medieval India, the modern era saw social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, and Savitribai Phule championing movements for women's education and rights. Following independence, the Constitution granted women the right to equality, freedom, and justice. The principles of gender equality outlined in the Vedas and Puranas are highly relevant today. The teachings from these texts can inspire respect and promote equality for women in society. Through social reform, education, and awareness, we can work towards creating a progressive and equitable society.

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INTRODUCTION

The Vedas and Puranas form the basis of Indian culture and philosophy. They are not only the source of spiritual knowledge but also guide the structure and values of society. These ancient texts teach men and women to maintain the balance of society with equal rights and duties. In the Vedas and Puranas, women are not only considered the foundation of the family but also the source of knowledge, power and compassion. In the Vedic period, women had the right to education, freedom, and participation in religious rituals. The principle of "Ardhanarishvara" shows that men and women complement each other in creation. However, with time, the status of women deteriorated due to changes in the social structure. In medieval India, women were deprived of education and freedom, but in modern India, efforts were made to re-establish gender equality through awareness and reform movements. This article studies the principles of gender equality contained in the Vedas and Puranas, which are relevant even in today's society. It acts as a bridge between ancient and modern society and teaches us that a progressive society can be built only through equality and respect. From this one shloka, you can understand how much women were respected in ancient times.

"मातृदेवो भव । पितृदेवो भव ।"

(तैत्तिरीय उपनिषद् 1.11.2)

(Taittireeya Upanishad 1.11.2)

Meaning: "Treat your mother like a god, treat your father like a god." That means you should respect your woman like your mother.

Gender Equality in Vedas

When we study the Vedas, we come to know that in that period, women were considered to be equal to men. There was no discrimination against women. Even men and women used to wear similar ornaments and clothes. Women had the right to participate in every religious and social work. You can see examples of this in all the four Vedas.

"इमं मां सुता वाचं ब्रह्मणो ब्रवीतु ।

अस्माकं मातरं वसिष्ठा ।"

(Rigveda 10.85.26)

This is the verse of the Rig Veda which says that women like our mothers should show us the path of this knowledge. This proves that women could acquire education and knowledge and participate in religious activities. There was no restriction on them.

"समानो मंत्रः समिति समानी ।

समानं व्रतम् सह चित्तमेषाम् ।"

(Yajurveda 36.18)

This shloka is mentioned in Yajurveda, which means that the duties and thoughts of a man and a woman should be the same. Because the married life of both can be good only when the duties and rights of both are the same. The right of one

will be the duty of the other. If the thoughts and duties of both are not the same, then there will be trouble in their married life.

“आयुष्यमंगलं देहि मे

यस्यामं वचने माता ।”

(Atharva Veda 14.1.64)

The meaning of this shloka mentioned in Atharvaveda is that respect the woman who is auspicious for the family and society. That is, we should respect women equally. They are the basis of our society. Society cannot develop without them. Apart from this, gender equality is also mentioned in Samveda. In Samveda, women are considered proficient in the art of music. Women enhance the beauty of nature.

Gender Equality in Upanishads

The Upanishads are regarded as the essence of Indian philosophy and studying them is essential for understanding this philosophical tradition. Evidence of gender equality can be found in the Upanishads, highlighting the significant role women played during that period. One notable figure is Gargi, also known as Brahmavadini, who is famous for her dialogue with Yajnavalkya, a sage and philosopher. This exchange illustrates that women had the right to engage in philosophical discussions at that time.

“अथ गार्ग्यब्रवीद्विद्या ब्रह्मणो महत्त्वं ज्ञास्यामि ।”

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3.6)

The meaning of the reference shloka is that “Gargi expressed her desire to know the importance of Brahma (ultimate truth) from Yajnavalkya.” From this shloka, we get evidence of the fact that women used to participate in philosophical discussions. Apart from this, Maitreyi, the wife of Yajnavalkya Rishi, also used to participate in philosophical dialogues. She also communicates with Yajnavalkya and expresses her desire to know about Dvaita (separateness).

“यत्र हि द्वितीयं भवन्ति तत्र अन्योऽन्यं पश्यति ।”

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2.4.14)

Meaning: “In the presence of duality (separation), one can perceive the other.” From this dialogue, we can infer Maitreyi’s philosophical knowledge and her immense potential. The Shatapatha Brahmana is a text from the Shukla Yajurveda that also contains elements of gender equality. This religious text emphasizes the necessity of women’s participation in every religious activity, including yajnas and rituals. If women do not participate, the virtue of the yajna or ritual is not fully realized.

“पत्युः सह यज्ञं करोति ।”

(Shatapatha Brahmana 1.3.1.10)

Meaning: “The wife performs the yajna along with the husband.” From this verse, we can understand the importance of women in religious works.

Gender Equality in Puranas

People of the Hindu religion have great faith in the Puranas. These texts provide insights into the history, mythology, religion, culture, geography, cosmology, and philosophy of ancient India. Many examples in the Puranas highlight the importance of gender equality during that time. One excellent illustration of gender equality is the Ardhanarishwar principle, which represents the unity of Shiva and Shakti. This principle reflects the balance of male and female roles in society, emphasizing that neither a single man nor a single woman can create a complete society on their own; instead, there must be a balance between both. This idea is encapsulated in a specific shloka.

“अर्धनारीश्वर रूपं तं शिवशक्त्यात्मकं प्रभुम् ।”
(Shiva Purana)

That is, Shiva and Shakti have one form, in which half is Shiva and half is Shakti. When we study the gods and goddesses in the Puranas, there is a goddess with every god. They have equal status, powers and authority as the gods. Goddesses are symbols of power, wealth and knowledge. Goddess Lakshmi sits on equal seats with Lord Narayana, Parvati with Shiva, etc., which shows gender equality.

“या देवी सर्वभूतेषु मातृरूपेण संस्थिता ।
नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ।”
(Devi Mahatmyam)

Salutations to the Goddess, who embodies the essence of motherhood for all living beings. This highlights the importance of respecting women in every individual. The story of Savitri and Satyavan, found in the Mahabharata, illustrates the incredible strength and courage of women from that era. Savitri demonstrates her devotion by enduring hardships and performing penance to save her husband, Satyavan. In this way, women symbolize both courage and spirituality.

“धर्मं सत्यं चाहं धर्मपत्नी ।”
(Mahabharata, Van Parva)

Savitri symbolizes truth and religion. A woman can endure the hardships of her own life but often prioritizes her family's well-being. She is willing to do anything for them. Similarly, the characters of Sita Mata in the Ramayana and Draupadi in the Mahabharata represent tolerance, knowledge, and strength. Both goddesses leave the comforts of their palaces to accompany their husbands into exile in the forest, enduring life's pains alongside them. This illustrates that the rights and responsibilities of both partners are the same. A woman should live her life in harmony with her life partner.

“सर्वधर्मेषु श्रेष्ठो धर्मः पतिव्रता ।”
(Valmiki Ramayana)

Meaning: “Loyalty to husband is the best religion.”

Change in Society and the Development of Gender Equality

In India, the concept of gender equality has evolved from the Vedic period to the present day. Over time, the meaning of gender equality has shifted significantly.

Gradually, the opportunities for freedom, equality, and justice for women have diminished, hindering their development and adversely affecting their overall situation.

➤ **Vedic Period: Golden Age**

The Vedic period is considered the golden age for gender equality. Women had freedom, equality, and judicial rights. They could read the Vedas, participate in discussions and participate in religious activities. Women had equal rights as men. Men and women were equal in domestic life.

➤ **Post Vedic Period: Change in Structure**

With the advent of the post-Vedic period, the status of women changed from the Vedic period. Men were considered more important in society, which led to the era of patriarchy. Gradually, women were prohibited from participating in religious activities.

➤ **Epic Age: The Struggle of Women**

In this period, the stories of women's struggles were written. This was the period of women's struggle. In Ramayana, the character of Mother Sita is a symbol of sacrifice and dedication. How she had to go to the forest for exile and undergo Agni Pariksha to prove herself right in front of society. A similar story is of Draupadi in Mahabharata. She was insulted in front of the society in a public gathering.

➤ **Medieval India: The Age of Decline**

During medieval India, external attacks were common, leading to significant changes in Indian culture. The arrival of Islamic civilization contributed to rapid social transformations. Strict restrictions were imposed on women, resulting in the emergence of harmful practices such as child marriage and the purdah system. Women were largely kept uneducated and were often viewed as objects of pleasure and luxury. As a result, women's rights were severely violated.

➤ **Modern India: A period of resurgence**

During British rule in modern India, people gradually became more conscious of social issues, leading to the establishment of various reformist movements. This laid the foundation for social reform. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, known as the pioneer of the Renaissance, banned the practice of Sati and initiated movements for widow remarriage, as well as raising awareness about women's education. Similarly, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar played a crucial role in legalizing widow remarriage and opposing child marriage. Savitribai Phule was instrumental in women's education; she, along with her husband Jyotiba Phule, established schools for girls and served as a teacher herself. Other prominent figures, including Mahatma Gandhi and Pandita Ramabai, also contributed significantly to social reform.

With India's independence, women were granted the same fundamental rights as men. Article 14 ensures the right to equality and equal protection under the law, while Article 15 prohibits discrimination based on sex, religion, caste, and other factors. Article 16 guarantees equal opportunity in employment and public services. Additionally, Article 39 mandates equal pay and equal rights to work for both men and women. Numerous laws have been enacted for the betterment of women, including the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, the Dowry Prohibition Act

of 1961, the Domestic Violence Act of 2005, and the Sexual Harassment Act of 2013. Women have also been given reservations in jobs and education in schools, colleges, and universities. The Indian Parliament has provided a reservation of 33% of seats for women in state panchayats. These provisions reflect the commitment of the Indian Parliament to support women's empowerment.

Relevance of Indian Vedas and Puranas in the Context of Gender Equality in Modern Times

Indian Vedas and Puranas are not just religious texts, but they are the soul of Indian society. People have immense faith in them. The things said in the Vedas in the context of gender equality are truly relevant for the present time because, at present, morality towards women is declining among people. Crime against women is increasing in the society. Whereas in the Vedic period, women were respected a lot. This is described in mythology. Women were given equal rights as men. Every work was considered incomplete without the participation of women. Therefore, we should learn from the Vedas and Puranas and give equal rights to women. When even the gods and goddesses supported gender equality at that time, then why don't we do it in the present time? We should treat women equally and give them every kind of right like equality, freedom etc. The teachings of gender equality given in the Vedas and Puranas should be spread among the people through education and literature so that consciousness can develop in them.

CONCLUSION

In the Indian Vedas and Puranas, gender equality is not merely a religious ideal; it serves as the fundamental basis for a balanced society. In ancient India, women had equal rights to education, freedom, and social participation. However, over time, the status of women deteriorated. Today, as women take on leading roles in social, political, and economic spheres, we can draw inspiration from the principles outlined in the Vedas and Puranas to foster an ethical and equitable society. To achieve gender equality, it is essential to revive and apply the teachings of these ancient texts in a modern context.

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Gender Dynamics in Social work and Education

Neha Srivastava* & Nainsi**

INTRODUCTION

Gender dynamics play a crucial role in shaping experiences, expectations, and outcomes in both social work and education. These fields are deeply influenced by societal norms, cultural beliefs, and historical power structures that define gender roles and relationships. Understanding gender dynamics is essential for promoting equity, inclusion, and social justice in these professions.

In social work, gender influences access to resources, treatment by institutions, and individual experiences of oppression or privilege. Social workers must recognize how gender intersects with other identities, such as race, class, and sexuality, to provide effective support and advocacy for diverse populations.

Similarly, in education, gender impacts student participation, teacher expectations, and curriculum design. Gender biases—both conscious and unconscious—can shape learning opportunities, career aspirations, and social interactions within schools and universities. Educators must be aware of these dynamics to create inclusive and supportive learning environments.

Gender dynamics operate at both national and international levels, influencing policies, economic development, social structures, and human rights. While each country has unique gender dynamics based on its culture, history, and legal framework, global trends and international organizations also shape the broader gender discourse.

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GENDER DYNAMICS AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

At the international level, gender dynamics are shaped by global policies, human rights frameworks, and cooperation between nations. International organizations, treaties, and global movements play a crucial role in advancing gender equality worldwide.

a. Global Gender Equality Frameworks

- United Nations (UN) Initiatives: The UN promotes gender equality through frameworks such as:
 - **Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5):** Aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
 - **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW):** A legally binding international treaty for women's rights.
 - **UN Women:** Works to advance gender equality through policy advocacy and funding.
- **International Labor Organization (ILO) Standards:** Advocates for gender-inclusive labor policies, equal pay, and maternity rights.
- **World Health Organization (WHO):** Works on gender-sensitive healthcare policies and addressing gender-based health disparities.

b. Gender in Global Politics and Diplomacy

- Women are underrepresented in international leadership roles, such as UN Secretary-General, heads of state, and global financial institutions.
- Some international agreements focus on **women, peace, and security**, recognizing the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.
- Gender-sensitive diplomacy is increasingly promoted, with more women serving as diplomats and foreign ministers.

c. Gender in Economic Development

- The **World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report** tracks gender disparities in economic participation, education, health, and political empowerment.
- **Microfinance programs** and women's entrepreneurship initiatives have empowered women in developing countries by providing financial independence.
- Trade agreements and international labor laws increasingly include gender equality provisions.

d. Gender-Based Violence and Human Rights

- **Human trafficking and gender-based violence** are major international concerns, with efforts from the UN and NGOs to combat these issues.
- **Sexual violence in conflict zones** has led to international tribunals addressing crimes against women and gender minorities.
- LGBTQ+ rights are recognized in some international agreements, but disparities in rights persist between countries.

e. Challenges in Global Gender Equality

Cultural and Religious Differences: Some nations resist international gender equality frameworks due to cultural or religious beliefs.

Enforcement Issues: International agreements rely on national governments for implementation, leading to inconsistent progress.

Economic Inequality: Gender equality efforts are often hindered by economic disparities between developed and developing nations.

GENDER DYNAMICS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

At the national level, gender dynamics are influenced by government policies, cultural norms, economic conditions, and social movements. These dynamics affect various aspects of life, including employment, education, political representation, and access to healthcare.

a. Gender in Politics and Leadership

- Women remain underrepresented in political leadership and decision-making positions in many countries.
- Some nations have implemented **gender quotas** to increase female representation in parliament and government.
- Gender-based political violence and societal norms often discourage women and gender minorities from participating in politics.

b. Gender and Employment

- Wage gaps persist in many countries, with women often earning less than men for the same work.
- Certain industries remain gender-segregated, with women concentrated in care work, education, and social services, while men dominate technology, engineering, and leadership roles.
- Work-life balance policies, such as paid parental leave and flexible work arrangements, vary across nations, influencing gender equality in the workplace.

c. Gender and Education

- Access to education for girls and women has improved globally, but disparities remain, particularly in rural and conservative areas.
- Gender stereotypes in curricula influence career aspirations, often discouraging girls from pursuing STEM fields.
- Sexual harassment and gender-based violence in educational institutions continue to be pressing issues.

d. Gender-Based Violence and Legal Protections

- Many countries have laws addressing gender-based violence (GBV), including domestic violence and sexual harassment, but enforcement is often weak.
- Social stigma, legal barriers, and lack of support services prevent many survivors from seeking justice.

- Movements such as #MeToo and feminist activism have pushed governments to strengthen protections against GBV.

e. Gender and Healthcare

Women and gender minorities often face discrimination in healthcare access, particularly in reproductive health services.

Maternal mortality rates remain high in some countries due to inadequate healthcare services.

The transgender and non-binary community faces significant barriers in accessing gender-affirming healthcare.

Gender dynamics in social work influence the way services are delivered, the experiences of clients, and the professional environment for social workers themselves. Understanding these dynamics is essential to ensuring equitable and effective support for individuals and communities.

Gender and Client Experiences:

Social work serves diverse populations, and gender plays a significant role in shaping individuals' experiences, access to resources, and the challenges they face.

- **Women and Social Work Services:** Women are often the primary clients of social work services, especially in areas such as domestic violence support, child welfare, and poverty assistance. Many social policies are designed to support women, particularly single mothers, who are disproportionately affected by economic hardship and caregiving responsibilities.
- **Men and Social Work Services:** Men may face stigma when seeking social services, particularly in areas like mental health, parenting programs, and domestic violence victim support. Traditional notions of masculinity often discourage men from expressing vulnerability or seeking help.
- **LGBTQ+ Individuals:** Gender-diverse individuals and LGBTQ+ clients often experience unique challenges, such as discrimination, family rejection, and lack of access to gender-affirming care. Social workers must be aware of these issues and advocate for inclusive policies and practices.

GENDERED EXPECTATIONS IN SOCIAL WORK

The social work profession has traditionally been gendered, with women making up the majority of the workforce. This has led to certain expectations and challenges within the profession :

Feminization of Social Work: The field is predominantly female, which has contributed to the perception that social work is an extension of caregiving roles traditionally assigned to women. While this highlights the importance of empathy and emotional labor, it can also lead to lower salaries and reduced professional recognition compared to male-dominated fields.

Male Social Workers: Men in social work may face biases, such as being assumed to be better suited for managerial roles or being questioned about their ability to provide emotional support. They are also underrepresented in areas like child welfare and family services, where female social workers dominate.

Intersectionality and Gender in Social Work

Social workers must recognize how gender intersects with race, class, sexuality, ability, and other identities to understand clients' unique experiences. For example:

- A low-income woman of color may face compounded discrimination in accessing housing and employment.
- A transgender individual may experience barriers in receiving adequate healthcare and legal protections.
- A stay-at-home father may struggle with societal perceptions of masculinity while seeking parental support services.
- Understanding intersectionality allows social workers to provide more inclusive and effective interventions.

Gender and Policy Advocacy in Social Work

Social workers play a key role in advocating for gender-equitable policies and challenging systemic inequalities. Some areas where gender advocacy is crucial include:

- **Gender-based violence:** Advocating for stronger protections and support services for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking.
- **Workplace equality:** Addressing gender pay gaps, parental leave policies, and workplace discrimination.
- **Healthcare access:** Ensuring gender-diverse individuals receive appropriate and affirming healthcare services.

GENDER DYNAMICS IN EDUCATION

Gender dynamics in education influence teaching practices, student experiences, career aspirations, and institutional policies. Schools and universities are social institutions where gender norms are reinforced or challenged, shaping opportunities and expectations for students of all genders. Understanding these dynamics is essential for promoting inclusivity, equity, and social justice in education.

1. Gender and Student Experiences

Students experience education differently based on their gender due to societal expectations, biases, and institutional structures.

- **Gender Stereotypes in Learning**
 - Boys are often encouraged to excel in subjects like math, science, and technology (STEM), while girls are guided toward humanities and social sciences.
 - This can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies where students perform better in subjects that align with societal expectations.
 - Teachers may unconsciously give more attention to boys in STEM subjects, reinforcing gender disparities in these fields.
- **Classroom Participation and Behavior Expectations**

- Boys are typically encouraged to be assertive and outspoken, while girls are expected to be polite and cooperative.
- Girls may be penalized more for assertiveness, while boys are often excused for disruptive behavior with phrases like “boys will be boys.”
- LGBTQ+ and gender-nonconforming students may experience bullying, exclusion, or lack of support in schools that do not actively promote inclusivity.

➤ **School Discipline and Gender Bias**

- Studies have shown that boys, particularly boys of color, are more likely to face harsher disciplinary actions, such as suspensions and expulsions.
- Girls, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, may face “dress code policing” that reinforces harmful gender norms.

2. GENDER REPRESENTATION IN CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

Textbooks and Learning Materials

Many textbooks still lack representation of female and gender-diverse role models in leadership, science, and history.

Traditional narratives often reinforce male dominance, with men portrayed as leaders and women as caregivers.

LGBTQ+ identities are often underrepresented or erased in educational content.

Hidden Curriculum

Beyond formal lessons, schools reinforce gender roles through informal socialization, such as expectations around dress codes, extracurricular activities, and leadership opportunities.

Girls are often encouraged toward caretaking roles (e.g., helping teachers, mentoring younger students), while boys are encouraged toward leadership positions.

3. GENDER AND TEACHERS

Gender Imbalance in the Teaching Profession

Women make up the majority of teachers in primary and secondary education, reinforcing the stereotype that teaching is a “nurturing” profession.

Despite their large numbers in education, women are underrepresented in leadership roles such as principals, deans, and superintendents.

Male teachers are often concentrated in administrative positions or specific subjects like science and physical education.

Gender Expectations in Teaching

Female teachers may be expected to take on additional emotional labor, such as counseling students or managing classroom relationships.

Male teachers may face scrutiny if they work in early childhood education due to stereotypes that associate caregiving with women.

4. GENDER AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS

➤ **Impact on Career Choices**

- Gender norms influence students' career aspirations from an early age, limiting opportunities for personal and professional growth.
- Girls may be discouraged from pursuing careers in male-dominated fields such as engineering, politics, and finance.
- Boys may avoid careers in caregiving professions like nursing, social work, and teaching due to stigma around masculinity.

➤ **Higher Education and Gender Gaps**

- Women now enroll in higher education at higher rates than men, but gender disparities persist in specific fields.
- Women remain underrepresented in STEM fields, while men are less likely to pursue degrees in education, healthcare, and the arts.

5. ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION

To create a more inclusive and equitable education system, schools must actively challenge gender biases and promote gender-sensitive policies

➤ **Gender-Inclusive Teaching Strategies**

- Encouraging girls in STEM and boys in humanities through mentorship programs.
- Using gender-neutral language and avoiding reinforcing stereotypes in lessons.
- Providing equal opportunities for leadership and classroom participation.

➤ **Safe and Inclusive School Environments**

- Implementing policies to prevent gender-based bullying and harassment.
- Creating safe spaces for LGBTQ+ students, such as support groups and inclusive curriculum representation.
- Training teachers to recognize and address gender biases in their classrooms.

➤ **Policy and Structural Changes**

- Ensuring gender diversity in school leadership positions.
- Revising curricula to include contributions from women, non-binary individuals, and LGBTQ+ figures.
- Enforcing fair disciplinary practices that do not disproportionately target specific genders.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER DYNAMICS IN SOCIAL WORK AND EDUCATION

Gender dynamics in social work and education are deeply interconnected, as both fields play a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes, opportunities, and policies related to gender equity.

In 2025, the evolving landscape of gender equality, inclusion, and intersectionality continues to influence how these two fields interact and support one another.

1. Shared Goals of Gender Equity and Social Justice

Both social work and education are rooted in principles of social justice and advocacy, striving to dismantle gender-based discrimination and promote equitable opportunities.

- **Social Work** addresses systemic gender inequalities through policy advocacy, support services, and interventions for marginalized groups.
- **Education** provides knowledge, critical thinking skills, and inclusive curricula that challenge gender biases and empower students to advocate for equality.

By working together, these fields help create a society where gender roles are not restrictive, and individuals of all genders have equal access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power.

2. Gender Stereotypes and Bias in Both Fields

Gender stereotypes persist in both education and social work, shaping individuals' experiences and career paths.

- **In Social Work:** The profession is often seen as a “feminine” field due to its emphasis on caregiving and emotional labor, leading to an overrepresentation of women and a devaluation of the work compared to male-dominated professions.
- **In Education:** Gender biases in the classroom influence subject choices, career aspirations, and leadership opportunities, reinforcing traditional gender roles from an early age.

The cycle of gendered expectations in education feeds into the gendered workforce of social work. For example, young girls encouraged toward caregiving roles in school may later enter social work, while boys are discouraged from emotional labor and advocacy-based careers.

3. Intersectionality and Support for Marginalized Groups

Both fields address the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as race, class, disability, and sexuality.

- **Social Workers** support students facing gender discrimination, LGBTQ+ challenges, and family issues through counseling and advocacy programs.
- **Educators** create inclusive classrooms that recognize diverse gender identities and challenge traditional gender norms.

In 2025, there is an increasing emphasis on **collaborative efforts** between educators and social workers to support vulnerable students, particularly transgender and non-binary youth, who face unique barriers in both school and society.

4. Policy Advocacy and Institutional Change

Education and social work professionals often collaborate to drive policy changes that promote gender equality.

- **Social workers** advocate for policies addressing gender-based violence, equal pay, and parental leave, which influence the school environment.

- **Educators** push for gender-inclusive curricula, equitable disciplinary policies, and representation of diverse role models in textbooks.

In 2025, growing movements for gender equity have led to more formal partnerships between schools and social work organizations to implement anti-discrimination policies, mental health support programs, and gender-sensitive education reforms.

5. Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination

Gender-based violence (GBV) and discrimination affect both education and social work settings, requiring a coordinated response.

- **Social workers** play a crucial role in supporting students who experience gender-based violence, bullying, or harassment.
- **Schools** serve as critical spaces for early intervention, education on consent and healthy relationships, and creating a culture of gender equity.

By working together, social workers and educators ensure that students and families have access to the resources and support needed to break cycles of violence and discrimination.

The relationship between gender dynamics in social work and education is one of mutual reinforcement. The gender biases and expectations formed in educational settings shape the workforce of social work, while social workers help challenge and transform these biases through advocacy and direct support. In 2025, increased collaboration between the two fields is essential for fostering a society that values gender equality, inclusivity, and empowerment for all individuals. collaboration between the two fields is essential for fostering a society that values gender equality, inclusivity, and empowerment for all individuals.

CONCLUSION

In 2025, gender dynamics in social work and education remain central to shaping societal progress toward equality and inclusion. Both fields play a transformative role in challenging gender-based discrimination, reshaping norms, and fostering environments where individuals of all genders can thrive. The intersection of social work and education highlights the critical need for policies, institutional reforms, and collaborative efforts to address the persistent gender disparities that influence learning, career paths, and social well-being.

While education lays the foundation for shaping perceptions and opportunities, social work ensures that individuals facing gender-based challenges receive support, advocacy, and empowerment. Together, these fields work to dismantle barriers such as gender stereotypes, unequal access to resources, and gender-based violence, creating pathways for inclusive growth. The integration of gender-sensitive policies, intersectional approaches, and inclusive curricula in schools and social work practices is essential for achieving long-term gender equity.

As global movements for gender justice continue to gain momentum in 2025, the collaboration between education and social work remains vital. Educators and social workers must advocate for progressive policies, challenge systemic biases, and support individuals from all gender identities in achieving their full

potential. By reinforcing gender equity at both national and international levels, these fields contribute to a more just and equitable society, ensuring that future generations benefit from a world where gender no longer determines one's opportunities or rights.

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The Role of Family and Society in Perpetuating Gender Norms and LGBT Oppression in India

Md Ali Jinna

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the pivotal role of family and society in perpetuating rigid gender norms and LGBT oppression in India. Drawing on historical, cultural, and legal perspectives, it traces how traditional family structures and societal expectations enforce heteronormativity, contributing to the marginalization of LGBT individuals. Families, as primary agents of socialization, enforce gender roles from childhood, leading to emotional and societal consequences for those deviating from these norms. Additionally, societal institutions education, media, and religion—further reinforce these expectations, fostering an environment where LGBT individuals face discrimination and violence. The paper also highlights the intersection of caste, class, and geographical differences in shaping LGBT experiences, particularly the challenges of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. Despite legal progress, such as the decriminalization of Section 377, social attitudes remain slow to evolve. Through analysis of family dynamics, societal norms, and the impact of activism, the paper underscores the need for holistic change that includes education, policy reforms, and support systems for both LGBT individuals and their families. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of societal transformation to create an inclusive environment that respects gender diversity and LGBT rights.

Keywords: Gender norms, LGBT oppression, Family, Society, India

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INTRODUCTION

Gender norms and LGBT oppression in India are deeply rooted in family structures and societal expectations. These norms, reinforced by traditional values, religion, and social practices, create rigid boundaries for acceptable gender roles and sexual identities. The family, as the primary institution of socialization, plays a pivotal role in shaping attitudes toward gender and sexuality. This perpetuates heteronormativity and stigmatizes LGBT individuals, leading to their marginalization. In this context, understanding how family and society contribute to enforcing these norms is critical to addressing the systemic oppression faced by the LGBT community. This paper aims to explore these dynamics and highlight the intersection of cultural, social, and legal factors in perpetuating such oppression.

Gender norms in Indian society are deeply entrenched in cultural, religious, and historical practices that dictate distinct roles for men and women. These norms reinforce patriarchal structures, assigning dominance and authority to men while restricting women to submissive and caregiving roles. Such rigid binaries not only perpetuate gender inequality but also marginalize those who deviate from heterosexual and cisgender identities. LGBT individuals, in particular, face significant oppression as traditional family structures and societal expectations prioritize conformity. This paper explores how family and societal dynamics perpetuate these norms, leading to the marginalization and discrimination of LGBT individuals in contemporary India.

LGBT oppression in India has deep historical roots, shaped by complex cultural, religious, and colonial legacies. Pre-colonial Indian society showed some recognition of gender fluidity and non-binary identities, as seen in ancient texts and religious traditions. However, British colonial rule introduced rigid Victorian morality, which criminalized homosexual behaviour through laws like Section 377. These colonial attitudes were internalized, reinforcing heteronormative gender norms in families and society. Post-independence India has struggled with these inherited norms, resulting in the continued marginalization of LGBT individuals. Despite some progress, such as the decriminalization of homosexuality in 2018, deeply entrenched gender norms within families and society remain significant barriers to equality and acceptance for LGBT people in India.

Family and society play a fundamental role in shaping social attitudes, especially in cultures where traditions and norms are deeply rooted, such as in India. These institutions serve as primary agents of socialization, reinforcing gender roles and expectations from an early age. In the context of LGBT individuals, family and societal pressures often perpetuate rigid gender norms, leading to marginalization and discrimination. Understanding the intricate relationship between family dynamics, societal expectations, and their influence on sexual and gender identities is crucial for addressing the systemic oppression faced by the LGBT community in India and fostering a more inclusive society.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Examine the Influence of Family Structures:** To analyze how traditional Indian family dynamics and expectations contribute to the reinforcement

of rigid gender norms and the marginalization of LGBT individuals within familial settings.

2. **Investigate Societal Norms and Cultural Practices:** To explore the broader societal and cultural factors that perpetuate gender conformity, heteronormativity, and the oppression of LGBT identities across different regions and communities in India.
3. **Assess Legal and Institutional Impacts:** To assess the role of legal frameworks, government policies, and institutional practices in either reinforcing or challenging gender norms and LGBT oppression, including the influence of colonial-era laws and modern judicial rulings.
4. **Highlight Emerging Trends and Activism:** To identify recent shifts in public perception, activism, and social change efforts aimed at deconstructing traditional gender norms and promoting the rights and acceptance of LGBT individuals in Indian society.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach to explore the role of family and society in perpetuating gender norms and LGBT oppression in India. Secondary data, including academic literature, historical records, legal documents, and media reports, form the foundation of analysis. A comprehensive literature review of scholarly articles, case studies, and reports by NGOs will be conducted to understand the societal and familial mechanisms contributing to gender norm enforcement. Relevant legal cases, such as Section 377 and the NALSA judgment, will also be examined. Where available, first-hand accounts from LGBT individuals, drawn from interviews and autobiographical sources, will provide insight into lived experiences. The intersectionality of caste, class, and religion will be analyzed to offer a nuanced understanding of these dynamics in different socio-cultural contexts.

1. Historical Background on Gender Norms and LGBT Rights in India: The historical context of gender norms and LGBT rights in India reveals a complex journey, from the acceptance of fluid gender roles in ancient traditions to the imposition of rigid binaries during colonial rule, shaping modern societal attitudes.

Pre-colonial India: Pre-colonial India exhibited a remarkable acceptance of gender fluidity, as reflected in ancient texts like the Mahabharata and Ramayana. These texts portrayed diverse gender identities and relationships, recognizing third-gender individuals such as hijras. This historical inclusivity challenged rigid gender norms, highlighting a time when sexual diversity was celebrated within various cultural and spiritual contexts in Indian society.

In pre-colonial India, third genders, often referred to as hijras, held a recognized place in society, reflected in cultural practices, temple art, and spirituality. They were revered in certain religious rituals, including blessings for fertility and childbirth, and were portrayed in ancient texts like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Temples often featured representations of gender fluidity, underscoring their spiritual importance. This historical acceptance contrasts sharply with the later societal oppression that evolved under colonial influence.

Colonial Era: The Colonial Era in India marked the imposition of Victorian morality and laws, which deeply influenced societal attitudes toward gender and sexuality. British colonial rulers enforced strict heteronormative frameworks, criminalizing same-sex relationships (e.g., Section 377) and reinforcing patriarchal family structures. These colonial laws perpetuated rigid gender norms and contributed significantly to LGBT oppression, shaping societal views that persist today.

The Colonial Era in India significantly influenced societal attitudes, particularly through British legal and cultural impositions. British colonization reinforced patriarchal values, institutionalizing gender norms that restricted women's roles and marginalized non-heteronormative identities. These colonial-era attitudes continue to shape modern Indian society, perpetuating gender-based discrimination and LGBT oppression within both family structures and societal institutions, influencing contemporary struggles for gender equality and inclusion.

Post-colonial Continuation of Gender Norms: The colonial legacy in India reinforced rigid gender norms through patriarchal family structures, which continue to persist post-independence. Colonial rulers imposed legal frameworks and societal hierarchies that marginalized women and LGBTQ+ individuals, restricting their rights and roles. These norms have been internalized within families, perpetuating traditional gender roles. In modern India, the family remains a primary agent in sustaining gendered expectations, contributing to the oppression of LGBTQ+ communities despite evolving social dynamics.

In post-independence India, colonial gender norms persisted, reinforcing heteronormativity through family structures and societal expectations. Despite legal advancements, traditional family roles emphasized heterosexual marriage, pressuring individuals to conform. LGBT communities faced societal ostracism and discrimination, rooted in colonial-era values. Families, acting as primary social units, played a crucial role in upholding patriarchal norms, restricting gender expression, and perpetuating homophobia, thus hindering progress toward inclusivity and equality in Indian society.

2. The Role of Family in Reinforcing Gender Norms: The family plays a crucial role in reinforcing gender norms in India by instilling traditional beliefs about masculinity and femininity. These norms often limit individual expression, contributing to the oppression of LGBT identities within society.

Family as the First Institution of Socialization: In traditional Indian family structures, the family serves as the first institution of socialization, reinforcing patriarchal values. Male dominance is often central, with men as primary decision-makers, while women are relegated to domestic roles. These dynamics shape early gender perceptions, conditioning children to conform to societal norms. The family, thus, perpetuates rigid gender roles, contributing to the marginalization of LGBTQ+ individuals who defy these norms, reinforcing gender inequality and heteronormativity within Indian society.

The family, as the first institution of socialization, plays a crucial role in shaping gender roles from childhood. In India, traditional expectations often define masculinity and femininity through daily behaviours and social interactions. Boys and girls are encouraged to conform to specific roles, which reinforces

societal norms. These early lessons perpetuate gender inequality and contribute to the marginalization of LGBT individuals, as non-conforming identities are often met with disapproval or exclusion within the family structure.

Impact of Family on LGBT Identity: In Indian families, expectations of heterosexuality and marriage often suppress LGBT identities, reinforcing rigid gender norms. These familial pressures contribute to internalized stigma, forcing individuals to conform to traditional roles. This perpetuates oppression, limiting self-expression and marginalizing non-heteronormative identities within the larger societal structure.

The family plays a significant role in shaping LGBT identity, often becoming a source of both support and conflict. In India, societal pressures and traditional gender norms make coming out to the family a challenging process, leading to emotional distress, rejection, or forced conformity to heteronormative expectations.

In *“The Role of Family and Society in Perpetuating Gender Norms and LGBT Oppression in India,”* the impact of family on LGBT identity is profound, as rejecting traditional gender norms can lead to emotional distress, social exclusion, disownment, or even forced marriage, causing severe financial and psychological consequences.

Honour and Shame in Indian Families: In Indian families, the concept of “family honour” is deeply intertwined with gender conformity. Traditional gender roles are enforced to maintain societal respect, often leading to strict expectations for behaviour and identity. Deviations from these norms, especially regarding LGBT identities, are seen as dishonouring the family, fueling stigma and reinforcing oppression within both the family and wider society.

In Indian families, honour and shame are deeply tied to societal expectations, particularly regarding gender norms. LGBT identities often challenge these traditional norms, seen as threats to family reputation. As a result, families may subject LGBT individuals to oppression, aiming to preserve societal honour. This dynamic perpetuates gender norms and marginalizes non-conforming identities, reinforcing systemic oppression.

In Indian families, honour and shame play a pivotal role in perpetuating gender norms, often leading to extreme measures like “corrective rapes,” forced marriages, and conversion therapies. These practices are used to enforce heterosexuality, reflecting societal pressure to conform. Such actions highlight the powerful influence of family and community in maintaining rigid gender expectations and LGBT oppression.

Parental and Generational Conflict: The paper *“The Role of Family and Society in Perpetuating Gender Norms and LGBT Oppression in India”* explores parental and generational conflict in the clash between modern values, like acceptance of diversity, and traditional beliefs, particularly gender rigidity. Younger generations increasingly embrace LGBTQ+ rights, challenging entrenched norms held by older generations. This conflict perpetuates systemic oppression, as traditional gender roles enforced by families resist the evolving societal landscape, creating tension between individual identity and collective expectations.

Parental and generational conflict significantly shapes the experiences of LGBT youth in India. Traditional gender norms often create barriers, as older generations may struggle to accept non-conforming identities. The lack of intergenerational dialogue exacerbates this divide, leaving LGBT youth feeling isolated and misunderstood. However, open conversations between generations can challenge entrenched biases and promote acceptance, fostering a more inclusive environment. Without such dialogue, rigid societal and familial norms perpetuate LGBT oppression across generations.

3. Societal Norms and Gender Expectations: The research paper, “The Role of Family and Society in Perpetuating Gender Norms and LGBT Oppression in India,” explores how traditional societal norms and family structures enforce rigid gender roles, marginalizing LGBTQ+ individuals and perpetuating systemic discrimination.

Gender Norms in Education and Social Institutions: Schools play a significant role in reinforcing gender binaries through practices like separate bathrooms and gendered dress codes. These institutional norms uphold societal expectations of masculinity and femininity, marginalizing non-conforming identities. In the Indian context, such divisions contribute to perpetuating gender stereotypes, excluding LGBTQ+ individuals and enforcing traditional roles. These educational practices reflect broader social structures that limit gender expression and contribute to LGBT oppression.

The exclusion of LGBT issues in educational curricula reinforces traditional gender norms and contributes to the marginalization of LGBT individuals. In India, both family and societal structures play a significant role in perpetuating these norms, creating an environment of oppression for non-conforming identities. The absence of inclusive discussions in education denies visibility and understanding, further entrenching heteronormativity and hindering efforts toward equality and social justice for LGBT communities.

Media Representation and its Role: Media representation plays a pivotal role in shaping societal perceptions, particularly in India, where cinema, television, and advertising often reinforce rigid gender roles. The lack of inclusion of LGBT issues in mainstream media and educational curricula perpetuates heteronormative ideals. This omission, along with stereotypical depictions, upholds traditional family and societal structures, further marginalizing LGBT individuals and entrenching gender norms.

Media representation plays a crucial role in shaping societal perceptions of LGBT individuals. In India, LGBT characters are often portrayed in stereotypical or limited roles, reinforcing harmful gender norms and biases. This lack of diversity in media narratives perpetuates societal stigma, contributing to the marginalization of LGBT communities, and hindering progress towards greater acceptance and equality.

Media representation has played a crucial role in challenging entrenched gender norms and LGBT oppression in India. Over time, films like *Aligarh* and *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* have marked a positive shift from invisibility and negative stereotypes to advocacy for acceptance and equality. By highlighting real stories and celebrating diverse identities, these films challenge societal prejudices and

foster greater empathy, thereby encouraging meaningful conversations about family, societal roles, and the rights of LGBT individuals.

Religious and Cultural Influences: In India, dominant religious beliefs like Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity significantly shape gender norms and attitudes toward sexual orientation. These religions often promote traditional roles, reinforcing heteronormativity and patriarchal structures. Family and societal expectations, influenced by religious doctrines, contribute to the stigmatization of LGBT individuals, perpetuating discrimination and marginalization. This cultural and religious framework sustains systemic oppression, limiting the acceptance of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations.

Religious and cultural influences play a significant role in shaping societal norms, including gender and sexuality. In India, religious institutions often perpetuate traditional gender roles, reinforcing heteronormativity and LGBT oppression. However, some progressive religious leaders challenge these norms, advocating for inclusivity. This duality highlights the complex relationship between religion and evolving societal views on gender and sexual orientation.

Religious and cultural festivals in India, such as Karva Chauth and Raksha Bandhan, often reinforce traditional gender roles. These practices emphasize patriarchal ideals—wives fasting for their husbands' long lives or sisters tying rakhi for protection from brothers—thereby perpetuating the belief in male dominance and female subservience. Such rituals, rooted in cultural and religious norms, contribute to the broader societal framework that upholds heteronormative values and marginalizes LGBT identities.

Economic Factors and LGBT Marginalization: Economic factors play a significant role in the marginalization of LGBT individuals in India, particularly in workplace discrimination. Bias against gender non-conformity leads to exclusion from job opportunities, lower wages, and job insecurity. This economic disenfranchisement, rooted in societal and familial pressure to conform to heteronormative ideals, perpetuates a cycle of poverty and marginalization, further entrenching LGBT oppression and limiting socioeconomic mobility.

Economic factors play a significant role in the marginalization of LGBT individuals in India, particularly at the intersection of class and caste. Poverty and economic dependency often force LGBT individuals to conform to rigid gender norms imposed by family and society. Additionally, limited access to education, employment, and social mobility further exacerbates their vulnerability, as class and caste hierarchies intersect with LGBT identity, intensifying systemic oppression and exclusion.

Economic independence plays a crucial role in challenging family and societal norms that marginalize the LGBT community in India. Access to stable employment and resources empowers individuals to resist oppressive structures, fostering autonomy and self-acceptance. As LGBT individuals gain economic footing, they are better positioned to advocate for their rights, disrupt traditional expectations, and promote acceptance within their families and society at large.

4. Legal Framework and Institutionalized Oppression: The legal framework in India institutionalizes gender norms, marginalizing LGBT individuals. Societal beliefs reinforce these norms, perpetuating oppression through family

structures and cultural practices, hindering progress toward equality and acceptance.

Laws Relating to Gender and Sexuality: Laws relating to gender and sexuality significantly shape the lives of LGBT individuals in India. Section 377, which criminalized consensual same-sex relationships, fostered societal stigma and oppression, marginalizing LGBT communities. The 2018 decriminalization marked a pivotal moment, challenging deep-rooted gender norms and enabling greater acceptance. However, the remnants of societal prejudice continue to impact LGBT lives, as families often uphold traditional views, complicating the journey toward equality. Analyzing these dynamics is essential for understanding ongoing struggles and advocating for comprehensive social change.

Laws relating to gender and sexuality significantly shape the struggle for legal rights in India. Issues such as same-sex marriage, adoption rights, and anti-discrimination laws highlight the legal challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community. Despite recent legal advancements, societal resistance often perpetuates discrimination. The fight for equal rights underscores the need for comprehensive legal protections that challenge traditional gender norms and promote inclusivity within familial and societal structures.

Role of the Judiciary in Addressing Gender Norms: The judiciary plays a pivotal role in challenging entrenched gender norms and reshaping societal perceptions through landmark rulings. Cases like *NALSA vs. Union of India* exemplify this influence, as the Supreme Court recognized transgender rights, affirming their identity and autonomy. Such decisions not only provide legal validation but also catalyze broader societal discourse on gender diversity, promoting acceptance and dismantling stereotypes. By affirming the rights of marginalized communities, the judiciary fosters a more inclusive society, gradually transforming cultural attitudes towards gender and sexuality in India.

The judiciary plays a crucial role in challenging entrenched gender norms and advancing LGBT rights in India. Through landmark judgments, it has dismantled discriminatory laws and emphasized individual dignity. Public interest litigation serves as a powerful tool for marginalized voices, allowing the judiciary to address systemic oppression. By interpreting constitutional provisions to protect sexual orientation and gender identity, the judiciary fosters a more inclusive society, pushing back against societal norms that perpetuate discrimination against LGBT individuals.

The Role of Government and Policy: The role of government and policy is crucial in addressing the lack of comprehensive protections for LGBT individuals, particularly in the education, employment, and healthcare sectors. In India, inadequate legal frameworks and policies perpetuate discrimination, hindering LGBT individuals' rights and access to essential services. The absence of inclusive policies fosters an environment of stigma and marginalization, reinforcing traditional gender norms. Effective legislation and robust policy frameworks are essential to safeguard LGBT rights, promote equality, and create a more inclusive society that respects diverse identities.

In "The Role of Family and Society in Perpetuating Gender Norms and LGBT Oppression in India," the government and policy play crucial roles in shaping societal attitudes. State initiatives, such as legal reforms and awareness campaigns, can challenge discriminatory practices and promote inclusivity.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) often supplement these efforts by advocating for marginalized voices, providing education, and fostering community support, ultimately working towards a more equitable society that recognizes and upholds the rights of all individuals.

Police and Legal System as Oppressive Forces: The police and legal system often serve as oppressive forces against LGBT individuals, particularly in contexts marked by systemic discrimination. Instances of police brutality and harassment highlight the vulnerability of this community, as law enforcement frequently upholds heteronormative values and perpetuates societal stigmas. These actions not only violate basic human rights but also instill fear, discouraging victims from seeking justice. Such dynamics reinforce harmful gender norms and contribute to the broader oppression of LGBT individuals in India.

The police and legal system often serve as oppressive forces in India, reinforcing societal norms that marginalize vulnerable groups, particularly within the LGBT community. Through moral policing, law enforcement enforces traditional gender norms, punishing those who deviate from heteronormative expectations. Additionally, instances of violence and harassment by police further perpetuate fear and silence among marginalized individuals, deterring them from seeking justice. This systemic oppression underscores the need for reform and accountability within the police and legal frameworks to foster inclusivity and protect human rights.

5. Activism, Social Change, and the Role of Civil Society: Activism and social change are vital in challenging entrenched gender norms and LGBT oppression in India. Civil society plays a crucial role in advocating for equality, fostering awareness, and promoting inclusive policies.

LGBT Movements in India: LGBT movements in India have evolved significantly over the decades, transitioning from underground activism to vibrant pride parades. Early efforts were often clandestine, focusing on awareness and community building. The landmark decriminalization of Section 377 in 2018 marked a pivotal moment, enabling greater visibility and legal recognition. Today, ongoing challenges persist as societal norms and family dynamics continue to influence the acceptance and rights of LGBT individuals across the nation.

In India, NGOs and advocacy groups play a pivotal role in advancing LGBT rights by fostering awareness, promoting inclusivity, and challenging societal norms. Organizations like the Naz Foundation and Humsafar Trust provide essential support through legal aid, mental health resources, and community-building initiatives. These groups engage in advocacy, influencing policy changes and public perceptions, thereby creating safer spaces for the LGBT community and challenging the oppressive gender norms entrenched in society.

Family Support Systems and LGBT Allies: Family support systems play a crucial role in shaping attitudes towards LGBT rights in India. As education and awareness about gender diversity increase, families increasingly embrace their LGBT members. Allies within these families advocate for acceptance, challenging traditional gender norms. This transformation fosters a more inclusive environment, ultimately reducing stigma and oppression. By promoting understanding and empathy, families can significantly impact societal change, paving the way for greater LGBT rights and visibility.

Family support systems and LGBT allies play a critical role in providing emotional and practical assistance to LGBT individuals, especially in contexts like India, where traditional gender norms often perpetuate oppression. Support networks, including counselling services and advocacy organizations, help mitigate the challenges faced by LGBT individuals by fostering acceptance and understanding. These allies challenge societal stigma and promote inclusivity, facilitating healthier environments for personal growth and self-acceptance.

The Role of Media and Internet: Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for challenging traditional norms and amplifying LGBT voices in India. It provides a platform for marginalized communities to express their identities and experiences, fostering a sense of solidarity and visibility. By facilitating discussions around gender diversity and inclusivity, social media disrupts societal narratives, encouraging acceptance and challenging the oppressive structures perpetuated by family and society.

The media and the internet serve as vital platforms for online communities, enabling marginalized voices to find safe spaces for self-expression and advocacy. In the context of gender norms and LGBT oppression in India, these digital arenas foster connections, provide resources, and amplify awareness, empowering individuals to challenge societal expectations and advocate for acceptance and equality.

Youth Movements and the Future of Gender Norms: Youth movements in India are pivotal in reshaping gender norms as they embrace diverse identities. This growing acceptance challenges traditional views, fostering an inclusive environment. By advocating for equality and visibility, these movements empower young people to redefine societal expectations, ultimately paving the way for a more accepting and progressive future.

Youth movements are pivotal in redefining gender norms and advocating for inclusivity and equality. Younger generations challenge traditional views, promoting diverse gender identities and expressions. Their activism addresses systemic inequalities and fosters societal change, encouraging families and communities in India to rethink and reshape attitudes towards gender and sexuality, ultimately reducing oppression against LGBT individuals.

Youth movements are pivotal in reshaping gender norms, particularly through inclusive educational programs and queer collectives at universities. These initiatives challenge traditional values, fostering dialogue and awareness. As young activists advocate for equality and representation, they play a crucial role in dismantling oppressive structures, paving the way for a more inclusive future.

6. Intersectionality and Additional Marginalization: This paper explores how family dynamics and societal structures intersect to reinforce traditional gender norms and exacerbate LGBT oppression in India, highlighting the compounded challenges faced by marginalized communities.

The Intersection of Caste, Class, and LGBT Oppression: The intersection of caste, class, and LGBT oppression in India reveals how caste hierarchies exacerbate the marginalization of LGBT individuals. Within these systems, societal expectations and familial pressures often dictate personal identities, leading to discrimination and exclusion. This dynamic not only reinforces

traditional gender norms but also deepens the struggles faced by those who challenge these oppressive structures.

The intersection of caste, class, and LGBT oppression in India reveals profound disparities in confronting oppressive family and societal norms. Individuals from marginalized castes often lack the economic resources to escape restrictive environments, while those from higher classes may access support networks. This disparity perpetuates gender norms, reinforcing systemic inequalities that hinder LGBT rights and acceptance within families and communities.

Rural vs. Urban Divide: The rural-urban divide significantly influences the experiences of LGBT individuals in India. Urban areas often provide greater anonymity, acceptance, and support networks, while rural environments are typically more conservative, with rigid gender norms and societal pressures. These contrasting settings shape the accessibility of resources and community support for LGBT populations.

The rural-urban divide in India significantly influences social norms and acceptance. In rural areas, traditional values often impose stricter gender norms and heightened restrictions on LGBT individuals, fostering an environment of oppression. Conversely, urban spaces, while still facing challenges, exhibit a more nuanced acceptance of diversity, allowing for greater dialogue and visibility of gender and sexual minorities.

Gender Non-Conforming and Transgender Identities: Gender non-conforming individuals and the hijra community in India face unique challenges, including social ostracism, discrimination, and violence. Family rejection often exacerbates feelings of isolation, while societal norms perpetuate stigmatization. These pressures hinder access to education and healthcare, reinforcing systemic inequalities. Understanding these challenges is crucial for fostering acceptance and supporting gender diversity in India.

Gender non-conforming and transgender identities represent critical challenges to traditional gender norms, especially in India. While there have been significant legal advancements, such as the recognition of transgender rights, societal acceptance remains limited. Discrimination and stigma persist, perpetuating oppression. Family structures often reinforce restrictive norms, hindering the acceptance and empowerment of diverse gender identities within society.

FINDINGS

- **Familial Pressure and Traditional Roles:** Families in India often impose rigid gender norms, leading to pressure on individuals to conform to traditional roles. This results in the marginalization of LGBT identities, as deviation from these norms is frequently viewed as a challenge to familial honour.
- **Societal Stigmatization:** The prevailing societal attitudes towards gender and sexuality create a hostile environment for LGBT individuals. Stigmatization often manifests in discrimination and violence, hindering their ability to live openly and authentically.
- **Cultural Narratives and Media Representation:** Cultural narratives and media portrayals significantly influence societal perceptions of gender and sexuality. Misrepresentation or lack of representation of LGBT communities perpetuates stereotypes and reinforces negative biases.

- **Impact of Education:** Educational institutions play a critical role in either challenging or reinforcing gender norms. The absence of inclusive curricula leads to ignorance and the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes, contributing to the cycle of oppression.
- **Legal and Policy Framework:** The inadequacies in legal protections for LGBT individuals reflect and reinforce societal norms. The lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and protections creates a climate of fear and vulnerability for LGBT individuals.
- **Intersectionality of Oppression:** The intersection of gender, caste, and class further complicates the experiences of LGBT individuals. Marginalized groups face compounded discrimination, making it crucial to address these intersecting identities in discussions of gender norms and LGBT rights.
- **Role of Activism and Awareness:** Grassroots activism and awareness campaigns have emerged as powerful tools in challenging gender norms and advocating for LGBT rights. However, sustained efforts are needed to shift societal attitudes and promote acceptance at all levels, particularly within families and communities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the interplay between family dynamics and societal structures in India plays a pivotal role in perpetuating gender norms and the oppression of LGBT individuals. The traditional family unit often reinforces patriarchal values, which not only dictate gender roles but also marginalize those who deviate from these norms. Societal expectations, deeply rooted in cultural and religious practices, further compound this issue, leading to widespread discrimination and violence against the LGBT community.

Despite progressive changes and increasing visibility of LGBT rights in urban areas, rural regions often remain entrenched in conservative ideologies, leaving many individuals vulnerable to familial rejection and social ostracism. Education and awareness initiatives are crucial in challenging these ingrained beliefs, promoting acceptance, and fostering inclusive environments. Additionally, the involvement of allies within families and communities can significantly contribute to dismantling harmful stereotypes.

Ultimately, addressing the dual influence of family and society is essential for creating a more equitable environment for all individuals, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Recognizing and confronting these challenges can pave the way for a future where diversity is celebrated and human rights are upheld for everyone in India.

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Intersections of Identity and Representation: A Comparative Study of Queer Literature and Queer Cinema

Dr. Raf Raf Shakil Ansari

ABSTRACT

This study explores the evolving landscapes of queer literature and queer cinema in the 21st century, focusing on their roles in representing LGBTQ+ identities and challenging societal norms. Through an analysis of Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* and Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty*, the paper examines how contemporary queer literature interrogates the constructs of gender and sexuality, offering nuanced portrayals of complex identities. Similarly, the analysis of Clint Eastwood's *J. Edgar* and Morten Tyldum's *The Imitation Game* highlights how queer cinema navigates the intersection of personal identity and public persona, particularly within the historical contexts of repression and secrecy. Both mediums serve as powerful tools for social commentary, revealing the tensions between conformity and self-acceptance in a heteronormative society. This study underscores the importance of these narratives in fostering a more inclusive understanding of the human experience.

Keywords: Queer Literature, Queer Cinema, Gender Identity, Representation, LGBTQ+ Narratives

1. INTRODUCTION: EXPLORING THE EVOLUTION OF NON-HETERONORMATIVE NARRATIVES

Queer literature, a field that has significantly evolved over the last few decades, continues to challenge and redefine the boundaries of literary studies. Rooted in the exploration of same-sex desire, queer identities, and non-heteronormative

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narratives, queer literature provides a voice for those historically marginalized by mainstream society. It spans a wide array of themes and genres, offering nuanced portrayals of kinship, love, marriage, desire, and family relationships, which have been central concerns in literature across ages. Queer literature, as a collective term, refers to works produced by or for the gay and lesbian communities, often portraying homosexual behavior through characters, plotlines, or themes. As Gregory Woods notes in his seminal work, *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition*, "Queer literature encompasses a wide spectrum of writings, reflecting the diversity of experiences within the LGBTQ+ community" (Woods, 1999). This literary tradition has played a crucial role in validating and expressing non-heteronormative identities and experiences, serving as a medium for both personal and collective empowerment.

One of the key turning points in the study of queer literature was the publication of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* in 1976. Foucault argued that the modern concept of homosexuality emerged not merely as a type of sexual relation but as a distinct identity. He famously stated, "The psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality constituted less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself...The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (Foucault, 1976). This perspective shifted the discourse around homosexuality from a focus on sexual acts to the recognition of homosexual identities as intrinsic aspects of human diversity. However, as Foucault's analysis highlights, there remains no definite consensus on the essential nature of homosexual identities, reflecting ongoing debates within queer theory and literary studies.

Historically, literature has been a space where non-heteronormative identities negotiate with societal structures, particularly the institution of the family. In many cultures, the acceptance of homosexuality has fluctuated over time, with queer literature documenting both the validation and the alienation experienced by individuals facing prejudice, legal discrimination, and religious condemnation. For example, the Greek poet Sappho, often celebrated for her lyric poetry that explores female eroticism, remains a symbol of early queer expression. As Plato and Socrates admired her work, referring to her as 'the tenth Muse,' Sappho's poetry has endured as a testament to the longstanding presence of queer voices in literature (Lester, 2002).

The representation of queer identities has also been shaped by cultural and legal contexts, particularly in the literature of the Renaissance and beyond. For instance, Shakespeare's plays often reflect the complex interplay between gender and sexual desire, as seen in *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*. In these works, characters such as Viola and Rosalind navigate their identities through cross-dressing, challenging contemporary notions of gender and sexuality. Bruce R. Smith, in his analysis of homoerotic desire in Shakespearean England, notes that despite the harsh legal penalties for sodomy, literature and visual arts of the time often depicted homoeroticism with a degree of tolerance (Smith, 1991).

The Gothic novel further exemplifies how literature has historically engaged with themes of perversion, decadence, and gender instability. Mathew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), for example, shocked readers with its graphic depictions of incest, rape, and same-sex desire, while simultaneously challenging societal

taboos. The novel's portrayal of Ambrosio's attraction to the young novice 'Rosario' serves as a clear example of the queer subtext that pervades Gothic literature (Haggerty, 1986).

In the 20th century, queer literature became more explicit and diverse, reflecting broader societal changes and the growing acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities. E.M. Forster's *Maurice* (1913-14), a novel about a young man's journey of self-discovery and acceptance of his homosexuality, is particularly notable for its affirming tone and happy ending. Forster insisted on the importance of portraying a positive outcome for his characters, stating, "A happy ending was imperative, ... I was determined that in fiction anyway, two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows... Happiness is its keynote" (Forster, 1914). This approach marked a significant departure from earlier literature, which often portrayed homosexual characters as tragic figures.

The evolution of queer literature continued into the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In the post-war period, there were many war-influenced gay novels like *The City and Pillar* (1948) by American writer Gore Vidal. This is a significant novel because its gay protagonist is portrayed sympathetically and is not killed off at the end of the story for defying social norms. Other notable works of the 1940s and 1950s include Jean Genet's semiautobiographical novel *Our Lady of the Flowers* (1943) and James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* (1956). Baldwin's central character David had an internal conflict between homosexuality and heterosexuality, opening up discussions on the concept of 'bisexuality'. In the 1970s, more voices of female homosexuality of color began to be heard. Notable among them are the works of American writer and feminist Audre Lorde (1934-1992). In the late 20th century, queer literature diversified into genres of fantasy, mystery, science fiction, and graphic novels. During this time, English novels which received national awards and mainstream critical acclaim, like *The Color Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker, included homosexual characters and relationships.

In the 21st century, queer literature encompasses a broad range of genres, including young adult fiction, science fiction, fantasy, and graphic novels. The acceptance and recognition of queer themes and characters in mainstream publishing have led to a more inclusive literary landscape, where LGBTQ+ authors are encouraged and supported. Novels like Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004) and Andrew Sean Greer's *Less* (2018) have not only garnered critical acclaim but have also won prestigious literary awards, further cementing the importance of queer narratives in contemporary literature. Queer literature has evolved from a marginalized genre to a vital and diverse field of study. It continues to challenge societal norms and provide a platform for voices that have historically been silenced. As literary scholar Michelle Sauer poignantly observes, 'Queer literature reflects the ongoing struggle for recognition and equality, while also celebrating the richness of LGBTQ+ experiences' (Sauer, 2007). As the field continues to grow, it offers new opportunities for exploring the complexities of identity, desire, and the human experience.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to analyze how works like Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* and Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty*, as well as films like *J. Edgar* and *The*

Imitation Game', portray LGBTQ+ identities, focusing on the complexities of identity, societal pressures, and personal struggles. It also aims to assess the role of queer narratives in challenging societal norms. The study seeks to evaluate how the representation of queer characters and stories in literature and cinema influences cultural perceptions and contributes to broader discussions on identity, acceptance, and visibility.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study will use a qualitative approach, combining textual analysis and film analysis within a comparative framework. The study will conduct close readings of *'Middlesex'* and *'The Line of Beauty'*, alongside critical film analysis of *'J. Edgar'* and *'The Imitation Game'*. The focus will be on identifying key themes related to gender and sexual identity, and the narrative strategies used to depict these in both mediums. The analysis will be guided by queer theory, particularly Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity and Michel Foucault's ideas on biopolitics, to understand how these narratives construct and deconstruct identities. The findings from the textual and film analyses will be compared to highlight similarities and differences in how queer identities are represented, offering insights into the unique contributions of literature and cinema to the discourse on LGBTQ+ issues.

4. QUEER LITERATURE IN THE 21ST CENTURY: UNVEILING IDENTITY, DESIRE, AND REPRESENTATION

Queer literature has undergone significant transformation over the years, with the 21st century marking a pivotal era in its evolution. The portrayal of LGBTQ+ characters, themes, and narratives in literature has expanded, reflecting the growing recognition and acceptance of diverse sexual identities. This detailed study explores the key developments in queer literature in the 21st century, focusing on the works of influential authors, the thematic concerns they address, and the critical discourse surrounding these narratives.

4.1 The Emergence of 21st Century Queer Fiction

The turn of the 21st century witnessed an increased visibility of queer narratives in mainstream literature. Authors like Jeffrey Eugenides and Alan Hollinghurst emerged as significant figures in this literary movement, with their works exploring complex themes of gender identity, sexuality, and the sociopolitical dynamics of queer lives. Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* (2002) is a landmark novel that delves into the life of Cal Stephanides, an intersex individual navigating the challenges of identity and societal expectations. The novel, which won the Pulitzer Prize, blends elements of a family saga with the protagonist's personal journey of self-discovery. Eugenides was inspired to write about an intersex protagonist after reading Herculine Barbin's memoir, which he found overly vague, prompting him to create a more detailed narrative that reflects contemporary times (Eugenides, 2002). The novel's exploration of intersex identity is both poignant and thought-provoking, raising questions about the biological and social constructions of gender.

Similarly, Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* (2004) offers a nuanced portrayal of gay life in 1980s Britain, set against the backdrop of political conservatism

and the AIDS crisis. Hollinghurst's narrative is not only a reflection on homosexuality and heterosexuality in mainstream society but also a meditation on the aesthetics of beauty, as suggested by the novel's title. The protagonist, Nick Guest, navigates his identity as a gay man within the privileged but hypocritical world of the British elite. The novel's interplay of politics, sexuality, and aesthetics makes it a seminal work in queer literature.

4.2 Gender Identity and the Body in *Middlesex*

Middlesex is not just a story of personal identity but also an exploration of the intersections between biology, culture, and politics. Cal's journey from being Calliope, a girl unaware of her intersex condition, to becoming Cal, a man who embraces his identity, is framed by the complexities of gender and sexual categorization. The novel begins with the famous line, "I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August 1974" (Eugenides, 2002, p. 3). This opening sets the tone for the novel's exploration of identity as fluid and multifaceted. Eugenides weaves together Cal's family history, which includes themes of immigration, incest, and genetic inheritance, to illustrate how identity is shaped by both personal and historical factors. The novel's treatment of intersex identity challenges the binary understanding of gender, prompting readers to reconsider societal norms around sex and sexuality. Critics have noted that the novel's portrayal of Cal's intersex body serves as a metaphor for the broader issues of biopolitics, where identity is constantly being naturalized, deconstructed, and resigned.

4.3 Aesthetics and Queer Desire in *The Line of Beauty*

Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty* is a richly layered novel that intertwines the personal with the political, reflecting on the nature of beauty and desire within the context of 1980s Britain. The novel is structured around the protagonist Nick Guest's experiences as a gay man in a society that is both fascinated by and fearful of homosexuality. Hollinghurst's narrative draws heavily on the aesthetic theories of Henry James and William Hogarth, particularly the concept of the 'line of beauty,' an 'S' shaped curve that symbolizes liveliness and aesthetic pleasure. The novel's exploration of queer desire is intricately linked to its aesthetic concerns. Nick's relationships, particularly with characters like Leo and Wani, are depicted with a focus on the beauty and tragedy inherent in gay love. Hollinghurst's portrayal of Nick's unrequited love for Toby, a heterosexual friend, highlights the tension between desire and social reality, a theme that is central to the novel. As Hollinghurst notes in a 2005 interview, *The Line of Beauty* is 'a book about decadence. It is about the lure of the aesthetic life, but also its dangers' (Hollinghurst, 2005).

4.4 Biopolitics and Resignification in Queer Narratives

Both *Middlesex* and *The Line of Beauty* engage with the concept of biopolitics, where the body becomes a site of political and social control. In *Middlesex*, Cal's intersex body is subject to medical scrutiny and societal expectations, reflecting the disciplining effect of biopower, as described by Michel Foucault. The novel's split narration between Callie and Cal mirrors the tension between social identity

and biological reality, underscoring the fluidity of gender and the possibility of resignification. Judith Butler's theory of performativity, as discussed in her seminal work *Gender Trouble* (1990), is also relevant to the understanding of gender in *Middlesex*. Butler argues that gender is not a stable identity but rather a set of repeated acts that constitute the illusion of a coherent gender identity. This concept is evident in Cal's journey, where the protagonist's gender identity is constantly being renegotiated in response to societal pressures and personal realizations. In *The Line of Beauty*, the politics of desire are intertwined with the politics of power. The novel's depiction of the 1980s gay scene, with its urban club culture, civil rights protests, and the looming threat of AIDS, reflects the biopolitical control exerted over queer bodies. Nick's experiences highlight the precariousness of queer identity in a society that simultaneously commodifies and marginalizes it.

4.5 The Role of Queer Literature in Contemporary Discourse

Queer literature in the 21st century has played a crucial role in expanding the boundaries of literary studies and cultural discourse. Authors like Eugenides and Hollinghurst have not only brought queer narratives into the mainstream but have also challenged readers to reconsider their assumptions about gender, sexuality, and identity. Their works offer a critical lens through which to view the ongoing struggles for recognition and equality faced by LGBTQ+ individuals. As the field of queer literature continues to grow, it offers new opportunities for exploring the complexities of human experience. The diverse representations of queer identities in contemporary fiction reflect the richness of LGBTQ+ lives and contribute to a more inclusive understanding of the world.

5. QUEER CINEMA: EXPLORING IDENTITY, REPRESENTATION, AND THE POLITICS OF VISIBILITY

Queer cinema has long been a critical space for exploring the complexities of LGBTQ+ identities, challenging societal norms, and providing visibility to marginalized communities. The films within this genre not only entertain but also engage in powerful dialogues about gender, sexuality, and the politics of representation. This detailed analysis delves into the evolution of queer cinema, focusing on significant films like *J. Edgar* and *The Imitation Game*, and how they depict queer identities and the challenges associated with them.

5.1 The Evolution of Queer Cinema

Queer cinema has evolved significantly since its inception, moving from underground films to mainstream cinema. Initially, LGBTQ+ themes were often hidden or coded due to censorship laws and societal taboos. However, as social attitudes have changed, queer cinema has become more visible and explicit in its portrayal of LGBTQ+ lives. The evolution of queer cinema has been marked by a growing complexity in the representation of queer characters and themes. Early films often depicted LGBTQ+ individuals as tragic or villainous, reflecting the prejudices of the time. In contrast, contemporary queer cinema seeks to portray the diversity of LGBTQ+ experiences, often highlighting the struggles for acceptance and the quest for identity in a heteronormative world.

5.2 *J. Edgar: The Ambiguity of Identity and Power*

Directed by Clint Eastwood, *J. Edgar* (2011) is a biographical drama that explores the life of J. Edgar Hoover, the controversial and enigmatic founder of the FBI. The film delves into Hoover's complex personality, particularly focusing on his ambiguous sexuality and the impact it had on his life and career. Leonardo DiCaprio's portrayal of Hoover reveals a man torn between his public persona and his private desires. The film hints at Hoover's possible homosexuality, particularly through his close relationship with Clyde Tolson, his longtime companion and second in command at the FBI. Their relationship, which remains ambiguous throughout the film, reflects the secrecy and repression that defined Hoover's personal life. Eastwood describes the film as a love story rather than a political profile, highlighting the emotional depth and inner turmoil of its protagonist. Hoover's relationship with his mother, played by Judi Dench, is also central to the film. The character of Annie Hoover embodies the societal pressures and internalized homophobia that influenced Hoover's life. In one poignant scene, she tells her son, "I would rather have a dead son than a daffodil for a son" a statement that underscores the intense stigma attached to homosexuality during Hoover's time. The film's depiction of Hoover's sexuality is not explicit but rather suggested through his actions and relationships. This ambiguity mirrors the real-life rumours and speculations about Hoover's sexuality, which remain a subject of debate among historians. Some, like Anthony Summers, author of *Official and Confidential: The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover*, argue that Hoover was likely homosexual but deeply closeted due to the societal and political climate of the time.

5.3 *The Imitation Game: Alan Turing and the Tragedy of Secrecy*

The Imitation Game (2014), directed by Morten Tyldum, tells the story of Alan Turing, the brilliant mathematician and cryptanalyst who played a crucial role in breaking the Nazi Enigma code during World War II. Turing's contributions to the war effort and the field of computer science are monumental, yet his life was marred by the persecution he faced due to his homosexuality. Benedict Cumberbatch's portrayal of Turing captures the complexities of a man who was both a genius and a social outcast. The film depicts Turing's struggle with his sexual identity in an era when homosexuality was criminalized in Britain. Despite his groundbreaking work, Turing was convicted of 'gross indecency' in 1952, a charge that led to his chemical castration and ultimately, his tragic death. The film not only highlights Turing's intellectual achievements but also the deep personal pain caused by his persecution. His relationship with Christopher Morcom, his childhood friend and first love, is portrayed as a formative experience that influenced his later work and his views on life and death. The film suggests that Turing's love for Morcom was a source of inspiration, driving him to pursue his groundbreaking work in cryptography and artificial intelligence. One of the central themes of *The Imitation Game* is the idea of secrecy and the consequences of living a life in hiding. Turing's work on breaking codes parallels his need to conceal his own identity. The title of the film refers to a game Turing devised to determine whether a machine could imitate human intelligence, but it also serves as a metaphor for the act of hiding one's true self in a world that demands conformity.

5.4 Gender Performance and the Politics of Queer Visibility

Both *J. Edgar* and *The Imitation Game* explore the concept of gender performance, a theme central to queer theory. Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity, which suggests that gender is not a fixed identity but rather a series of actions and behaviors that are socially regulated, is relevant to the experiences of both Hoover and Turing. In *J. Edgar*, Hoover's public persona as a tough, law-abiding director of the FBI is at odds with his private life, where he possibly struggled with his sexual identity. His need to maintain a certain image in the public eye can be seen as a form of gender performance, where he conforms to societal expectations to avoid suspicion and scandal. This is evident in his interactions with Tolson and his mother, where he suppresses his true feelings and desires to uphold his public image. Similarly, in *The Imitation Game*, Turing's engagement with Joan Clarke, despite his homosexuality, can be seen as an attempt to conform to societal norms. Joan's acceptance of Turing's sexuality and her willingness to continue their engagement highlights the tension between societal expectations and personal identity. Turing's life becomes a tragic illustration of the consequences of living a life dictated by the need to conform to heteronormative standards.

CONCLUSION: THE IMPACT OF QUEER LITERATURE AND QUEER CINEMA

Queer literature and cinema in the 21st century have become pivotal in reshaping societal attitudes toward LGBTQ+ identities, offering both visibility and validation to those historically marginalized. The powerful narratives found in works like Jeffrey Eugenides' *Middlesex* and Alan Hollinghurst's *The Line of Beauty*, as well as films such as *J. Edgar* and *The Imitation Game*, provide critical insights into the complexities of gender, sexuality, and identity. These narratives not only reflect the ongoing struggles for acceptance and equality but also serve as tools for social change by challenging deeply ingrained heteronormative norms. In recent years, the global conversation around LGBTQ+ rights has intensified. For instance, the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2020, which ruled that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act protects employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, has underscored the importance of legal recognition and protection for LGBTQ+ individuals. Additionally, the growing visibility of queer narratives in mainstream media has coincided with increased public support for LGBTQ+ rights, as reflected in a 2021 Gallup poll, where 70% of Americans expressed support for same-sex marriage, up from 27% in 1996.

Queer literature and cinema play a crucial role in fostering this cultural shift by providing audiences with narratives that humanize and normalize LGBTQ+ experiences. These stories enable a broader audience to empathize with the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, thereby reducing prejudice and promoting inclusivity. Moreover, by representing a diverse range of queer identities and experiences, these narratives challenge the simplistic or stereotypical portrayals of LGBTQ+ people that have often dominated mainstream media. The impact of queer literature and cinema extends beyond individual understanding and into the realm of social policy and community building. As these narratives become more prevalent, they have the potential to influence public discourse and policy, encouraging governments and

institutions to adopt more inclusive practices. For instance, the representation of queer characters in media has been linked to increased support for LGBTQ+ rights among viewers, highlighting the potential for these stories to contribute to societal change. Moreover, the inclusion of queer narratives in education and media can significantly impact younger generations, fostering an environment of acceptance and understanding. By integrating queer literature and cinema into school curriculums and public media, society can promote a more inclusive culture where individuals of all gender identities and sexual orientations feel seen and valued. This, in turn, can reduce the stigma and discrimination that LGBTQ+ individuals often face, leading to a more equitable society.

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Rhetoric on Human Rights Violation Against LGBTQ+ Community: A Study in India

Dr. Keshabananda Borah

ABSTRACT

The LGBTQ+ people are one of the most marginalized community in Indian society. The genesis of this issue lies in the discrimination and social stigma in society that results in exclusion of them from a socio-political spectrum of society. The human rights violation of LGBTQ+ people is prevalent in the family, educational institutions, workplace, law enforcement institutions, police, media, polity and society to a large extent. In this article, the author based on the secondary sources of literature explains the victimization and sufferings of LGBTQ+ people in India from social, political, economic, religious and legal perspectives. The researcher observes that their only solution lies in the adoption of an inclusive approach and comprehensive reform to integrate them as an important part of mainstream society.

Keywords: LGBTQ+, Rights, Discrimination, Social Taboos and Inclusiveness.

INTRODUCTION

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) assures a world where everyone is born free and enjoys equal dignity and rights. Yet, it is indeed a shallow promise to those who belong to LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ)) (Kaur 2016). The rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) became the centre of attention and debate in the 21st Century. The LGBTQ communities are confronting social, economic and legal challenges as this community does not fall into the

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general people. They are different because their sexual orientation is different from the common men. The terminology 'LGBTQ' is perceived by society to denote different factions of people. For instance, 'L' stands for 'Lesbian' means emotional or sexual attraction of women to other women. 'G' stands for "Gay" and refers to that category of men who are emotionally or sexually attracted to another man. 'B' stands for 'Bisexual' which means a person who is sexually attracted to more than one gender i.e. men and women. Again 'T' stands for 'Transgender' means those people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, someone who is assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a man is a transgender man. Similarly, someone assigned male at birth who identifies as a woman is a transgender woman and the last form i.e. 'Q' stands for 'Queer' which is an inclusive term used to describe sexual orientations and gender identities that fall outside of heterosexual and cisgender norms. People who identify as queer may not fit neatly into traditional categories like "gay," "lesbian," "bisexual," or "transgender." Because of its flexibility, "queer" is often used as an umbrella term to represent a wide range of identities within the LGBTQ+ spectrum. The "+" in 'LGBTQ' represents the inclusion of a wide range of identities beyond "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual," "transgender," and "queer." It acknowledges that gender and sexual identities are diverse and fluid, and not everyone fits into the more commonly recognized categories. The "+" signifies inclusivity and encompasses other identities such as Asexual, Pansexual, Non-binary, intersex and two-spirit (Sharma 2021). The "+" allows for the representation of all sexual and gender identities, acknowledging that human identity and attraction exist on a spectrum. On account of their different sexual orientation, LGBTQ+ people are often subjected to discrimination in different spheres of life despite the Supreme Court and high court judgement. For instance, in the historic judgement of the Supreme Court of India, *Navtej Singh Johar vs. Union of India* (2018) abolished Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and decriminalized consensual same-sex relations among adults in India. But, still LGBTQ+ community living as a vulnerable group in Indian society. Public discussion on homosexuality in Indian society is not open due to the belief that sexuality is a private sphere of life. However, the attitudes of people on LGBTQ+ issues have slightly shifted recently. The study on LGBTQ+ issues falls under 'Queer theory' a theory based on post-colonial studies that aim to look at the construction of sexuality in the discourse of law, religion and medicine, the representation of gays or lesbians in a public forum, hidden history of homosexuality, their discrimination and deprivation. The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) creates a set of global goals to end poverty and inequality by 2030, equality group includes the rights and needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people to be taken into account¹. It affirms the ideology of 'leave no one behind' and thus tries to promote and preserve LGBTQ+ rights.

ANALYSING LGBTQ RIGHTS FROM RELIGIOUS AND LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

In India, no systematic procedure is followed to collect data on the LGBTQ+ community. Moreover, the census data for 2011 did not accurately mention the

1 The Sustainable development goal and LGBT inclusion. Available at- <https://ocm.iccrom.org/documents/sustainable-development-goals-and-lgbt-inclusion>. Accessed on 22nd April, 2024.

numbers of LGBTQ+ people (Gaur et al. 2023). Besides, individuals are hesitant to disclose their identities as LGBTQ+ community due to social stigma, deprivation, fear of rejection and sociocultural biases. However, in a report published by National Aids Control Organization (NACO), there are 2.5 million homosexual males in India.²

From a social and legal perspective; LGBTQ rights are usually regarded as human rights but religious beliefs and social practices significantly influence LGBTQ rights. The perception of social acceptance of the LGBTQ community is varied depending on each religious tradition, values and practices. Some religions regard this as vice whereas others consider it as a normal phenomenon. For instance, as a reformist and reconstructionist movement, many branches of Judaism support LGBTQ rights. They allowed same-sex marriage and the Jewish Movement (1977) withdrew the decriminalization of homosexual acts between consenting adults. The United Church of Christ (UCC) Protestant domination in the United States in 2005 supports 'marriage equality and LGBTQ rights that span back more than forty years'³. Likewise, the Unitarian Universalism Association (UAA), a religious organization in the United States first officially opposed the discrimination inflicted on homosexuality. The Unitarian Universalism Association (UAA) states, 'We not only open our doors to people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, we value diversity of sexuality and gender and see it as a special gift'⁴. On the contrary to this, some religions have opposed the acceptance of LGBTQ rights. For instance, in many Islamic countries such as Iraq, Kuwait, Egypt, Oman, Syria and UAE same-sex relations are considered as 'haram' (forbidden). Based on the interpretation of the Quran and Hadith; it is punishable by death in some countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. In Yemen and the Gaza Strip punishment is different from imprisonment to death (Glas and Spierings 2021). However, there are some progressive Muslims who have continuously raised their voice for the inclusion of LGBTQ rights. For instance, Imam Daayiee Abdullah the director of MEECA Institute who is a prime advocate of progressive and Islamic education emphasises the inclusion of LGBTQ+ rights within Islam. He states Quran can be interpreted in a way that supports LGBTQ rights. Khalid EI-Rouayheb is a well-known scholar in Islamic history and thought who has extensively written on the phenomenon of homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic world. In his book on 'Homosexuality in Arab-Islamic World', he challenges the traditional Islam orthodoxy which typically opposes homosexuality. The renowned Malaysian-American activist and founder of Muslim for Progressive Values (MPV) a global organization that protects and promotes human rights including LGBTQ rights from an Islamic perspective. These examples reveal how individual leaders and organizations irrespective of their religion consistently advocate for evolving an inclusive understanding of Islam where LGBTQ are welcomed and protected.

2 India has 2.5m gays, government tells Supreme Court. Available at- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-17363200#:~:text=There%20are%20about%202.5%20million,of%20gay%20sex%20in%20India..> Accessed on 3rd September, 2024.

3 Marriage Equality and LGBTQ rights. Available at- https://www.ucc.org/marriage_equality_and_lgbtq_rights/. Accessed on 21st March, 2024.

4 Stances of faiths on LGBTQ+ issues: Unitarian Universalist Association. Available at- <https://www.hrc.org/resources/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-unitarian-universalist-association>. Accessed on 25th March, 2024.

In Indian religious culture, homosexuality has never been considered a crime. This is not regarded as a crime in any Smriti. For instance, Lord Ayyappa was born of Hari-Hara (Vishnu & Shiva). In Mahabharat, we have seen characters like Shikhandi, Chitrangada and Babruvahana who demonstrate a range of sexual orientations and gender identities. These characters have been respected from then to now and they are assessed on their ability rather than sexual orientation or gender perspective.⁵ The homosexuality practice was also present in the sculptures of Ajanta and Ellora caves. The concepts 'Tritiyaprakriti' and 'Napumsaka' were recognized in Hindu mythology, folklore and Vedic literature with dignity and honesty. The 'Mohini' character, the female incarceration of Lord Vishnu in the epic Mahabharata portrays the earliest examples of transgender in Hindu Mythology (Barman 2024). The same-sex relationship is also acknowledged in ancient texts like the *Kama Sutra*. During the Mughal period, transgender people occupied a prominent position in the Mughal administration and they played the role of political adviser to the Mughal empire. Malik Kafur was one of the notable transgender figures who was referred to as "Hijra" and served as a military general under Alauddin Khilji of the Delhi Sultanate.

From a legal perspective, although a decade back section 377 IPC, 1860 contains engaging sexual intercourse with the same community considered 'against the order of nature' it had no scientific base. Homosexuality is a natural order and it is found among 1500 species. A major question arises, if it is prevalent in 1500 species in the world then why it should not exist in a single species i.e. in human beings? In *Navtej Singh Johar vs. Union of India* (2018), the honourable Supreme Court of India ruled that abrogation of homosexuality is a violation of fundamental rights to equality (Article 14), right to privacy (Article 21) and non-discrimination (Article 15). Non-recognition of LGBTQ rights is an attack on their dignity and therefore they should be allowed to choose their partners. The *National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) vs. Union of India* (2014) has recognized the rights of transgender and asked the government to take appropriate action to recognize their rights and to provide other basic amenities such as the right to education, employment and health care. The Supreme Court ruled that the non-recognition of their identities is a violation of Articles 14, 15, 16 and 21 of the Indian constitution. The Supreme Court further ordered to treat them as 'third gender' and they shall be included in the economically and socially backward class and they will receive reservation in education and employment. The court clearly states that depending on one person's birth and gender there should not be any controversy and instead of adopting 'treatment of the abnormality'; the prime focus should be on 'resolving distress over a mismatch.' The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019 has allowed transgender people to change their gender identity; however, it can be done after proof of sex reassignment surgery certified by a district magistrate.

Regarding the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, the Indian constitution is 'sex blind' i.e. it believes in 'equality before law and equal protection of law' and that is ensured through Article 14. Likewise, Article 19(1) provides freedom of speech

5 Half policy Brief: Hindu Teachings inclusive of LGBT people. Available at- <https://www.hinduamerican.org/press/haf-policy-brief-hindu-teachings-inclusive-lgbt-people>. Accessed on 25th March, 2024.

and expression, Article (21) ensures the dignity of all persons, and Articles 15 (1), 15 (2) and 16 (2) prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex. The beneficiary of fundamental rights as incorporated in Part-III of the Indian constitution from (12-35) are identified as 'person' or 'citizen'. By implies that the LGBTQ+ community are also human beings; therefore, they should not be denied from availing all rights as guaranteed for the same. The Citizenship Act of India, 1955 does not lay down any pre-condition for sex or gender identity to avail Indian citizenship. The Registration of Birth and Death Act, of 1969 does not consider 'sex' or 'gender' as a person to be registered in case of birth and death. In the context of inclusion of this community to the mainstream society the Naz Foundation Vs NCT of Delhi holds, '*Where society can display inclusiveness and understanding, such persons can be assured of a life of dignity and non-discrimination. It cannot be forgotten that discrimination is the antithesis of equality and that it is the recognition of equality which will foster the dignity of every individual*'⁶. The Twelfth five-year plan of India (2012-2017) emphasised the adoption of an 'inclusive approach' for the overall development of all sections of people in society. Inclusivity for the twelfth five-year plan encompasses broadly the SC, ST, OBC, women, minorities and other marginalised groups. LGBTQ+ people as a marginalized group should be included under the broad parameters of 'equity for development' logic.

In the international context, countries like the USA, Argentina, Australia and Canada have passed important legislation for the protection of the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. For instance, the Private Members Bill (2011) in Canada, the Federal Employment and Non-discrimination Act (2013) in the USA, the Sex Discrimination Amendment (sexual orientation, Gender identity and inter-sex status) Bill (2013) in Australia and the same-sex marriage legislation (2010) in Argentina. On account of the impact of this significant legislation, people have begun to celebrate today the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia and we recall May 17, 1990, to commemorate the decision taken by the World Health Organization (WHO) to remove homosexuality from its list of mental illness.⁷

CHALLENGES OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

Having been passed numerous Supreme Court and high court judgments although homo-sexuality is decriminalized but same-sex marriage is still observed as an illegal affair. The Delhi High Court on 25 February 2021 ruled that marriage can be allowed between biological men and women. In India, the Special Marriage Act and other personal laws do not recognize marriage rights of the same gender. The Hindu Marriage Act, of 1955 and the Special Marriage Act (1954) do not recognize the same-sex union. Even LGBTQ+ people can adopt children as single parents but same-sex couples are not jointly allowed to adopt a child. This is one of the major ethical and social challenges of the LGBTQ+ community. Likewise, the Honourable Supreme Court of India after hearing a public interest Litigation (PIL) on 5th March 2021 has banned transgender and

6 160 Delhi law times 277.

7 The Long road to LGBT equality in India. Available at- <https://www.undp.org/india/blog/long-road-lgbt-equalityindia#:~:text=In%20April%202014%2C%20the%20Supreme,the%20Section%20377%20judgment%20review..> Accessed on 27th March, 2024.

gay persons from donating blood due to their high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS infection. Various petitions have been filed to redress their grievances but it is yet to be passed by the parliament. But it is not true that the government has done nothing for LGBTQ people but whatever the acts have passed; they are unable to address their woes completely. For instance, in 2019 the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act was passed by the parliament and act provided educational, employment and healthcare facilities to transgender persons so that they could face any discrimination. But now, it only remains on paper and is criticised as a 'certificate of identity' to officially recognize one's gender which happens through an order issued by the district magistrate. The act has failed to adequately address the issues encountered by the transgender community. The *Puttaswamy Vs. Union of India* (2017) case, the Supreme Court ruling on 'privacy is a fundamental right' paved the way for the decriminalization of homosexuality and allowed them to make personal decisions about their sexual orientation.

The LGBTQ+ people do not possess spousal benefits like inheritance of property and another financial benefits from tax laws or pension schemes. For instance, the Hindu Succession Act, of 1956 talks about the purposes of inheritance for both joint and separate property but it does not talk about the inheritance of property rights for LGBTQ. This is a clear violation of Article 15 of the Indian constitution i.e. prohibition of discrimination on the ground of sex. But later on, section 24 to section 26 of the 1956 Act, lay down the cause for disqualification of a person from parental inheritance of property. The act specifically points out that the word 'person' has a wider connotation because it not just includes males and females but also transgender. Therefore, disqualifying a transgender based on sex to avail of parental property is against the equality before the law as per section 28 of the 1956 Act.

The LGBTQ+ people are easy targets of hate crime and they are exploited verbally, emotionally and physically. Some studies reveal that LGBTQ+ people conceal their sexual orientation on account of being discriminated against in society. Despite having laws, LGBTQ+ people in India have been facing discrimination in the workplace. In India, broadly 5 to 10 per cent of working people fall under the LGBTQ+ community (Bagdi & Sharma 2019). They are forced to leave their job and are often paid less than their co-workers (Singh & Chatterjee 2019). Many surveys reveal the high rate of discrimination against LGBTQ+ people. Singh and Chatterjee (2019) in their studies showed that LGBTQ+ people were forced to quit their jobs once when their organization came to know that these people have same-sex orientation. In their study, it is found that 44% of LGBTQ+ people are fired from the organization and this ratio is competitively higher for the transgender who constitutes 67%. Not only this, there are many glaring examples of this, where workplace discrimination is inflicted on LGBTQ+ people. For instance, Chetan Sharma, a gay person in Gurgaon has faced severe workplace discrimination after knowing his sexual orientation. He was subjected to bullying and harassment by his co-workers. In *Clare vs. Fairburn t/a The Old Rectory Nursing Home* (1997 ET) case Ms Clare alleged that she had not been selected for the post of Assistant in the office because she was a transexual person. A study conducted by Social Science Research Network in April (2022) reveals that in the US; students who have passed their graduation and engage as workers and who self-identify as LGBTQ+ earn less than 22 per

cent than heterosexual people⁸. The UK government invites less than 5 per cent of applicants for interviews from the LGBTQ+ community than heterosexual people. During 2020-2021, in the US 1:10 LGBTQ+ people faced workplace discrimination over a job, plague at work, were denied promotion, not invited to the company's events⁹. Bagdi and Sharma (2019) in their study explain how LGBTQ+ people are paid less than people belonging to the heterosexual community. They added large population of transgender are unemployed or paid less.

LGBTQ+ people are highly subjected to suffering from different mental health complications. They are experiencing a higher risk of mental depression and anxiety on account of social stigma, rejection and discrimination. Their stress is also related to the non-recognition of their sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBTQ+ youth have a higher rate of suicidal death than their heterosexual or cisgender peers. A survey conducted with LGBTQ+ people in Canada, Mexico, Miami and Israel revealed that female sex workers who identify as LGBTQ+ have poor mental health in comparison to female sex workers who do not identify as sexual minorities. Besides they have a very bad history in early childhood and faced mental trauma (Cwikel et al; 2004). LGBTQ+ people are easy victims of bullying at their school which results in higher levels of absenteeism and poor academic records and health outcomes (Gilbert 2018). A study conducted by the National School of Climate Survey in 2011 reveals that 89 per cent of self-identified pupils are bullied at school in comparison to heterosexual students whereas in Tennessee 98 per cent of students have experienced being bullied at school (Street 2016). In India, lack of parental support and cooperation, hostile or abusive peers and non-adjustable school environments are some of the prime reasons for LGBTQ+ children having higher dropout rates in school (The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2013). In 2019, the Human Resource Development Ministry, Government of India revealed that other than Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) with an enrolment of 814 transgender students, no other central universities reported having transgender students and teaching staff. Despite the persistent effort of UGC to include LGBTQ+ in higher education, grant scholarships and research projects but still a huge gap in practical implementation (Ganguli 2023).

In India, the lack of civil space and their poor political representation pose a big challenge to expand their rights and fulfil their demand. The sectarian religious belief, social taboos and lack of political support narrowed down their scope to participate in active politics (Arun 2015). The first entry of transgender people in Indian politics can be observed in the Assembly Election of Madhya Pradesh in 1998 where Shabnam 'Mausi' was elected as the first trans-women MLA. After two decades, in the Kerala Assembly poll in March 2021, Anannyah Kumari Alex was chosen as the first transgender candidate in Kerala but she quit her candidature soon due to allegations parties of gender discrimination, stigmatization and harassment¹⁰. However, in the 2019 parliamentary election, the 'third gender' voters increased up to 45 per cent since 2014 but their

8 The Big LGBTQ+ wage gap problem. Available at- <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20220603-the-big-lgbtq-wage-gap-problem>. Accessed on 16th April, 2024.

9 Ibid.

10 Deconstructing Queer representation in Indian Politics. Available at- <https://www.cgapsouthasia.org/post/deconstructing-queer-representation-in-indian-politics>. Accessed on 20th April, 2024.

representation is observed miserably low. Since 1998, in 2015 Madhu Kinnar was elected as the first independent Dalit candidate as Mayor in the Municipal election of Chhattisgarh. Another major setback emerged in 2009 and 1999 when the court declared the victories of transgender people invalid as they had been elected in the post reserved for women.

The cases of blatant violation of the human rights of LGBTQ+ people in India can be noticed in the media and cases registered in the Supreme Court and High Court. The National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) also does not maintain any record of their infringement of rights. Hence, to a large extent, there is a lack of systematic evidence inflicting discriminatory attitudes by law enforcement agencies or any person against LGBTQ+ people. Research studies reveal that in most of the cases; the police atrocities on this minority community happen due to the dearth of knowledge of applicable legislation and sensitization of police (The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2013). In *Jayalakshmi vs. The State of Tamil Nadu*, Madras High court on 10th July, 2007; the petitioner of a young transgender named Pandian claimed that the victim had been interrogated by police and sexually harassed and abused by a police personnel for the cause of a theft. The victim later confessed that the torture was unbearable to him and might cause death. The Madras High Court ruled that the state government has to pay a compensation of five lakh rupees to the petitioner for the harassment inflicted on her brother Pandian.

In India, it is undeniable that the process of discrimination and sexual harassment of same-sex-oriented people begins at home. Parents are not ready to accept this hormonal issue of their children and force them to act contrary to their interests. Sometimes they are forced not to disclose their sexual identities and abused emotionally and physically. A study conducted by Swasti Health Resource Centre (2015) among 12 community organizations in five states (Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka) revealed that gay men who seek peer support are much safer than those living with their parents. More than half of man who face physical violence (52.4 per cent), sexual abuse (55 per cent) and emotional torture (46.5 per cent) still live with their parents.¹¹

CALL FOR AN 'HUMAN RIGHT BASED APPROACH' FOR LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY.

As the issues about LGBTQ+ are quite sensitive and hence only through holding an inclusive approach their issues can be redressed. The issues encountered by LGBTQ+ people should not be treated alone; they are human beings and therefore; whenever any initiative is taken to protect their rights it should be within the broad ambit of the society. LGBTQ+ people should be allowed to take part in the decision-making process and given free will so that they can share their opinions and accordingly, policies are framed. Instead of the 'Top-down approach' the 'Bottom-up approach' should be taken for the greater interest of the society.

Nonetheless to say that in India, as of now many NGOs and civil society organizations are coming out and providing their helping hand to protect

11 52 percent of the gay men without peer support suffer violence. Available at-<https://www.indiaspend.com/52-of-gay-men-without-peer-support-suffer-violence-65005/>. Accessed on 4th April, 2024.

the rights and welfare of LGBTQ+ people. To remove discriminatory practices against LGBTQ+ children in educational institutions, an NGO called 'Orinam' relentlessly working to build a convenient environment for LGBTQ+ children in Chennai. Among other activities, the NGO forms groups of transgender children, arrange film screenings, sets up the intellectual resource centre, increases library books and other audio-visual materials on LGBTQ+ issues, initiates policies to remove sexual harassment and bullying of children and arranges gender sensitization programmes. Even in some schools of Tamilnadu state, transgender counsellors are appointed to educate teachers and children. The Government of India, through the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 takes the initiative for character development and to build an inclusive school culture, particularly for vulnerable groups like LGBTQ+ (Ganguli 2023).

Under the 11th Five Years Plan (2007-2012), the Government of India introduced the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) and under this programme, the transgenders are given the opportunity for 100 days of assured employment. On 29th June 2008 for the first time in the history of India, homosexual people came out on the open street in four cities including Delhi, Bangalore, Puducherry and Kolkata and celebrated 'queer pride celebration.' In this context, Lesley Esteves, a travel journalist and queer activist said, 'Queer pride is a celebration. It's about loving who we are whether lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or hijra and affirming everyone's right to be respected for their own sexual choices.'¹²

In 2016, the Kerala government for the first time introduced free sex-reassignment surgery in the government hospital for transgender people.

SUGGESTION FOR A LGBTQ+ FRIENDLY SOCIETY

The Transgender Welfare Board should be revamped and the board should vibrantly work and introspect the issues of reasons why the LGBTQ+ community could not get the proper representation in the Indian Political system. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment constituted an expert committee on 23rd August 2013 at Shastri Bhawan to discuss the issues of the transgender community¹³. The expert committee report recommended to the election commission to replace the word 'other' with 'transgender', advise police to take appropriate action to stop abuse on them, customize community-friendly services to address health-related issues like Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Sex reassignment surgery (SRS), to uphold appropriate measure for their correct estimate of population, responsibility of district administration to address the issues of harassment, violence and other crisis, involvement of LGBTQ+ people to design programme for their own, to address their social needs like education, housing, livelihood and literacy programme. Besides, from the various national and international literature it is already observed that LGBTQ+ people face discrimination during childhood, and the school administration should deal with this issue sensitively. Depending on their age, they should be provided proper education via technical-non-technical, skilled and semi-skilled

12 Delhi gets its own queer pride. Available at- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/delhi-gets-its-own-queer-pride/articleshow/3152764.cms>. Accessed on 5th May, 2024.

13 Report of the expert committee on the issues relating to transgender persons. Available at- <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://socialjustice.gov.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/Binder2.pdf>. Accessed on 27th April, 2024.

education. The reservation of this community in employment will undoubtedly enhance their sense of independence. The government should take adequate steps to recognize transgender people in social entitlements like passports, bank accounts, driving licences and inheritance of family property. The NGOs and civil society organizations can render ample support to redress social, economic, political, and cultural issues of LGBTQ+ people. The awareness among people about this community is important because until or unless society is ready to accept them no legal sanction can bring this person to mainstream society. On the above of this, family acceptance is the first criterion. The very first sense of insecurity arises in the family hence family should provide utmost care and attention to nurture them. The parents, family members, and peers should be taught that discriminatory treatment of different sexually-orientated children will have far-reaching detrimental impacts on the child's future. Their emotional support and cooperation will inculcate a sense of self-confidence among them to live a healthy lifestyle and they will learn how to adjust to society. For this counselling and other health services are required for both parents and children. In this context, we can take the example of 'The Centre for Counselling in Chennai' and 'Swabhava' in Bangalore in active cooperation with the civil society organization working for the welfare of LGBTQ+ people. The 'Swabhava Trust' has been providing legal aid, health care facilities, financial assistance, counselling and support for LGBTQ+ people for the last 25 years¹⁴. Likewise, the counselling centres are also significant as they could help the parents and socially non-conformity children to erode their misconception about intersex variation, realize that these children are not alone; their parents are with them, realize that the non-conformity of these children are not the result of bad parenting and they can work together safely with other people in the society. Besides, Policy review and reforms are crucial to eliminate structural constraints and legal barriers (Raj 2019). To curb the police atrocities on LGBTQ+ people, proper training and sensitization programmes on LGBTQ+ people should be arranged for the police officials. The State Legal Service Authority (SLSA) and the District Legal Service Authority (DLSA) should be ready to provide free legal aid facilities to LGBTQ+ people to fight against their discrimination and violence.

CONCLUSION

In the 21st Century, in the age of human rights; people across the world are assertive towards the rights of different communities. Now, in terms of career opportunities, many companies have come forward to employ LGBTQ+ people. A survey conducted by Mingle in India shows that gay employee maintains and inculcate a higher trust towards their employers and they try to engage in some entrepreneurial activity in future. Thus, to meet the challenges faced by these same-sex-oriented people; there is a need for synergy of effort from government, media, civil society and family. Besides, the court judgement on the protection of LGBTQ+ people is nothing but some resolutions only, but the ultimate responsibility lies on the society to accept them and to make them inclusive.

14 Contact these NGO's for LGBTQIA+ support. Available at- <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/karnataka/bengaluru/contact-these-ngos-for-lgbtqia-support-3071641>. Accessed on 28th April, 2024.

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LGBTQ+ Rights as Human Rights: The Legal Struggle and Social Reality in India

Dr. Bhupen Ghimirey

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines how LGBTQ+ rights intersect with human rights and community rights, focusing on theoretical frameworks and their practical applications in the Indian context. In order to emphasize how important it is to acknowledge the particular difficulties LGBTQ+ populations experience, the chapter will look at how human rights theory has evolved and how it applies to LGBTQ+ issues. The chapter will go over how addressing both individual and communal rights is essential to achieving true inclusion and equality. The function of legal frameworks, societal attitudes, and the necessity of integrated approaches that uphold community and human rights are important concerns. LGBTQ+ rights are becoming more widely acknowledged as being essential to the larger human rights framework. Human rights have historically prioritized the defence of the individual, but there is a rising understanding of the importance of addressing communal rights, especially for underrepresented groups like the LGBTQ+ community. Community rights here relate to an individual's rights as a member of a specific group, acknowledging their shared identity and experiences. The theoretical underpinnings of human rights and their applicability to LGBTQ+ concerns are examined in the first section of this chapter. It examines how these theoretical stances have changed over time to take into account the rights of underrepresented groups and how important this is for the LGBTQ+ community. After that, the conversation shifts to the Indian setting, where cultural acceptance is still low despite legal successes. The goal

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of this chapter is to offer a comprehensive view of how LGBTQ+ rights can be effectively realized as both human and community rights.

Keywords: LGBTQ+, Rights, Human Rights, Legal Framework, Societal Acceptance

*“We declare that human rights are for all of us, all the time: whoever we are and wherever we are from; no matter our class, our opinions, our sexual orientation.” —
Ban Ki-moon*

HUMAN RIGHTS IN INDIA

Due to India’s vast size and amazing diversity, its dual status as a developing nation and a sovereign, secular, democratic republic, as well as its past as a colonial colony, the country’s human rights situation is complicated. Freedom of religion is one of the Fundamental Rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. Additionally, clauses guarantee freedom of speech, the division of powers between the executive and judicial branches, and the right to travel both domestically and internationally. Members of the Dalit or Untouchable caste have allegedly faced and still face severe prejudice. This belief is frequently expressed, especially by Indian human rights organizations and activists.

Even though India has human rights issues, unlike other South Asian nations, the nation is not typically seen as having a problem with human rights. Based on these factors, Freedom House’s 2006 report *Freedom in the World* awarded India a political rights rating of two and a civil liberties rating of three, designating it as free.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How are LGBTQ+ rights understood and acknowledged as human rights as well as community rights shaped by theoretical ideas on human rights?
2. What are the main obstacles to the full implementation of LGBTQ+ rights in India that exist within the legal and social frameworks?
3. How can the larger framework of human rights in India be used to reinforce the acknowledgement and upholding of LGBTQ+ rights?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter utilises a qualitative research methodology that includes theoretical analysis, case studies, and a policy evaluation. The theoretical study will look at the evolution of human rights concepts and how they apply to LGBTQ+ situations. Case studies, notably from India, will demonstrate the actual application of these theoretical frameworks. The policy assessment will evaluate existing laws and policies in India about LGBTQ+ rights, with an emphasis on how they address or fail to address the confluence of community and human rights.

RESEARCH GAP

While there is a vast amount of literature on LGBTQ+ rights as human rights, there is a significant gap in research that examines these rights from a community viewpoint. Much of the current debate focuses on individual rights,

frequently ignoring the community components of LGBTQ+ identities. This chapter attempts to fill this vacuum by examining how recognising LGBTQ+ rights as community rights might supplement and improve the traditional human rights framework. The emphasis on the Indian context, where legal reforms are frequently prioritised over social approval, emphasises the need of this integrated approach.

NATURE OF THE STUDY

This exploratory and analytical study seeks to bridge the gap between academic perspectives and real applications of LGBTQ+ rights as community and human rights. By exploring the interconnectedness of these rights, the study hopes to provide a holistic picture of the difficulties and potential for promoting LGBTQ+ rights in India. The analysis aims to assist policymakers, activists, and scholars with useful findings.

MAIN DISCUSSION

The discussion section will focus on the following key areas:

In “The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1”, by Michel Foucault:

In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, Michel Foucault questions the widely held assumption, known as the “repressive hypothesis,” that sexuality has been restrained in modern Western civilisation. Rather than perceiving sexuality as suppressed, Foucault contends that the conversation about sex has increased since the 18th century. This intensification developed as a result of confessional procedures in religion, scientific studies, and social regulation, which scrutinised even mild sexual impulses. Foucault presents the concept of *scientia sexualis*, in which sexuality is examined scientifically and morally, altering personal identity and behaviour. He emphasises that power does not just suppress sexuality, but rather operates via it to shape societal norms and knowledge. Sexuality serves as a channel for power to enter family systems, with a focus on children, women, married couples, and the so-called “perverse.”

According to Foucault, the bourgeoisie used sexuality to safeguard their social class, viewing sexual deviance as a threat to their continued existence. Thus, he refutes the concept that power simply restricts, instead demonstrating how power exploits sexuality to spread and regulate social and familial institutions.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

Human rights in India have evolved over time, spanning ancient, mediaeval, and modern times, demonstrating the country’s long-standing commitment to human dignity. Dharma was emphasised in ancient Indian scriptures such as the Vedas, Upanishads, and epics like the Ramayana, which advocated for equality, dignity, and everyone’s well-being. Buddhist teachings and King Ashoka’s welfare state strengthened human rights ideals by emphasising freedom, nonviolence, and equality. During mediaeval India, the Mughal Empire presented problems, but Emperor Akbar’s religious tolerance policy, *Din-E-Ilahi*, encouraged social and religious rights. Despite regressive monarchs like Aurangzeb who limited freedoms, the Bhakti and Sufi movements, which emphasised love and devotion, aided in the advancement of human rights.

In modern India, the British committed serious violations of human rights during the colonial period. Following independence, the Indian Constitution contained Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles, which guaranteed freedom, equality, and social justice. Major international human rights accords, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (1976), have been integrated into Indian law. Notable judicial interpretations, such as *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* and *Naz Foundation v. Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi*, broadened the right to life to include privacy, dignity, and LGBTQ+ rights. Contemporary India continues to face issues such as domestic violence and free speech suppression, but it remains committed to reconciling traditional traditions with modern human rights principles.

EVOLUTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS THEORY

Discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' fundamental principles of human dignity, equality, and non-discrimination. Despite these ideals, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of prejudice are still pervasive. More than 60 countries still criminalise same-sex partnerships, with some imposing harsh penalties, including the death penalty. LGBTIQ+ people endure a variety of types of violence, marginalisation, and institutional discrimination, including medical abuses such as forced surgeries on intersex people. Transgender people are frequently targeted by laws that prohibit cross-dressing, heightening their vulnerability.

Under international human rights law, all nations are required to protect LGBTIQ+ individuals from assault, torture, and ill-treatment. States must also repeal discriminatory legislation and protect all individuals' rights to free expression, assembly, and association, including those of LGBTIQ+ people. Recent years have seen significant progress. Many states have decriminalised same-sex relationships, enacted anti-discrimination legislation, recognised same-sex partnerships, and granted legal recognition to gender identity. Global campaigns against harmful treatments, such as conversion therapy and surgery on intersex children without their consent, are also gaining steam. These accomplishments reflect a rising global commitment to LGBTIQ+ people's equality and dignity.

COMMUNITY RIGHTS VS. INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

Community rights and individual rights are two separate notions that frequently overlap but can also cause conflict. Individual rights refer to a person's freedoms and privileges, such as the right to free expression, privacy, and legal equality. In contrast, community rights emphasise a group's collective well-being, identity, and values, which are generally based on cultural, religious, or social norms. For LGBTQ+ people, the link between these two sorts of rights can be complicated. On the one hand, individual rights are critical for safeguarding LGBTQ+ people from discrimination and preserving their ability to express their identities. These rights allow people to live honest lives without fear of repercussions or persecution.

Community rights, on the other hand, can occasionally clash with individual rights, especially when cultural or religious organisations oppose LGBTQ+

identities because of shared values. In some circumstances, the emphasis on upholding communal customs might limit LGBTQ+ people's personal liberties, such as laws criminalising same-sex partnerships. However, there are some synergies. Stronger recognition of individual rights can result in more inclusive communities that value varied identities. Promoting both community and individual rights can lead to societies in which all members, including LGBTQ+ persons, can live with dignity and mutual respect.

LGBTQ+ RIGHTS IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

In India, LGBTQ+ rights have experienced tremendous legal progress in recent years. One of the most significant milestones was the *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* lawsuit in 2018. In this landmark decision, the Supreme Court of India struck down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, decriminalising same-sex relations. This colonial-era statute criminalised consenting homosexual acts, classifying them as "unnatural offences." The court concluded that Section 377 violated the Indian Constitution's fundamental rights to equality, privacy, and dignity. This ruling marked a significant step towards recognising the rights of LGBTQ+ people in India.

Another significant legal development was the *NALSA v. Union of India* lawsuit in 2014. In this decision, the Supreme Court recognised the rights of transgender people, referring to them as a "third gender." The court found that transgender persons had the right to self-identify their gender and ordered the government to provide them with legal protection, such as access to education, healthcare, and jobs. This decision was critical in protecting the rights and dignity of transgender people in India. Together, these decisions have created the groundwork for increased recognition and legal protection of LGBTQ+ rights in India, however, obstacles in social attitudes and full execution of these rights remain.

SOCIAL ATTITUDES AND BARRIERS

In societies where heterosexuality is the norm and homosexuality is considered deviant, LGBT people confront several difficulties. They face abuse and discrimination regularly. They are more prone than heterosexuals to face prejudice, harassment, and threats of violence because of their sexual orientation. In many countries, same-sex couples are denied the same legal rights as heterosexual couples, thereby excluding them from social safety systems such as healthcare and pensions. Many LGBT people feel driven to hide their gender identity for fear of losing their careers, resulting in low self-esteem. Parents of non-LGBT children frequently prevent interaction with LGBT youngsters, assuming they are behaving out of care. The lack of communication between LGBT children and their parents frequently results in family problems.

Many LGBT adolescents are incarcerated, placed in foster care, or forced to live on the streets. LGBT teenagers are more likely to suffer physical and mental health problems as they get older because they are rejected by their parents and carers. In certain circumstances, they use drugs or alcohol to deal with stress and feelings of loneliness. They are also frequent victims of hate crimes. In many nations, homosexuality is still illegal, punishable by imprisonment or penalties, and considered sinful under specific religious laws.

Intersectionality and the Dual Recognition of Rights:

Understanding intersectionality is crucial to comprehending the particular struggles that LGBTQ+ people confront because it sheds light on how a variety of identities, including gender, sexual orientation, class, and caste, overlap to influence their experiences. To address these complications, it is imperative to acknowledge not only the human rights but also the community rights of LGBTQ+ individuals since they are integral members of broader social, cultural, and economic communities. Additional layers of marginalisation frequently exacerbate their challenges.

Although legal changes in India have advanced the recognition of LGBTQ+ rights, persistent social issues still exist. As an illustration, the Navtej Singh Johar case (2018) decriminalised same-sex relationships, giving LGBTQ+ people a triumph in the legal system. Many still experience discrimination, though, in the healthcare system, the workplace, and society at large. Another significant court victory was the 2014 NALSA v. Union of India case, which upheld the rights of transgender individuals. This case gave transgender people the freedom to identify as their gender and the right to work and study. Even still, social stigma frequently stands in the way of these rights' complete realisation. Dalit gay activists who encounter both homophobia and caste-based prejudice are the subject of a case study that explores the relationship between caste and LGBTQ+ identity. Since upper-caste voices predominate in mainstream LGBTQ+ groups, they are frequently left out. This demonstrates the marginalisation that LGBTQ+ people can experience within their groups and highlights the importance of intersectional advocacy. Hijra communities, who have long experienced social exclusion, are the subject of another case. Even after their gender identification was officially recognised by law, hijras continue to face barriers to social security, work, and healthcare. Legal successes have not always been accompanied by societal acceptance, highlighting the distinction between human and community rights.

Addressing these challenges requires a dual approach: legal reforms to ensure equality and social efforts to change attitudes, making intersectionality crucial in advocating for the rights of all LGBTQ+ individuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTEGRATED APPROACHES

To strengthen the recognition of LGBTQ+ rights as both community and human rights, a combination of legal and policy reforms is needed. These reforms should address discrimination, social stigma, and gaps in legal protections while ensuring that LGBTQ+ individuals can exercise their rights freely in every sphere of life.

First and foremost, India needs a comprehensive anti-discrimination law that specifically addresses sex traits, gender identity, and sexual orientation. This bill should forbid discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in several areas, including employment, education, housing, and healthcare.

Second, although same-sex relationships were made less illegal by the Navtej Singh Johar ruling, marriage rights for LGBTQ+ couples are still unacknowledged. Enacting legislation allowing same-sex unions would grant LGBTQ+ couples the same inheritance, tax advantages, and adoption rights as heterosexual spouses.

Thirdly, even though transgender rights were acknowledged by the NALSA ruling, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019 still needs to be strengthened in its application. Affirmative action for transgender people should be the main emphasis of policy, encompassing employment, healthcare, and educational opportunities. Transgender individuals ought to have respectful and simple access to identification documents that correspond with their preferred gender. Fourth, those who identify as LGBTQ+ frequently cannot access assistance programmes like health insurance and pensions. Government programmes must be clearly inclusive, with specific consideration for LGBTQ+ individuals, guaranteeing them access to social security, healthcare, and housing benefits.

Finally, awareness efforts must be carried out at places of employment, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions to counteract societal stigma. Law enforcement, medical, and social worker training programmes can guarantee that LGBTQ+ people are treated without discrimination. India may endeavour to ensure that LGBTQ+ rights are respected as both community and human rights, promoting an inclusive and equitable society, by implementing these integrated legislative and policy reforms.

SOCIETAL ACCEPTANCE:

Several tactics can be used to advance public acceptance and comprehension of LGBTQ+ groups. One important factor is education. Including LGBTQ+ subjects in school curricula promotes an inclusive and respectful atmosphere in children from a young age. Teachers should be trained in these areas so they may correct students' misconceptions and foster understanding while handling the material sensitively and effectively. Campaigns to raise public awareness are yet another essential tactic. These campaigns can make use of print, social media, and television, among other media platforms, to dispel preconceptions, bring attention to LGBTQ+ concerns, and present inspiring tales. Celebrity support and prominent allies have the power to magnify these messages and increase their impact and relatability.

A big part of encouraging acceptance is played by workplaces as well. Gay and lesbian employees might feel appreciated and supported if diversity and inclusion initiatives are put in place. To guard against bias and harassment, anti-discrimination policies ought to be put in place and upheld. In addition to providing support for LGBTQ+ people, an inclusive workplace promotes equality and a respectful culture. To shape public opinion, media representation is crucial. Positive representations of LGBTQ+ people in films, TV series, and news articles help dispel preconceived notions and advance a more complex understanding of the lives of LGBTQ+ people. Media representation of LGBTQ+ people and topics that are courteous and accurate contributes to their normalisation. Equally significant are community-based endeavours.

Local events, workshops, and support groups can build networks of support and understanding within communities. The involvement of influential figures and community leaders in these initiatives can further drive acceptance and inclusion.

By combining educational efforts, public campaigns, workplace reforms, positive media representation, and community engagement, societal attitudes

towards LGBTQ+ communities can be significantly improved, leading to greater acceptance and respect.

RECENT HISTORIC MOVEMENT:

In a historic first, the Jharkhand government has appointed a transgender from West Singhbhum district as a community health officer. Amir Mahato was happy to get the appointment letter from Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Thursday. Mahato was one of the 365 applicants hired by the National Health Mission. She finished her nursing education at Sambalpur village. Mahato stated that financial limitations at home prevented her from pursuing her dream of becoming a nurse, despite her mother's wishes.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Because it bridges the gap between community and individual rights within the framework of LGBTQ+ rights, this chapter is important. The chapter offers a more comprehensive view of the difficulties experienced by LGBTQ+ people and communities by examining the interplay of these rights. More inclusive legislative frameworks and social policies—especially in the Indian context—are to be informed by the knowledge gathered from this study. Achieving true equality and social justice requires the simultaneous acceptance of LGBTQ+ rights as human rights and community rights.

ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Human dignity, equality, and universality are emphasised in theoretical viewpoints on human rights. These concepts influence how LGBTQ+ rights are viewed as essential human rights. LGBTQ+ rights are viewed as a component of the broader human rights framework rather than as distinct rights. This acknowledgement contributes to ensuring that LGBTQ+ people receive the same respect and equality as everyone else. By stressing both individual and collective rights, seeing LGBTQ+ rights as community rights also draws attention to the unique social and cultural requirements of the LGBTQ+ group.
2. Notwithstanding advancements in the law, such as the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 2018, India still has a long way to go before LGBTQ+ rights are completely implemented. Prejudice and social stigma are still pervasive, which results in discrimination in the workplace, the medical community, and the educational system. There isn't much anti-discrimination legislation protecting LGBTQ+ people legally, and changes to the law are happening slowly. The acknowledgement and implementation of these rights are further hampered by cultural conservatism and a dearth of all-encompassing legislative safeguards.
3. Legal reforms are required, including anti-discrimination laws and policies that address the needs of the LGBTQ+ community, to promote LGBTQ+ rights in India. Campaigns for public education and awareness help lessen stigma in society. These rights can be further advanced and more inclusive laws can be created by endorsing judicial activism and supporting LGBTQ+ organisations.

CONCLUSION

To promote an inclusive and just society, LGBTQ+ rights must be acknowledged as human rights as well as community rights. Significant progress has been made in the legal domain with the decriminalisation of same-sex relationships and the acknowledgement of transgender rights in India. To guarantee that LGBTQ+ people can fully use their rights without worrying about discrimination, however, these legislative reforms must be accompanied by a more significant societal transformation. Even while India has made progress in addressing LGBTQ+ rights, there are still issues that need to be resolved, such as ingrained societal prejudices, a lack of specific regulations, and inadequate legal protections. To get beyond these obstacles, a multifaceted strategy is required. Strong legislation changes, extensive public education efforts, and community empowerment programmes should all be a part of this strategy. These initiatives will aid in changing cultural perceptions, fostering understanding, and dismantling harmful stereotypes.

LGBTQ+ groups confront a variety of needs, and we can more successfully address them if we position LGBTQ+ rights within both community and human rights frameworks. To advance these rights and guarantee that LGBTQ+ people can live with justice, equality, and dignity, advocacy and reform must continue. A persistent commitment to legislative and societal reform is necessary to achieve full inclusion and acceptance. The goal is to create a society in which every person, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, can live freely from fear of prejudice or exclusion.

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Shades of Asexuality: Painting the Full Picture of Ace Identities

Disha

ABSTRACT

The chapter explores the spectrum of asexual identities within the LGBTQIA+ community, emphasising the diversity and complexity of asexuality. Asexuality, defined as the lack of sexual attraction, is a spectrum encompassing various identities such as aromantic asexuality, demisexuality, grey-asexuality, and aegosexuality. The study examines the distinct challenges faced by individuals within these identities, including societal misconceptions, marginalisation, and invisibility in both mainstream media and LGBTQIA+ advocacy. The intersectionality of asexuality with other social identities, such as race and gender, is also explored, highlighting how cultural contexts influence the perception and experience of asexuality. The role of romantic attraction in shaping relationships and the significance of queerplatonic partnerships are discussed, challenging traditional paradigms of intimacy. Furthermore, the chapter addresses the need for enhanced visibility, representation, and support for asexual individuals through educational initiatives, community-building, and media representation. This chapter underscores the importance of recognizing and validating the diverse experiences within the asexual spectrum, advocating for greater inclusivity and understanding in both academic and social discourses.

Keywords: Asexuality, Intersectionality, LGBTQIA+, Identity, Asexual Marginalisation.

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INTRODUCTION

Asexuality, a sexual orientation characterised by a lack of sexual attraction to others, has historically been overlooked and misunderstood within both societal and academic contexts. Despite its growing recognition as a legitimate identity within the LGBTQIA+ spectrum, asexuality remains marginalised, often dismissed as a temporary phase, a medical condition, or simply a lack of interest in relationships. This marginalisation is exacerbated by the pervasive societal norms that prioritise sexual attraction and romantic relationships as central to human experience, leaving asexual individuals grappling with invisibility and stigmatisation. Within the asexual community, there exists a diverse spectrum of identities, including aromantic asexuals, demisexuals, grey-asexuals, and aegosexuals, each with unique experiences and challenges. These identities challenge conventional understandings of attraction, intimacy, and relationships, underscoring the complexity and fluidity of human sexuality. The academic study of asexuality, although still emerging, has begun to shed light on these varied experiences, emphasising the importance of visibility and representation. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the diverse identities within the asexual spectrum, exploring the intersectionality of asexuality with other aspects of identity, such as race, gender, and cultural background. By examining the unique challenges faced by asexual individuals, particularly in navigating relationships and societal expectations, this chapter seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of asexuality. Furthermore, it highlights the critical need for increased representation and advocacy, both within the LGBTQIA+ community and in broader societal discourses, to ensure that asexual identities are recognized, respected, and supported. Through this exploration, the chapter aspires to foster greater awareness and inclusivity, challenging the misconceptions and biases that continue to marginalise asexual individuals.

UNDERSTANDING ASEXUALITY: DEFINITION AND KEY CONCEPTS

Asexuality is defined as the lack of sexual attraction to others, distinguishing it from celibacy, which is a choice to abstain from sexual activity (Rider, 2014). Asexual individuals, often referred to as “aces,” may experience varying levels of romantic attraction, emotional intimacy, and sexual desire, but do not feel sexual attraction towards any gender. This orientation exists on a spectrum, allowing for diverse experiences and expressions of asexuality. Importantly, asexuality is not synonymous with a lack of interest in relationships or intimacy; rather, it challenges the traditional link between sexual attraction and emotional connections (Yule et al., 2017). Asexuality is frequently misunderstood or dismissed due to prevailing societal norms that emphasise sexual attraction as a universal human experience. A common misconception is that asexuality is a temporary phase, often associated with youth or trauma. Others mistakenly view it as a medical condition requiring treatment, conflating asexuality with sexual dysfunction (Houdenove et al., 2013). These misconceptions stem from a lack of awareness and perpetuate the invisibility of asexual identities within both LGBTQIA+ and broader social discourses. The term “asexuality” first gained recognition in the early 21st century, although the concept has existed under various names and forms throughout history. The term’s modern usage was solidified by the founding of the Asexual Visibility and Education

Network (AVEN) in 2001, which provided a platform for asexual individuals to connect and share their experiences (Hinderliter, 2023). The academic study of asexuality gained momentum with the publication of key works such as Anthony Bogaert's *Understanding Asexuality* (2012), which helped to establish asexuality as a distinct sexual orientation within sexological research (Bogaert, 2006). Despite these advancements, asexuality remains underrepresented in both academic and social conversations, highlighting the need for greater visibility and understanding within the LGBTQIA+ community.

AROMANTIC ASEXUALITY

Aromantic asexuality represents a distinct identity within the broader asexual spectrum, characterised by the absence of both romantic and sexual attraction. To understand this identity, it is crucial to distinguish between romantic and sexual attraction. While sexual attraction involves a desire for physical intimacy, romantic attraction refers to the emotional desire to form romantic relationships. Aromantic asexuals, therefore, do not experience these forms of attraction, positioning them uniquely within both the asexual and aromantic communities. The characteristics of aromantic asexuality can vary widely among individuals. Some may pursue close, non-romantic friendships, often described as "platonic" or "queerplatonic" relationships, which involve deep emotional connections without romantic or sexual involvement. These relationships challenge traditional paradigms of intimacy and companionship, highlighting the diversity of human connections beyond the romantic and sexual frameworks commonly emphasised in societal norms (Popović, 2005). Aromantic asexual individuals often face specific challenges in navigating relationships. In a society where romantic and sexual relationships are frequently idealised as the pinnacle of human connection, aromantic asexuals may experience societal pressure to conform to these expectations. This pressure can lead to feelings of isolation or misunderstanding, as their experiences and desires may not align with dominant cultural narratives (Scherrer, 2008). Queerplatonic relationships offer an alternative framework for understanding the connections that aromantic asexual individuals may seek. These relationships, though not based on romantic or sexual attraction, are characterised by a profound level of commitment and emotional intimacy. The concept of queerplatonic relationships challenges the conventional hierarchy that places romantic relationships at the apex of relational significance, instead recognizing the validity and depth of non-romantic bonds (Guinsburg, 1973).

DEMIROMANTIC AND DEMISEXUAL ASEXUALITY

Demiromanticism and demisexuality are identities within the asexual spectrum that emphasise the importance of emotional connection in forming romantic or sexual attraction. Demiromanticism refers to an individual who only experiences romantic attraction after forming a strong emotional bond. Similarly, demisexuality describes those who experience sexual attraction only when a deep emotional connection has been established. These identities challenge the conventional understanding of romantic and sexual attraction, which is often presumed to be more immediate or spontaneous. For demiromantic and demisexual individuals, the emotional bond is a prerequisite for attraction, marking a significant departure from alloromantic and allosexual

experiences. Studies within the field of sexuality suggest that the spectrum of attraction is more nuanced than binary categories of sexual or asexual (Yule et al., 2015). The concept of “secondary attraction,” where attraction develops after a significant emotional bond, is central to understanding demiromantic and demisexual identities. This emotional prerequisite can take time and may not develop in every relationship, leading to a lower frequency of romantic or sexual attractions (Lund et al., 2016). Demiromantic and demisexual individuals often face unique challenges, particularly in a society that frequently equates immediate attraction with normalcy. A common misconception is that demi-identities are simply a preference or a phase, rather than a distinct orientation (Poston & Baumle, 2010). This misunderstanding can lead to the invalidation of their experiences. Research indicates that these misconceptions contribute to feelings of isolation and misunderstanding within both LGBTQIA+ and broader social contexts (Amestoy, 2001). The lived experiences of demiromantic and demisexual individuals highlight the variability and fluidity of attraction. Many report that their relationships are often perceived as atypical or difficult to understand, yet these relationships underscore the significance of emotional intimacy (Hille et al., 2019). This complexity emphasizes the need for broader recognition and acceptance of demiromantic and demisexual identities within discussions of sexuality and romantic orientation.

GREY-ASEXUALITY (GREYSEXUALITY)

Grey-asexuality, often referred to as greysexuality, occupies a unique position on the asexual spectrum. Individuals who identify as grey-asexual experience sexual attraction infrequently or under specific circumstances, setting them apart from those who are fully asexual (experiencing no sexual attraction) and those who are sexual (experiencing regular sexual attraction). The concept of grey-asexuality recognizes the complexity and variability in human sexual experiences, emphasising that sexual attraction is not binary but exists on a continuum (McClave, 2013). For instance, a grey-asexual person may rarely experience sexual attraction or may only feel it under particular emotional or relational contexts, which is a key distinguishing feature from demisexuality, where sexual attraction emerges only after an emotional bond is formed. Grey-asexual individuals often face distinct challenges in both LGBTQIA+ and broader societal contexts due to the ambiguity of their experiences. Within LGBTQIA+ spaces, the fluid and variable nature of grey-asexuality can sometimes lead to feelings of marginalisation or misunderstanding, as these identities do not always align neatly with more defined sexual or asexual categories (Mollet, 2020). This ambiguity may result in their experiences being overlooked or invalidated by those who may perceive sexual attraction as an all-or-nothing phenomenon. Outside LGBTQIA+ circles, grey-asexual individuals might confront similar challenges. The broader societal discourse often lacks the nuanced understanding necessary to recognize and validate grey-asexual experiences, leading to a lack of appropriate support and representation. Moreover, the fluidity inherent in grey-asexuality, where attraction may vary over time, can complicate self-acceptance and community recognition (Schudson & Anders, 2019). Nevertheless, the recognition of grey-asexuality within the asexual spectrum is vital for fostering a more inclusive understanding of human sexuality, acknowledging that experiences of attraction can be diverse,

complex, and nonlinear. This inclusion emphasises the importance of validating and supporting all identities, even those that may not fit neatly into traditional categories.

AEGOSEXUALITY (AUTOCHORISSEXUALITY)

Aegosexuality, also referred to as autochorissexuality, is a nuanced identity within the asexual spectrum. This term describes individuals who experience a disconnect between themselves and sexual attraction or fantasies. Aegosexual individuals may find themselves engaging with sexual content or fantasising about sexual scenarios without the desire to participate or involve themselves in these activities. This detachment distinguishes aegosexuality from other forms of sexual attraction, where the individual is typically more personally engaged or desires a sexual connection with another person (Bogaert, 2012). The key characteristic of aegosexuality lies in the separation between arousal or attraction and the desire for sexual interaction. Aegosexual individuals may experience sexual arousal in response to certain stimuli or fantasies, yet they do not wish to enact these scenarios in real life. This distinction is crucial in understanding aegosexuality as an identity that challenges conventional notions of sexual desire, where arousal is often assumed to be accompanied by a desire for sexual engagement (Pardo, 2010). The detachment observed in aegosexuality highlights the diversity within the spectrum of sexual orientations, emphasising that sexual attraction does not uniformly lead to a desire for sexual interaction. Personal experiences of aegosexual individuals often reflect the complexity of navigating an identity that may be misunderstood both within and outside the asexual community. Some individuals may struggle with reconciling their experiences of arousal with their lack of desire for sexual engagement, leading to confusion or a sense of isolation (Scherrer, 2008). However, the recognition of aegosexuality as a valid identity provides a framework for understanding these experiences. Within the asexual community, aegosexuality is increasingly acknowledged, offering support and validation to those who identify with this orientation. Nonetheless, navigating aegosexual identity in broader societal contexts can be challenging due to the pervasive expectation that sexual attraction should naturally culminate in sexual activity (Colborne, 2018). This discrepancy underlines the importance of continued education and advocacy to foster greater understanding and acceptance of aegosexuality within the wider discourse on sexual orientations.

FLUIDITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY WITHIN ASEXUAL IDENTITIES

Asexuality, like many aspects of human sexuality, is not necessarily a static identity. The fluidity within asexual identities refers to the potential for change in how an individual experiences or identifies with asexuality over time. This fluidity can be influenced by a variety of factors, including personal growth, evolving self-awareness, and changes in emotional or physical health. Research indicates that sexual orientation can be fluid, and asexuality is no exception (Diamond, 2016). For example, some individuals may identify as asexual during one period of their life and later experience changes in their level of sexual attraction, leading them to identify with other labels within or outside the asexual spectrum, such as demisexuality or grey-asexuality. This fluidity underscores the importance of viewing asexuality as part of a broader continuum of sexual

identities rather than a fixed point. The concept of intersectionality, originally articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw, is crucial in understanding the fluidity of asexual identities (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality posits that various social identities, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, interact in complex ways to shape individual experiences. For asexual individuals, intersecting identities can significantly influence how their asexuality is perceived and experienced. For instance, cultural norms related to race or gender may affect the expression or understanding of asexuality. A person of colour might experience different societal pressures regarding sexuality, which could, in turn, influence how they navigate their asexual identity. Similarly, gender identity may intersect with asexuality, with non-binary individuals potentially experiencing fluidity in their sexual orientation as they explore and affirm their gender identity. Gender non-conforming individuals and transgender people who are also asexual may find that their identities are often misunderstood or erased, as society tends to impose binary and heteronormative expectations onto both gender and sexual orientation (Meyer, 2019). Cultural context plays a significant role in the perception and acceptance of asexuality. In many Western societies, where sexual attraction is often considered a normative aspect of adult life, asexuality can be met with scepticism or outright denial (Bogaert, 2004). However, in some non-Western cultures, where sexual behaviour might not be as openly discussed or valued, the concept of asexuality might be interpreted differently, sometimes even normalised (Wong, 2014). For example, certain East Asian cultures, influenced by Confucian ideals that emphasise restraint and familial duty, may have less stigmatisation of low sexual interest, though they might not explicitly recognize asexuality as an identity. Conversely, in cultures with strong religious or traditional norms regarding marriage and procreation, asexuality may be heavily stigmatised or pathologized. These cultural variations stress on the importance of considering intersectionality when studying and supporting asexual individuals, as their experiences can differ widely depending on their cultural, racial, and gender identities. Thus, intersectionality provides a framework for understanding the diverse and evolving experiences of asexual individuals, recognizing that fluidity in sexual identity is often shaped by the broader social context in which a person lives.

THE ROLE OF ROMANTIC ATTRACTION IN ASEXUALITY

A critical distinction within the asexual community is the difference between romantic and sexual attraction, concepts that are often conflated in broader societal discourse. While sexual attraction refers to a desire for sexual engagement with others, romantic attraction pertains to the emotional desire to form a close, loving relationship, which may or may not include sexual activity (Gonzaga et al., 2006). This differentiation is crucial in understanding the diverse experiences of asexual individuals, many of whom experience romantic attraction independent of sexual desire. Within the asexual spectrum, romantic orientations are as varied as sexual orientations, encompassing identities such as biromantic (attracted to multiple genders), heteroromantic (attracted to a different gender), homoromantic (attracted to the same gender), and panromantic (attracted to all genders). These romantic orientations are integral to how asexual individuals navigate relationships and form emotional connections, challenging the notion that romantic and sexual attractions are intrinsically linked. Navigating romantic

relationships as an asexual individual presents unique challenges. The absence of sexual attraction can lead to misunderstandings or unmet expectations in partnerships, particularly in a society where sexual intimacy is often considered a cornerstone of romantic relationships (Scherrer, 2008). This divergence necessitates clear and ongoing communication between partners to establish mutual understanding and to negotiate the boundaries and expectations of the relationship. Successful relationships involving asexual individuals often hinge on the presence of empathy, open dialogue, and the willingness to redefine conventional relationship norms (Dawson et al., 2016). Partners must be attuned to each other's needs, with an emphasis on non-sexual forms of intimacy, such as emotional support, physical affection, and shared experiences. This approach not only fosters a deeper emotional connection but also validates the diverse ways in which love and partnership can manifest beyond traditional sexual frameworks.

ASEXUALITY IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA

Asexuality remains significantly underrepresented in mainstream media, contributing to its marginalisation within broader societal discourse. Studies indicate that asexual characters are scarce, and when they do appear, their identities are often ambiguously portrayed or overshadowed by more dominant narratives of sexual and romantic attraction (Tokheim, 2023). For instance, the character of Todd Chavez in the animated series *BoJack Horseman* is one of the few explicitly asexual characters on mainstream television, but such representations are exceptions rather than the norm. This lack of visibility perpetuates the notion that asexuality is an anomaly, further entrenching its invisibility in popular culture (Kennon, 2023). When asexual characters are depicted, they often fall prey to stereotypes that distort the reality of asexual experiences. Common tropes include the portrayal of asexual individuals as emotionally cold, repressed, or socially inept, which reinforces harmful misconceptions (Miller, 2017). For example, the "robotic" or "inhuman" asexual character archetype, seen in various science fiction and fantasy genres, strips away the complexity and humanity of asexual identities. These stereotypes not only misrepresent asexuality but also contribute to the broader societal misunderstanding of what it means to be asexual. The impact of such media portrayals on asexual individuals is profound. Research suggests that the lack of positive representation can lead to feelings of isolation, invalidation, and internalised stigma among asexual people (Esmail et al., 2010). The absence of diverse and accurate depictions in media reinforces the erroneous belief that asexuality is either a phase or a disorder, rather than a legitimate sexual orientation. Therefore, expanding and diversifying asexual representation in media is crucial for challenging stereotypes, fostering inclusivity, and providing a more accurate understanding of asexuality within society.

SOCIETAL CHALLENGES FACED BY ASEXUAL INDIVIDUALS

Asexuality remains one of the most underrepresented and misunderstood identities within both the LGBTQIA+ community and broader society. Despite growing awareness, asexual individuals often experience social invisibility—a phenomenon where their identity is either ignored or denied. This erasure is evident in the lack of asexual representation in mainstream media, limited

inclusion in LGBTQIA+ advocacy, and the scarcity of academic research focused on asexual experiences. Such invisibility leads to a failure to recognize asexuality as a legitimate sexual orientation, which can have profound consequences. Asexual individuals may struggle with feelings of isolation, as they often lack role models or community spaces that affirm their experiences (Gupta, 2016). Furthermore, the absence of visibility reinforces the misconception that sexual attraction is universal, marginalising those who do not conform to this norm. In addition to invisibility, asexual individuals face stigmatisation rooted in societal norms that prioritise sexual attraction and romantic relationships as essential components of a fulfilling life (Scherrer, 2010). Asexuality challenges these deeply ingrained beliefs, leading to widespread misunderstanding and prejudice. Asexual individuals may be pathologized, with their lack of sexual attraction being misinterpreted as a medical or psychological issue rather than a valid identity (Conley-Fonda & Leisher, 2018). This pathologization can result in asexual individuals facing pressure to conform to sexual norms, either through unwanted medical interventions or societal expectations to engage in sexual relationships. Misunderstanding also perpetuates harmful stereotypes, such as the notion that asexual people are “cold” or “incapable of love,” further alienating them from social and romantic contexts (Colborne, 2018). These challenges contribute to the marginalisation of asexual identities, exacerbating the struggles of those who identify as asexual and emphasizing the need for greater awareness, representation, and advocacy within both LGBTQIA+ and mainstream discourses.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR ASEXUAL INDIVIDUALS

Asexuality has often been marginalised within the broader LGBTQIA+ discourse, necessitating targeted activism and advocacy to ensure visibility and support. Asexuality-focused organisations play a pivotal role in this effort. The Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN), founded in 2001 by David Jay, is one of the most prominent organisations dedicated to raising awareness about asexuality. AVEN’s efforts include providing resources, fostering community discussions, and advocating for the inclusion of asexuality in broader LGBTQIA+ agendas. Such organisations are essential for addressing misconceptions and ensuring that asexual identities are acknowledged and respected within social and political movements. In addition to formal organisations, community support plays a crucial role in the well-being of asexual individuals (Lappe, 2016). Online platforms, such as forums, social media groups, and dedicated websites, offer a sense of belonging and a space for sharing experiences. These communities enable individuals to connect with others who share similar identities, thus mitigating the isolation often felt by asexual individuals. The importance of these communities cannot be overstated, as they provide emotional support, validate personal experiences, and facilitate access to relevant resources. Moreover, the intersectionality of asexuality with other marginalised identities, such as race and gender, underscores the need for inclusive support systems. Online resources like *The Asexual Journal* and blogs that focus on asexual experiences across diverse backgrounds are valuable tools for fostering inclusivity (Pinto, 2014). These platforms challenge the dominant narratives and ensure that the diverse experiences of asexual individuals are represented and understood. Through activism, advocacy, and community-

building, these support systems are vital in addressing the unique challenges faced by asexual individuals, ensuring their voices are heard, and fostering a more inclusive society.

EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Recent years have seen a significant increase in efforts to educate the public about asexuality, driven largely by both grassroots activism and academic research. Organisations like The Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) have played a crucial role in raising awareness and providing resources for both asexual individuals and the general public. Educational campaigns have also been integrated into broader LGBTQIA+ initiatives, ensuring that asexuality is included in discussions about sexual orientation and identity (Rothblum et al., 2018). Scholarly research has expanded, with studies exploring the lived experiences of asexual individuals, the social challenges they face, and the psychological aspects of asexual identity (Colborne, 2018). These efforts have contributed to a growing recognition of asexuality as a valid and distinct identity within the sexual orientation spectrum. Despite these advancements, there remains a critical need for more comprehensive educational initiatives to further enhance public understanding of asexuality. Integrating asexuality into sex education curricula in schools could provide a foundational understanding from a young age, helping to combat misconceptions and reduce stigma (Mollet, 2020). Additionally, there is a need for increased representation of asexual identities in media and literature, which can serve as powerful tools for normalising asexuality (An Educator's Guide to Asexuality, 2023). Further research is essential, particularly in exploring the intersectionality of asexuality with other identities, such as race and gender. This could lead to more nuanced and inclusive educational resources that address the diverse experiences within the asexual community. Overall, a multifaceted approach that includes education, representation, and research is necessary to foster a more inclusive society that recognizes and respects the full spectrum of sexual orientations, including asexuality.

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive analysis presented in this chapter explores the complexity and diversity of asexual identities within the LGBTQIA+ community. Asexuality, as an orientation, challenges traditional notions of sexual attraction and relational norms, revealing a spectrum of experiences that are often misunderstood or marginalised. Through the exploration of distinct identities such as aromantic asexuality, demi romanticism, demisexuality, grey-asexuality, and aegosexuality, this discussion highlights the varied ways in which individuals navigate their lack of sexual attraction, as well as the importance of recognizing these identities as valid expressions of human sexuality. The intersectionality of asexuality with other aspects of identity, including race, gender, and cultural background, further complicates the experiences of asexual individuals, necessitating a more nuanced understanding and inclusive approach within both LGBTQIA+ advocacy and broader societal discourses. This chapter also emphasises the crucial distinction between romantic and sexual attraction, explaining the diversity within asexual experiences and the unique challenges

that arise in forming and maintaining relationships. The underrepresentation of asexuality in mainstream media and the persistent societal challenges faced by asexual individuals—such as invisibility, stigmatisation, and pathologization—illustrate the urgent need for greater visibility, education, and support. The role of asexuality-focused organisations, online communities, and educational initiatives is pivotal in addressing these challenges and fostering a more inclusive environment. In conclusion, the continued efforts to raise awareness, promote understanding, and advocate for the inclusion of asexual identities are essential for ensuring that asexual individuals are recognized and respected within the spectrum of human sexuality. Future directions must focus on expanding educational initiatives, enhancing representation in media, and advancing research to create a society that fully embraces the diversity of sexual orientations.

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The Psycho-Social and Educational Challenges of LGBTQ+ People

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The LGBTQ+ community has long been a vibrant and essential part of society, contributing to culture, politics, and social change, but they have long faced unique challenges due to societal stigma and discrimination. Despite increasing acceptance in some parts of the world, many LGBTQ+ individuals continue to experience prejudice and exclusion. This happens in areas like family, school, work, and healthcare. These challenges can be visible like discrimination, or more hidden, such as internalized shame or pressure to fit traditional gender roles. LGBTQ is a term that includes people whose sexual orientation or gender identity is different from the traditional ideas. LGBTQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (or Questioning) explained as;

L (Lesbian) – This denotes women who are drawn to other women.

G (Gay) - Men who are attracted to other men (also used to describe same-sex attraction).

B (Bisexual) – Individuals who are drawn to both men and women.

T (Transgender) - People whose gender identification does not correspond to the sex given to them at birth.

Q (Queer or Questioning) - "Queer" is an inclusive term for those who do not fit standard categories, whilst "Questioning" refers to those who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender identities.

Sometimes, the acronym LGBTQ is expanded to LGBTQIA+, where I stands for Intersex, A for Asexual, and + represents other identities.

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HISTORY OF LESBIAN

The history of lesbians is deeply rooted in cultural, social, and political changes throughout time.

In Ancient Greece & Rome Lesbianism was often ignored or dismissed as male-dominated societies focused more on controlling women's roles in marriage and reproduction. In 19th & early 20th century many women, especially in upper classes, had intense, romantic friendships, sometimes living together as "Boston marriages" (a term for women who cohabitated without men). Radclyffe Hall & *The Well of Loneliness* (1928): One of the first lesbian novels, faced censorship but helped raise awareness of lesbian identity. World War II (1940s) has created space for lesbian relationships as more women entered the workforce and military. The 1970s Feminist Movement advocated for lesbian rights.

History of Gay

The gay community, as a distinct social and political identity, emerged in the 20th century. In Sumerian and Akkadian mythology, gods like Enki and heroes like Gilgamesh had close

relationships with male companions. Some of the earliest references to same-sex relationships come from Mesopotamian (3000 BCE – 500 BCE) texts. The Same-sex relationships, especially between older men and younger men (pederasty), were socially accepted in many Greek city-states. Philosophers like Plato wrote about love between men in works. With the rise of Christianity, laws criminalizing male same-sex acts.

In the 19th century, Western societies began labeling homosexuality as a psychological condition rather than just an action. Stonewall Riots (1969): The modern gay rights movement was sparked when LGBTQ+ people, led by figures like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, in New York City. Following Stonewall, the first Pride parades took place in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Many Western countries began decriminalizing homosexuality .By the 1990s countries like the Netherlands (2001), Canada (2005), and the U.S. (2015) legalized same-sex marriage.

Gay men still experience severe prejudice in many regions of the world, including Asia and Africa, despite the expansion of their rights. Some openly gay men, like Tim Cook, the CEO of Apple, and Xavier Bettel, the head of state government in Luxembourg, have achieved national success and recognition.

History of bisexual

The history of bisexuality is long and complex, spanning ancient civilizations, the medieval period, and modern times. Ancient texts and myths have limited direct evidence of bisexuality. Many notable figures, including Socrates, Plato, and Alexander the Great, were believed to have had relationships with both men and women. Many Indigenous cultures in the Americas, Africa, and the Pacific recognized non-binary and fluid sexual identities. With the rise of Christianity in Europe, bisexuality (and homosexuality) became heavily stigmatized. Laws against "sodomy" were introduced.

In medieval Islamic societies, poetry and literature depicted same-sex relationships. Some Mughal emperors in India were rumored to have had both

male and female partner. Bisexuality was not widely recognized as a distinct identity. Western psychiatry began labeling and pathologizing non-heterosexual behavior. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1860s) was one of the first European activists to discuss diverse sexual orientations. Sigmund Freud suggested that humans are naturally bisexual but become heterosexual or homosexual due to social influences. 1970s: The term "bisexual" gained visibility within the LGBTQ+ rights movement. In 1990s the bisexual rights movement expanded, with groups like BiNet USA.

In 21st Century bisexual representation in media and politics increased. Studies revealed that bisexual individuals face unique challenges. Today, while bisexuality is more acknowledged than ever, misconceptions and erasure still exist.

History of transgender

The history of transgender people is spanning cultures and centuries. Some Native American tribes had Two-Spirit people who embodied both masculine and feminine qualities. In India, hijras have existed for centuries, recognized as a third gender with cultural and spiritual significance. Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin was founded by German physician Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) was one of the first institutions to study and support transgender people.

Inspite of Legal and medical advancements, though trans people faced discrimination in healthcare and employment. Public figures like Laverne Cox and Caitlyn Jenner brought trans issues into mainstream media but challenges remain such as anti-trans laws and discrimination still exist. Healthcare and legal rights vary globally.

History of Queer

Ancient texts and depictions of Mesopotamia and Egypt suggest same-sex relationships existed and were sometimes accepted, particularly among the ruling classes. Homosexual relationships, especially between men, were widely accepted in ancient Greece and Rome. Hindu mythology includes gender-fluid deities (e.g., Ardhanarishvara, a deity combining Shiva and Parvati). The Kama Sutra also mentions same-sex relationships.

Many pre-Christian cultures tolerated or even celebrated queer identities, but with the rise of Christianity and Islam, same-sex relationships became criminalized in much of Europe and the Middle East. In medieval Europe, sodomy laws were introduced, punishing same-sex activity, often with death. Despite repression, queer culture persisted in coded ways, such as in poetry and secret societies.

In early 1900s Berlin became a queer haven with organizations like the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (founded by Magnus Hirschfeld). A pivotal moment in LGBTQ+ history occurred when police stormed the Stonewall Inn in New York City, igniting days of protest and inspired modern Pride rallies.

LGBTQ+ AND THEIR SOCIAL PROBLEMS:

The LGBTQ+ community faces various social challenges worldwide, though the severity and nature of these problems vary by country and culture. Here are some key social issues they commonly encounter:

1. Discrimination and Stigma

Discrimination and stigma are common experiences for many LGBTQ+ individuals in various aspects of life. They often face bias and unfair treatment in workplaces, schools, healthcare systems, and public spaces. These challenges stem from societal norms and prejudices that reject or marginalize LGBTQ+ identities. Stigma is perpetuated through harmful stereotypes, exclusion, and negative attitudes.

2. Legal Inequality

In some countries, same-sex relationships and gender nonconformity are still criminalized. Many LGBTQ+ individuals face legal inequality due to a lack of legal protections. Discrimination in housing, employment, and healthcare is common in areas without these protections. Laws in certain regions fail to safeguard the rights of LGBTQ+ people, making them vulnerable to unfair treatment.

3. Hate Crimes and Violence

LGBTQ+ individuals are at a higher risk of physical and verbal abuse, including hate crimes. Transgender people, in particular, face significantly higher rates of violence and murder. Many LGBTQ+ people live in fear of being targeted or harmed because of who they are. The lack of protection and awareness further contributes to their vulnerability to such attacks.

4. Family Rejection and Homelessness

Many LGBTQ+ individuals face rejection from their families, which can lead to homelessness, especially among LGBTQ+ youth. Conversion therapy and forced marriages are still employed in some areas to try to alter a person's gender identity or sexual orientation. The lack of acceptance from family members often leaves individuals with limited support systems. As a result, LGBTQ+ people may experience further social isolation and harm.

5. Workplace Discrimination

LGBTQ+ employees often face bias, which can lead to fewer promotions or even job loss. In many countries, there are no laws to protect them from workplace discrimination. This lack of legal protection makes it difficult for LGBTQ+ individuals to feel safe and secure in their jobs.

6. Healthcare Barriers

Many LGBTQ+ individuals especially transgender faces problem due to inadequate or discriminatory healthcare, often due to biases or lack of understanding from healthcare providers. Many healthcare professionals are not trained to address the specific needs of the LGBTQ+ people, leading to uncomfortable or harmful experiences. As a result, LGBTQ+ individuals may avoid seeking medical care, which can worsen their health outcomes.

7. Representation and Media Stereotypes

The portrayal or absence of good LGBTQ+ characters in media frequently reinforces harmful stereotypes, leading to skewed perceptions of the community.

In many circumstances, LGBTQ+ people are depicted negatively or limiting ways, which can intensify discrimination. Their problems and issues are not raised in mainstream media. Some countries also censor LGBTQ+ content in films, books, and online platforms which limit the awareness and understanding society.

8. Political and Religious Oppression

Some governments actively suppress the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals through laws and policies that make it illegal to be openly gay or transgender. These laws can criminalize same-sex relationships, gender nonconformity, or any form of LGBTQ+ advocacy. As a result, many LGBTQ+ people live in constant fear of punishment or imprisonment just for being themselves. In addition to government actions, many religious institutions condemn LGBTQ+ identities, leading to struggles both within families and in larger communities. Due to these prohibition and rejection LGBTQ+ people fear to live openly or feel proud of who they are,. These political and religious pressures make it much harder for LGBTQ+ individuals to experience equality and acceptance.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS ON LGBTQ+

Social problems affecting LGBTQ+ individuals can have significant psychological impacts, often leading to mental health challenges. These problems include discrimination, stigma, rejection, violence, and lack of legal protections. Below are some key psychological effects:

1. Mental Health Disorders

LGBTQ+ individuals often experience depression and anxiety due to rejection, bullying, and lack of acceptance. Many face Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder from hate crimes or family rejection. Feelings of isolation can lead to suicidal thoughts and self-harm, especially in youth.

2. Minority Stress

Chronic stress caused by societal prejudice, internalized homophobia, and fear of discrimination leads to emotional exhaustion, low self-esteem, and hyper vigilance in social settings.

3. Identity Struggles

LGBTQ+ individuals often face identity struggles. Internalized homophobia or transphobia can lead to negative self-perception because of society's messages. Many also experience confusion about their identity, especially in unsupportive or conservative environments. These struggles make it harder for them to accept themselves.

4. Substance Abuse

Higher likelihood of using alcohol, drugs, or smoking as a coping mechanism for stress and discrimination are found among them.

LGBTQ+ AND EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

According to the Census of India (2011), only 56% of LGBTQ+ who were identified

as "other gender" were literate, compared to the national average of roughly 73%. In India, the educational status of LGBTQ+ individuals is significantly impacted by societal attitudes, discrimination, and a lack of support systems. LGBTQ+ students face multiple challenges, including bullying, harassment, and rejection from their families. These challenges create a hostile environment in schools, which often leads to lower educational attainment and higher dropout rates among LGBTQ+ individuals.

India lacks inclusive policies for LGBTQ+ students, especially transgender individuals. Most schools follow a binary gender system, making it difficult for non-binary students to fit in. Additionally, LGBTQ+ persons are not formally recognized in official government data, hindering the ability to address their educational needs. While there is some legal protection, like the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, there are no clear, enforced policies at the school level to ensure these rights are implemented effectively.

LGBTQ+ students often face high drop-out rates due to psychological stress from harassment, bullying, and family rejection. They lack essential support systems like counseling, safe spaces, and peer networks, making it harder to stay in school. Additionally, many face financial barriers, especially if they've been rejected by their families, which limits their ability to continue their education.

Most of the educational system lacks an inclusive curriculum that addresses gender diversity, LGBTQ+ history, and issues affecting the community. The absence of positive LGBTQ+ representation in textbooks, media, and classroom discussions fosters ignorance and bias. There is also a need for more LGBTQ+ role models in academic materials and leadership positions to improve visibility and promote acceptance.

LEGAL RIGHTS IN THE CONSTITUTION FOR LGBTQ+

Despite above challenges, there have been advancements in LGBTQ+ rights, including permission to marriage in same-sex, laws against discrimination, and greater social acceptance in many places. However, continuous advocacy and policy changes are needed to address these social issues effectively. Legal rights for LGBTQ+ individuals vary by country, but in many places, constitutional provisions and legal frameworks are evolving to ensure equal rights and protections. Here are some key areas where LGBTQ+ rights are recognized or debated in constitutional law:

1. Equal Protection & Non-Discrimination

Many constitutions include equality clauses that prohibit discrimination based on sex, gender, or other characteristics. Some explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity (e.g., South Africa's Constitution). Courts in countries like the U.S., India, and Canada have interpreted constitutional equality and dignity provisions to protect LGBTQ+ rights.

2. Right to Marriage & Family

Some constitutions recognize same-sex marriage as a fundamental right (e.g., Argentina, Germany). In other cases, courts have ruled that denying marriage equality is unconstitutional (e.g., U.S. Supreme Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges*).

3. Decriminalization of Homosexuality

In many countries, colonial-era laws criminalizing same-sex relationships have been struck down as unconstitutional (e.g., India's Supreme Court ruling in *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India*).

Other constitutions do not explicitly criminalize homosexuality but fail to provide protections, allowing discriminatory laws to persist.

4. Gender Identity Rights

Some countries recognize the right to self-determined gender identity in their constitutions or laws (e.g., Argentina's Gender Identity Law). Courts in places like Colombia and India have ruled that constitutional rights to dignity and autonomy protect transgender individuals.

5. Freedom of Expression & Association

LGBTQ+ organizations and pride events are protected under constitutional freedom of speech and assembly provisions in many democracies. However, in some countries, laws restricting LGBTQ+ advocacy violate constitutional rights (e.g., Russia's anti-LGBTQ+ propaganda laws).

6. Employment & Social Protections

Some countries have specific laws that protect LGBTQ+ workers from discrimination. For example, South Africa's constitution guarantees equal workplace protections for LGBTQ+ individuals. In other places, like the U.S., courts have interpreted general non-discrimination laws to include LGBTQ+ workers. *Bostock v. Clayton County* is a significant case in which the U.S. Supreme Court held that it is illegal to fire someone based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION AND GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN INDIA

India has traditionally been conservative regarding issues of sexuality and gender. For many years, the LGBTQ+ community in India faced significant social stigma, legal barriers, and human rights violations. However, in recent years, the country has witnessed a gradual shift towards greater acceptance, advocacy, and legal recognition of the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals.

i. Constitutional Provisions for LGBTQ+ Rights

While the Constitution of India does not specifically mention LGBTQ+ rights, it enshrines several key principles that can be extended to protect the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals:

1. **Article 14** guarantees the Right to Equality before the law to Indian citizens. It declares that no individual shall be deprived of equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within India's territory.
2. **Article 15** prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Though it does not clearly refer sexual orientation or gender identity, the interpretation of this article has evolved to include broader understandings of discrimination, which has been instrumental

in advancing LGBTQ+ rights. For example, the Supreme Court's decision in the *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* case (2018) recognized that discrimination based on sexual orientation violates the right to equality under Article 15.

3. **Article 21** of the Constitution ensure "the right to life and personal liberty," which the Supreme Court has broadly interpreted. In various rulings, the court has extended the right to privacy and personal autonomy to individuals, including LGBTQ+ persons. The landmark *K.S. Puttaswamy (Right to Privacy)* case (2017) reaffirmed that privacy is a fundamental right, which has been applied to protect LGBTQ+ individuals' autonomy over their sexual preferences and gender identities.
4. **Article 19** guarantees freedom of speech and expression to all citizens, subject to reasonable restrictions. This provision has been cited in support of LGBTQ+ rights, especially regarding the freedom to express one's sexual preference or gender expression.

ii. Legal Reforms and Government Initiatives

While constitutional provisions lay the groundwork for LGBTQ+ rights in India, several legal reforms and government initiatives have been undertaken to protect and uplift the LGBTQ+ community. These measures have played a crucial role in redefining the legal and social landscape for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Decriminalization of Homosexuality – The most important achievement for LGBTQ+ rights in India occurred in 2018 when the Supreme Court, in a landmark ruling, decriminalized consensual homosexual acts between adults by modifying Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Section 377, which had criminalized "unnatural offenses," was interpreted as unjustly targeting consensual same-sex relationships. The Court ruled in the case of *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* that the provision was unconstitutional insofar as it infringed on the rights to equality, privacy, and personal liberty. The verdict was a major victory for the LGBTQ+ community, as it marked the end of criminalization and affirmed the right of LGBTQ+ individuals to live freely without fear of legal prosecution. This ruling also strengthened the argument that the Constitution's promise of equality applies to people of all sexual orientations.

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act was passed in 2019 with the aim of ensuring equal rights and social inclusion for transgender individuals. Some key provisions of this law include:

- i. This law prevents discrimination against transgender individuals in schools, workplaces, healthcare services, and more.
- ii. It allows transgender people to be recognized based on their self-identified gender.
- iii. It grants transgender people the right to live with their parents and immediate family members.
- iv. It provides for the creation of programs to support transgender people in education, social security, and healthcare.

- v. It establishes a National Council for Transgender Persons to guide, oversee, and assess measures protecting their rights.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR TRANSGENDER PERSONS

This was formed on August 21, 2020, under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019. The Union Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment is the Chairperson, and the Union Minister of State for Social Justice & Empowerment is the Vice-Chairperson. The council advises the government on policies, programs, and projects related to transgender persons. It monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of policies aimed at ensuring equality for transgender people. The council also coordinates activities of various government and non-government organizations working for transgender rights. It helps address the grievances of transgender persons.

SMILE (Support for Marginalised Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise)

The SMILE scheme was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on February 12, 2022. It aims to support marginalized individuals, including transgender persons and those engaged in begging. The scheme focuses on rehabilitation, medical care, counseling, education, and skill development. It offers financial support through scholarships for transgender students from ninth grade to post-graduation.. Transgender persons can also receive skill development training and livelihood support. The scheme covers medical health services, including gender-affirming surgeries and post-operative care. It includes the establishment of Garima Grehs, shelters for abandoned and orphaned transgender persons. The government has allocated Rs. 365 crores for this scheme from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

National Portal for Transgender Persons

It was launched on November 25, 2020, by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. This portal allows transgender individuals to apply for a certificate of identity and an identity card online, without needing to visit an office. The certificate of identity allows them to change their first name on official documents, like their birth certificate. The portal provides a simple, seamless process for transgender persons across the country to apply for these documents. The certificate and identity card are recognized nationwide. To access welfare measures under the SMILE scheme, transgender persons must have the certificate.

National Education Policy, 2020

The NEP 2020 recognizes transgender children as Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) and ensures they receive equal quality education. It focuses on helping transgender children access education and supports local efforts to remove barriers to their participation. The aim is to reduce inequalities in education access, including vocational education, for children of all genders and other disadvantaged groups.

Garima Grehs

The Garima Grehs are shelter homes established for transgender individuals in need, as part of the Transgender Act 2019 and the SMILE scheme. These shelters

provide essential services such as shelter, food, medical care, and recreational facilities, while also focusing on capacity-building and skill development for transgender persons. Currently, 12 pilot Garima Grehs are operating in states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, and others. An online monitoring system has been created through the National Portal for Transgender Persons to ensure proper tracking and support. The initiative also offers financial help to community organizations to set up shelter homes.

In conclusion, the impact of social problems on LGBTQ+ individuals significantly affects their psychological well-being and educational experiences. Discrimination, bullying, family rejection, and societal stigma contribute to increased mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. In educational settings, these social barriers often lead to lower academic performance, higher dropout rates, and limited access to inclusive learning environments. However, supportive policies, inclusive curricula, and mental health resources can help mitigate these effects. Creating a more accepting and affirming society is crucial in ensuring that LGBTQ+ individuals can thrive both psychologically and academically.

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Transgender - Kuld Courage in Adversity

Dr. Aditi Goswami* & Aishwarya Saxena**

“Everywhere the suffering of our community is highlighted. Everyone wants to hear our sad story. People are not interested in hearing our success story. There is a lot of struggle but also show our success.”

Ella. D. Verma (Trans Model)

INTRODUCTION

There is so much pain in the above words. While men and women are two important classes of any society. Along with this, there is also a class which is neither a man nor a woman. This third class is known as 'trans gender'. It is an integral part of the human race but still no society and country in the world has given them as much importance as men and women. Neglected by society, family, government everywhere, transgender are often pushed out of the periphery in the form of social boycott. Due to which many of them get into professions like begging, dancing, which is a type of human trafficking.

Fighting these adverse circumstances, transgender are setting an example in front of the world today. Out of which, we are going to describe the transgender who have taken initiative in some areas.

First of all, it is necessary to understand the meaning of the word 'Transgender'- Meaning of the word transgender - This word is used for those people Transgender is defined as a person whose gender identity or expression is different from the gender that they were given at birth. The word transgender is made up of two words Trans + gender. Trans means - 'beyond' or beyond, another place or another state. And Gender means - gender. Thus, the literal meaning of 'Transgender' is gender in another state. Before the 20th century, the

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term 'transsexual' was used, which in the middle of the century became known as transgender. It came after the German word Transsexualismus (1923).

The English term 'transsexual' is used to describe transgender people who wish to undergo medical sex change. This term has gained international acceptance. They are also called "trans" for short. Thus transgender means "those men or women who do not conform to traditional notions of gender but combine or move between the two.

Symbols of Transgender -

They are defined by a special type of symbol -



Flags of Transgender -

There is a "Transgender Pride Flag" for the transgender community which was designed by American transgender woman Yonika Hales in 1999 and it was first shown in a pride parade in Phoenix Arizona in 2000. The flag has five horizontal stripes - light blue, pink, white, pink, light blue.



Hales has explained the meaning of the flag as follows-

"The light blue is the traditional colour for baby boys, Pink is for girls and the white is the middle for those who are transitioning those who feel they have a neutral gender or no gender and those who are inter sex the pattern is such that no matter which way you fly it, it will always be correct. this symbolizes us trying to find correctness in our own lines.

Rights enjoyed by Transgender's in different countries of the world

Or

Equal rights enjoyed by Transgender's in the world

Trans have legal rights in many countries, but some countries have declared their gender identity a crime. The equal rights enjoyed by them include the right

to education, employment, health, service and movement. Apart from this, they have many other rights-

Prohibition on discrimination against them

1. Right to use public property.
2. Right to reside and join the family.
3. Providing equal opportunities in education, employment and health services.
4. Redressing their grievances.
5. Providing health facilities like sex reassignment surgery to transgender people.

Despite difficult circumstances, some transgender are setting an example of unmatched bravery and immense determination in front of the world, some of which are described as follows-

World's first transgender: Lily Elbe was born in Vejle Denmark in 1882. She was a professional painter who was assigned male at birth. She underwent the world's first documented sex reassignment surgery. She was born Einar Wegener. She spent almost her entire life as a man.

Transgender day

1967 American Gwendoly Am Smith founder of "transgender day of remembrance Activist and writer.

- **1st Institute** - July 6, 1919, Tiergarten Berlingerman doctor Magnus Hirschfeld co-funds the "Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for sex Research)
- **1st Trans Surgeon** - The first physician in the United States to perform gender confirmation surgery was the late Dr. Emel Belt who did so until the late 1960s,
- **1st Trans legally changed Name** - 1912-1962 Barbara Ann Wilcox One of the first American trans people to legally change their name.
- **Oldest trans tranee** - 1921-2021, Robina Asti US Navy pilot during World War II, holds the record for the world's oldest flight instructor.
- **1st Registered Trans** - 1886-1954 Lucy Hix Anderson is one of America's first documented trans women.
- **1st Trans Politician**-1933-2013, Jonne Conteferisk openly Transgender American person to be elected to a city council in the U.S. she radio show host & investigative.
- **1st Trans Presidential Appointee**- HHS Assistant Secretary DR. Rachel Levine On Biden Administration on Biden Administration commitment of Health Equity
- **1st Negro (black) Trans city Council**- Adria Jenkins leads the city council is the first black trans woman to be elected as a public official.
- **1st Transgender Judge**- 1946 American, Phyllis Frye First openly Transgender judge in Texas,
- **1st Trans mayor** 1948-2021 Americal stu Ramsussen first openly transgender mayor in the United State.

- **1st Trans Surgery** - 1956 spanish Bibiana Montoya is first trans gender women to go under gender affirming surgery in spain
- **1st trans represent labour** - Anwen Muston British first transwoman to be elected and represent labour.
- **1st trans person-** 1954-2019 British Julia Grant, Activist first person to have their gender reassignment followed on uk Television in A Change to sex.
- **1st Trans M.P-** 1954 polish Anna Grodzka first trans gender M.P in european history.
- **1st Trans Prisoner** - 1951/1952 John Pilley British pris in England and wales to be granted gender-affirming surgery
- **1st Trane Model & actress & Bond Girl** -1954 caroline cossey is a British Model & actress who often worked under the name Tula which She also used for two memoir. she appeared in the 1981 James bond film "for your eyes only" as an extra.
- **1st Trans professor** -1961- American Joy Ladin first openly transgender professor at an orthodox jewish institution and holds the David & Ruth Gottes man, chair in English at the 'stern college for women of Yeshiva university.
- **1st Trans Murder Victim** 1962-1982 Brazilian Ritallester Murder Victim, inspiration for the first transgender day of Remembrance.
- **1st Trans Opera** - 1965 British Annie Wallace Actress first transgender person to portray a regular character in British soap opera history.
- **1st Trans Health guide** - 1977 Syrus Marcus ware Canadian and American artist created first sexual health guide for trans men & the first parenting course for trans people in North America. Scholar of Trans studies and assistant professor.
- **1st Trans Airline Captain** - 1975 Argeulinian Traniela campolieto first transgender woman to be an airline captain in the history of Argentina and Latin America
- **1st Trans Rapper** - 1979 American Racco Kayiatos (A.K.a Katastrophe) first openly transgender singer in the hip-hop genre.
- **1st Trans awarded** - 1979 Malaysian Nisha Ayub fist teases gender rights activist to awarded with the prestigious. international women of courage award in 2016.
- **1st trans plus size model** - 1987/8 American Shay Neary first openly trans plus size model to land a major campaign.
- **1st Trans Boxer-** 1985 American Patricio Manuel first transgender professional boxer in the United States.
- **1st Trans Substitute lawyer-** 1983-2022 Uruguayan Suarez Berlora first openly transgender female lawyer substitute senator (2014-2017) in Uruguayan.
- **1st Trans Nominee-** 1982/83 American Misty Plow right first trans gender woman to be a nominee to the USA House of Representatives from a major political Party

- **1st Trans Refugee** - 1988 New Zealander Colombian Eliana Rubashkyn first trans gender woman recognized as woman under International law and the UNHCR
- **1st teens state senate**- 1985 American Misty snow nominee to the United state senate from a major political Party,
- **1st trans runway model**- This is a moment I will cherish for the rest of my life I am honoured to walk with pride, love and hope to inspire the next generation." Sampaio Alex Consani and Valentina Sampaio The first trans models to walk in the Victoria's Secret show made history. They faced tremendous criticism. This show shows that being trans is just as extraordinary as anyone else on the runway
- **1st trans Award** - 1995 Dutch hoiza hamer first transgender winner in the top model franchise.
- **1st trans nominated** - American L. Morgan Lee First openly transgender actor to be nominated for a tony award
- **1st Trans officer** -1998 British Lily Madign first openly transgender woman to become a women's officer within the labor party.
- **1st trans super Hero** - 1997 American Nicole Maines played the first actress television transgender superhero on CW's super girl transgender rights activist.
- **1st Trans Miss**- 1995 American Kalatuna Enriquez first trans woman to become a Miss USA contestant & win Miss Nevada.
- **1st Trans Engineer**- engineer 1998 Indian grace Bane first transgender engineer in Tamilnadu.
- **1st Trans public speaker**- 1997 American Delig M. Sosa public speaker, LGBTQ+ health care advocate.
- **1st trans Cheerleader** - 1992 justin Lindsay made sports history by becoming the first openly transgender cheerleader in the NFL the athlete initially faced backlash but is now ready for.
- **1st trans teacher**- Karen Toptom In 1998 I knew that I had only two options - change or death. There was no third option. This path was not easy.
- **1st trans pilot** - Indian Adam Harry is a trans pilot. He took flight at the age of 11 and decided to become a pilot when he grew up. He got permission to fly planes as a hobby. He got commercial pilot license from the local academy.
- **1st Trans IPS/ Police**- India's K. Prithik Yashini is the first transgender IPS/ Police. Her being trans brought many obstacles in her path. After facing a lot of struggle and discrimination from family and bureaucracy, she had to approach the court for 2 recruitment boards as there was no provision of criteria like written test, physical test and interview for trans candidates.
- **1st Trans Principal** - "I have been busy fighting so many battles and then this happened suddenly. I had not really thought about it. My journey has been full of taunts and abuses from father, school friends and colleagues in academia.

- **In 2015 India's** Pride Manabi Bandopadhyay became the Principal of Krishna Nagar Mathila College. Before this she has also been an Associate Professor at Vivekananda Santoshi Mahavidyalaya.
- **1st trans miss universe competition participate** - Angela Ponce is the first trans woman to participate in this competition in 2018.
- **1st Trans olympics** - 1978 Laurel Hubbard from New Zealand was selected to compete in the olympics openly as a trans woman.
- **1st Trans woman judge** - 2015 India Joyita Mandal is first transgender judge, she was appointed as a judge in the "Lok adalat" of Islampur in west bengal india.
- **1st trans MLA** - India 'Shabnam Mausi' Knowing 12 languages, she studied in primary school for only two years. She is a trained classical dancer. She was elected as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Madhya Pradesh. She named her party 'Jeeti Jitai Rajneeti' which literally means- 'already won politics'.
- **1st Trans-Social Media influencer**- 1994 Swedish Mathilda Hogberg, social media influencer, she publicly came out as a trans woman in 2020
- **1st Trans Hairdresser** - 1970-1995 American. Tyra Hunter was an african American hair dresser and transgender woman who died after being injured as a passenger in a car.
- **1st Trans Businesswoman**- 1979 thai Jakkaphong Jakra jutatip also known as Anne Jakrajutatip. sometimes informally stylized as Anne JKN. is a thai business woman and TV host along with being the founder & current CEO of JKN Global group.
- **1st Trans Fashion Designer**- 1985 American Isis King is the most widely known for her role on both the eleventh cycle and the seventeenth cycle of the reality TV Show America's next top model. she was the first openly trans woman to compete on the show and one of the most visible trans people on the T.V.
- **1st Trans Nurse**- American Mario Martino Nurse. early trans male autobiographer. He is known for writing one of the first autobiographies on the trans male experience. He also worked with the Labyrinth foundation in N.Y.
- **1st Trans Parliamentarian**- 1968 English Nikki Sinclair was elected MEP in June 2009, as a UK independence party candidate but later resigned from the Europe of freedom and Democracy (EFD) group. in which UKIP
- **1st trans Scientist** - 1966 American Robyn Leigh Tanguay (born Rober-Tanguay) is an American. researcher, academic & educator. She is a distinguished professor in the department of Environmental & Molecular Toxicology.

PROBLEMS OF TRANSGENDER

1. Abandonment by family and society.
2. They are not considered to have basic rights.
3. Discrimination for medical facilities and basic needs (access to toilets and public places)

4. Social problems (conservatism, superstitions)
5. Employment problems (limited employment opportunities due to which sometimes they end up begging, dancing, committing crimes and working as sex workers)
6. Housing problems
7. They face discrimination in getting education due to which they are deprived of education.

SUMMARY

"It is important to educate the transgender community. Only education can make an impact and change our lives. Sadly, this is not happening."

Along with educating the transgender community, it is also necessary to educate the surrounding society so that they can also understand that transgender are an integral part of the society and like others, they should also get their rights so that they can also lead their lives and come out of their deplorable situation. Apart from providing education and rights, there is also a need to reinforce it. The fight for equality has been going on for centuries. With time, society is changing. It is necessary to keep pace with time.

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The Role of Transgender Individuals in Kashmir's Economy: Challenges and Opportunities

Dr. Salfie Muzaffar Parray

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the complex socioeconomic landscape for transgender individuals in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), a region with a unique geopolitical history and diverse social fabric. Despite historical recognition dating back to the Mughal era, the transgender community in J&K faces severe marginalization, high levels of social stigma, and systemic economic exclusion. This research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of census data and economic indicators with qualitative insights from in-depth interviews and case studies.

Our findings reveal a stark contrast between historical acceptance and contemporary marginalization. Census 2011 data indicates a transgender population of 4,137 in J&K, with a literacy rate of 49.20%, significantly lower than the state average. Economic analysis shows severe underrepresentation in formal employment sectors, with many transgender individuals relegated to traditional roles in matchmaking and ceremonial performances – occupations that are rapidly declining in economic viability.

The study identifies key barriers to economic participation, including familial rejection, lack of access to education, housing discrimination, and inadequate healthcare. These factors contribute to a cycle of poverty and social exclusion. However, our research also uncovers potential opportunities in emerging sectors such as tourism, hospitality, and the creative industries, where the unique cultural knowledge of the transgender community could be leveraged.

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The research contributes to the growing body of literature on transgender economics in South Asia, offering one of the first comprehensive studies focused on J&K. It underscores the urgent need for inclusive economic policies that recognize the intersectionality of gender identity, regional politics, and economic development. The findings have implications not only for policymakers in J&K but also for broader discussions on gender inclusivity in economically sensitive regions.

Keywords: Transgender people, Marginalization, Social stigma, third gender recognition. Policy recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

The economic integration and empowerment of marginalized communities is a critical aspect of inclusive development, particularly in regions with complex socio-political landscapes. This study focuses on the transgender community in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), a region characterized by its unique geopolitical history and diverse social fabric. Despite India's progress in recognizing transgender rights, including the landmark 2014 Supreme Court judgment and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2019, the economic realities for transgender individuals in J&K remain stark and understudied.

Historically, transgender individuals, known locally as "Khwaja Siras," held respected positions in Mughal courts and elite households of Kashmir. However, their social and economic status has deteriorated significantly over time, leading to their current marginalized position. This research aims to bridge the gap in understanding between historical context and contemporary economic realities, focusing on the challenges and opportunities faced by the transgender community in J&K's evolving economy.

According to the Census 2011 of India, the Transgender population in Jammu & Kashmir is 4,137 of which 487 are in the age group of (0-6) years of age, whereas 207 are SC & 385 belong to the ST category. The literacy rate of transgender in Jammu & Kashmir is 49.20 percent.

Transgender face intense discrimination in the Kashmir Valley, now reckoned to be "the third gender." Rejected by their families and unrecognized as a distinct gender class, these people are just beginning to demand that society accept and honour them. Transgender are asking the government to help them achieve financial independence, and they are calling on Muslim leaders to foster the bedrock Islamic virtues of tolerance and acceptance. As far back as the 16th century, transgender enjoyed a special respect in Jammu and Kashmir State. They were treated as guardians, trusted ambassadors, and excellent artists during Mughal times". Nowadays they have to undergo discrimination. Nowadays, the majority of Kashmiris cannot accept such sex change. Here, families refuse a transgender person due to the threat of being outcast by the community, and society detests them because their families have discarded them. Regardless of the terms through which people identify themselves as transgender, the Indian government – and its Kashmiri administrators – register their sex as the one they had at birth. The prevalence of transgender will not become apparent to Kashmir until their rights are protected, they are a minority group like disabled people, but still, there are no legal provisions for them.

Legal Recognition: In 2014, India's Supreme Court recognized transgender people as a "third gender." Subsequently, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, aims to safeguard the rights of transgenders and prevent discrimination. Social Challenges Despite this legal development, acceptance by society still remains a great challenge. Most of the transgender people in the state of J&K are excluded from their families and communities thereby leaving them vulnerable concerning their economic status.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The transgender community in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has a complex history, marked by periods of respect and integration followed by marginalization and economic exclusion. This section traces the evolution of their social and economic status from the Mughal era to the present day, providing context for their current economic challenges.

MUGHAL ERA (16TH TO 19TH CENTURY)

During the Mughal period, transgender individuals, often referred to as "Khwaja Siras," held respected positions in society:

- **Royal Court Roles:** They served as guardians of harems, trusted ambassadors, and advisors to Mughal rulers.
- **Artistic Contributions:** Many were renowned as excellent artists, particularly in music and dance.
- **Economic Status:** Their proximity to the royal court and elite families provided them with economic security and social prestige.

BRITISH COLONIAL PERIOD (1846-1947)

The onset of British colonial rule in India, including J&K, marked a shift in the status of transgender individuals:

- **Legal Marginalization:** The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 categorized many transgender communities as "criminal," leading to increased stigmatization.
- **Economic Displacement:** Traditional roles in courts and elite households diminished, forcing many into economically precarious situations.

POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA (1947-2014)

After India's independence, the situation for transgender individuals in J&K remained challenging:

- **Social Stigma:** Increasing conservatism led to greater social exclusion and family rejection.
- **Economic Limitations:** Most were confined to traditional occupations like matchmaking (manzimyaras) and performing at weddings (natchuntegaewun).
- **Lack of Legal Recognition:** The absence of legal recognition as a distinct gender category limited access to education, employment, and social services.

CONTEMPORARY PERIOD (2014-PRESENT)

Recent years have seen significant legal changes, through social and economic challenges persist:

- **Legal Recognition:** The 2014 Supreme Court judgment recognizing the third gender marked a turning point.
- **Legislative Progress:** The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, aims to protect rights and prevent discrimination.
- **Persistent Challenges:** Despite legal advancements, social acceptance remains low, and economic opportunities are limited.

LINKING HISTORICAL CONTEXT TO CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION

The historical trajectory of the transgender community in J&K has directly shaped their current economic status:

1. **Loss of Traditional Roles:** The decline of respected positions in courts and elite households has left a void in legitimate economic opportunities.
2. **Educational Exclusion:** Historical marginalization has led to low literacy rates (49.20% as per the 2011 Census), limiting access to formal sector employment.
3. **Social Stigma:** Centuries of increasing stigmatization have resulted in family rejection and social exclusion, forcing many into economically vulnerable positions.
4. **Limited Skill Development:** The confinement to traditional occupations has hindered the development of skills relevant to the modern economy.
5. **Housing Insecurity:** Historical displacement and current discrimination in housing contribute to economic instability.
6. **Health Disparities:** Longstanding exclusion from healthcare systems has led to higher health risks and associated economic burdens.

CURRENT ECONOMIC STATUS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Keep an effective record of the transgender population and their economic status in J&K.

Develop targeted skill development and entrepreneurship programs.

Enforce anti-discrimination laws in employment and education.

Raise public awareness and sensitivity in the community at large to promote social acceptance.

Dedicated credit lines and business support services for transgender entrepreneurs.

Legal Framework: The legal landscape for transgender individuals in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has evolved significantly in recent years, primarily driven by national-level judicial decisions and legislation. This section examines the key legal developments and their implications for the economic and social status of the transgender community in J&K.

The 2014 Supreme Court Ruling: NALSA v. Union of India

The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) v. Union of India judgment, delivered on April 15, 2014, was a landmark decision that fundamentally altered the legal status of transgender individuals in India.

Key aspects of the ruling:

- **Recognition of Third Gender:** The Court recognized transgender individuals as a “third gender,” distinct from male and female.
- **Fundamental Rights:** Affirmed that transgender individuals are entitled to all fundamental rights under the Constitution of India.
- **Self-identification:** Established the right of individuals to self-identify their gender.
- **Directive to Governments:** Ordered central and state governments to take steps for the welfare of transgender communities and treat them as socially and educationally backward classes.
- **Public Health and Sanitation:** Directed the provision of separate public toilets and appropriate healthcare facilities for transgender individuals.
- **Social Welfare:** Mandated the creation of various social welfare schemes for the community's betterment.

Implications for J&K:

- As a then-state (now Union Territory), J&K was required to implement these directives, opening avenues for policy formulation and welfare schemes.
- The ruling provided a legal basis for transgender individuals in J&K to claim their rights and seek economic opportunities.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

This Act, which came into effect on January 10, 2020, provides a comprehensive legal framework for protecting transgender rights.

Key provisions:

- **Prohibition of Discrimination:** Bars discrimination against transgender persons in education, employment, healthcare, and other areas.
- **Right to Self-Perceived Identity:** Reaffirms the right of individuals to be recognized based on their self-identified gender.
- **Welfare Measures:** Mandates governments to take steps to ensure full inclusion and participation of transgender persons in society.
- **Education and Employment:** Directs educational institutions and establishments to provide inclusive education and opportunities.
- **Healthcare:** Requires the government to provide health facilities to transgender persons, including separate HIV surveillance centres.
- **National Council for Transgender Persons:** Establishes a Council to advise the government on policy formulation and monitor the impact of said policies.

Implications for J&K:

As a central legislation, this Act applies to J&K, providing a legal framework for protecting transgender rights in the region.

It creates obligations for the J&K administration to implement specific measures for transgender welfare and economic inclusion.

3. JAMMU AND KASHMIR SPECIFIC LAWS AND POLICIES

While J&K has not enacted specific state-level legislation for transgender rights, several developments are noteworthy:

- **J&K Reorganization Act, 2019:** Following the reorganization of J&K into a Union Territory, central laws like the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, became directly applicable without the need for separate adoption.
- **Social Welfare Department Initiatives:** In 2020, the J&K Social Welfare Department announced plans to conduct a comprehensive survey of the transgender population to facilitate targeted welfare schemes.
- **Draft Policy on Transgender Welfare:** As of 2021, the J&K administration was reported to be working on a draft policy for transgender welfare, focusing on education, employment, and healthcare. However, the current status and specifics of this policy remain to be clarified.
- **Reservation in Employment:** In April 2020, the J&K Administrative Council approved the reservation of 4% of jobs for Persons with Disabilities in government services, which includes some categories of transgender individuals.

Challenges in Implementation

Despite these legal advancements, several challenges remain in their effective implementation in J&K:

1. **Awareness:** Limited awareness about these laws among both the transgender community and the general public.
2. **Infrastructure:** Lack of necessary infrastructure (e.g., separate toilets, healthcare facilities) as mandated by the laws.
3. **Social Acceptance:** Persistent social stigma hindering the realization of legal rights.
4. **Economic Opportunities:** Despite legal provisions, practical barriers to accessing education and employment persist.
5. **Political Instability:** The unique political situation in J&K has sometimes overshadowed the focus on specific community issues.

Economic Opportunities

While the transgender community in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) faces significant challenges, there are emerging economic opportunities that could be leveraged for their empowerment. This section explores potential areas for economic integration, drawing on successful initiatives from other regions and considering the specific context of J&K.

1. Tourism and Hospitality Sector

J&K's tourism sector presents significant opportunities for the transgender community.

- **Sector Size:** Tourism contributes approximately 8% to J&K's GDP (as of 2020), with over 16 million tourists visiting in 2022.
- **Potential Roles:** Tour guides, cultural performers, hospitality staff
- **Successful Initiatives:**
Kerala's "Garima Yatra" program trained transgender individuals as tour guides, increasing their visibility and economic participation.

Barriers

- Lack of formal education and training in tourism-related skills
- Social stigma affecting customer interactions
- Limited awareness among tourism operators about transgender inclusion

2. Handicrafts and Traditional Arts

J&K is renowned for its handicrafts, offering opportunities in this sector.

- **Sector Size:** The handicraft sector employs over 340,000 artisans in J&K (2021 data).
- **Potential Roles:** Artisans, designers, marketing and sales representatives
- **Successful Initiatives:**
West Bengal's "Muktadhara" initiative trained transgender individuals in traditional handicrafts, leading to sustainable employment.

Barriers:

- Limited access to training programs and apprenticeships
- Challenges in accessing credit for starting handicraft businesses
- Market competition and the need for modernizing traditional skills

3. Information Technology and Digital Services

The growing IT sector in J&K offers new avenues for skilled employment.

- **Sector Size:** J&K's IT sector is nascent but growing, with the government aiming to attract ₹500 crore in investments by 2024.
- **Potential Roles:** Software development, data entry, digital marketing, customer service
- **Successful Initiatives:**
Bangalore's "TransIT" program provided IT training to transgender individuals, leading to placements in tech companies.

Barriers:

- Digital literacy gaps and limited access to technology education
- Discrimination in hiring practices in the formal IT sector
- Need for creating inclusive work environments in tech companies

4. ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MICRO-ENTERPRISES

Supporting transgender-led businesses can create economic independence.

- **Sector Potential:** Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) contribute about 8% to J&K's GDP.
- **Potential Areas:** Beauty salons, catering services, tailoring, retail shops
- **Successful Initiatives:**
Tamil Nadu's transgender self-help groups have successfully run catering businesses and small-scale industries.

Barriers:

- Limited access to credit and financial services
- Lack of business management skills and mentorship
- Challenges in customer acquisition due to social stigma

5. Government and Public Sector Employment

Recent policy changes open opportunities for government jobs.

- **Sector Size:** J&K government employs over 450,000 people (2021 data).
- **Potential Roles:** Administrative positions, social work, healthcare support staff
- **Policy Support:** 4% reservation for Persons with Disabilities, including some categories of transgender individuals.

Barriers:

- Limited educational qualifications meeting job requirements
- Bureaucratic hurdles in the implementation of reservation policies
- Need for sensitization of existing government employees

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of challenges and opportunities, we propose the following recommendations to improve the economic empowerment of transgender individuals in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

A. Policy Recommendations

1. Implement a Comprehensive Transgender Welfare Policy

- Action Steps: a. Draft a J&K-specific transgender welfare policy b. Conduct public consultations with the transgender community and stakeholders c. Allocate budget for policy implementation
- Potential Challenges:
 - Resistance from conservative elements in society
 - Budgetary constraints in a resource-limited region

2. Establish a Transgender Welfare Board

- Action Steps: a. Define the board's structure and responsibilities b. Appoint members ensuring transgender representation c. Empower the board to monitor policy implementation

- Potential Challenges:
 - Finding qualified transgender individuals for board positions
 - Ensuring the board has real authority to effect change

3. Enhance Legal Aid Services

- Action Steps: a. Train lawyers on transgender rights and issues b. Set up dedicated legal aid clinics for transgender individuals c. Create awareness programs about legal rights
- Potential Challenges:
 - Limited number of lawyers familiar with transgender issues
 - Overcoming fear and mistrust of legal systems in the community

B. Economic Recommendations

1. Develop Targeted Skill Development Programs

- Action Steps: a. Conduct a skills gap analysis for the transgender community b. Partner with industry leaders to design relevant training programs c. Establish transgender-friendly training centers
- Potential Challenges:
 - Ensuring program accessibility in remote areas of J&K
 - Overcoming societal stigma to encourage participation

2. Create Transgender-Focused Entrepreneurship Support

- Action Steps: a. Establish a dedicated credit line for transgender entrepreneurs b. Provide business incubation services and mentorship programs c. Organize transgender-focused business fairs and markets
- Potential Challenges:
 - Overcoming creditworthiness issues
 - Ensuring sustained market access for transgender-led businesses

3. Implement Inclusive Hiring Practices in the Tourism Sector

- Action Steps: a. Develop guidelines for transgender inclusion in the hospitality industry b. Offer incentives to tourism businesses for hiring transgender individuals c. Conduct sensitivity training for existing tourism sector employees
- Potential Challenges:
 - Resistance from traditional tourism operators
 - Balancing inclusion with customer expectations

4. Promote Transgender Artisans in Handicraft Sector

- Action Steps: a. Create a special category for transgender artisans in handicraft exhibitions b. Provide subsidized stalls in government-run handicraft emporiums c. Develop a branding strategy for transgender-made handicrafts
- Potential Challenges:
 - Ensuring quality control to compete in the market
 - Overcoming potential exploitation in the supply chain

5. Facilitate Access to Government Employment

- Action Steps: a. Conduct special recruitment drives for transgender individuals b. Provide pre-examination training for government job aspirants c. Ensure implementation of reservation policy in all departments
- Potential Challenges:
 - Meeting educational qualification requirements
 - Overcoming potential backlash from other job seekers

Implementation of these recommendations requires a coordinated effort from government agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and the transgender community itself. Regular monitoring and evaluation will be crucial to assess the effectiveness of these measures and make necessary adjustments.

CONCLUSION

The economic empowerment of transgender individuals in Jammu and Kashmir represents a critical challenge at the intersection of human rights, economic development, and social justice. This study has illuminated the complex historical, legal, and socio-economic factors that have shaped the current marginalized status of the transgender community in the region.

Key findings of this research include:

1. The historical trajectory from respected positions in Mughal courts to contemporary marginalization has profoundly impacted the economic status of transgender individuals in J&K.
2. Recent legal advancements, including the 2014 Supreme Court ruling and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, provide a foundation for change but face implementation challenges in J&K's unique socio-political context.
3. Significant economic opportunities exist in sectors such as tourism, handicrafts, IT, and entrepreneurship, but barriers to entry remain substantial.
4. Targeted policy interventions and economic initiatives are necessary to bridge the gap between legal recognition and economic empowerment.

The recommendations proposed in this study offer a roadmap for addressing these challenges, emphasizing the need for comprehensive policy implementation, skill development, entrepreneurship support, and inclusive hiring practices. However, the success of these initiatives will depend on sustained effort, resource allocation, and a shift in societal attitudes.

Looking ahead, several areas require further attention:

1. Longitudinal studies to track the long-term impact of policy interventions on transgender economic empowerment in J&K.
2. Comparative analysis with other regions to identify best practices in transgender economic inclusion.
3. Exploration of the role of technology in creating new economic opportunities for the transgender community in a rapidly digitalizing economy.
4. Investigation into the intersectionality of gender identity with other factors such as caste, religion, and disability in the context of economic empowerment.

In conclusion, the economic empowerment of transgender individuals in J&K is not just a matter of social justice but a crucial step towards harnessing the full potential of the region's human capital. By addressing the unique challenges and leveraging the opportunities identified in this study, J&K can set a precedent for inclusive economic development, benefiting not only the transgender community but the society and economy as a whole.

The path forward requires collaborative efforts from policymakers, civil society, the private sector, and the transgender community itself. Only through such concerted action can we hope to create a more inclusive, equitable, and prosperous future for all in Jammu and Kashmir.

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Legal Rights of Transgender – An Analysis

J. Nissha

ABSTRACT

Since ancient times, the transgender population in India has been an essential component of the nation. However, they were only just granted legal recognition as a third gender a few years ago. The transgender community is denied essential rights including the right to personal liberty, dignity, and free education, despite the fact that our constitution guarantees everyone the "right to equality." This article aims to investigate and evaluate the legislative safeguards provided for transgender rights in India, as well as the efficacy of their implementation. The articles also examine the different societal issues that the transgender population faces. The report ends with several recommendations and potential strategies to raise their standard of living.

Keywords: Transgender, right to equality, right to personal liberty, dignity, and free education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Those who feel visibly differently about their bodies or intimate areas are considered transgender. It refers to an individual whose sex differs from the one they had at conception; they may identify as male or female, or they may believe that neither description adequately describes them. The distribution of sex is determined by science, chromosomes, biological systems, and hormones. That being said, a person's sexual orientation—that is, their internal sense of being male, female, or both—usually has no bearing on their scientific background. According to transgender people, they were given a sex that doesn't match their identity. The prefix "trans" in word reference implies "beyond," "over," or

* Advocate,

"across." But the term "transgender" refers to more than just queer sexuality. Frequently, not everyone understands this phrase correctly. It's a broad phrase used to describe someone who spends a major portion of their life expressing a gender and sex that is more natural than what is assumed to be their biological sex.

To communicate with the network, several native phrases are used in India. The word Kothi, for example, refers to a range of recognisable feminine persons who were assigned a male sexual orientation after birthing. Moreover, notable transgender-related names from various provinces and territories include jogtas/jogappas, shiv-shaktis, hijras, and aravani. "Transgender is typically described as an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression, or behaviour does not conform to their biological sex," according to the NALSA ruling. This term encompasses not only individuals with an intermixture of genitalia but also those exhibiting dual-sex traits and those unable to identify their sexual orientation.

2. HISTORY OF TRANSGENDERS IN INDIA

Indian mythology provides glimpses into the past and occasionally offers perspectives on reality. It suggests that the transgender individuals who face criticism now were formerly regarded with respect and recognition. The concept of third sex originated in Hindu mythology, where there are many examples of gods changing their sexual preferences, appearing as different-gender avatars, and other scenarios. It was common to believe that divine creatures may be talked to as either male or female depending on the context and appearance. For example, Ardhanarishvara was highly revered. He was created by coordinating Lord Shiva and his consort, Parvati.

The myths of the Ramayana and Mahabharata served as the transgender community's fortune boxes. Among Hindu legends, Shikhandi from the Mahabharata is probably the most notable transgender persona. Another small but important transgender character is Aravan or Iravan, the child of Arjuna, who is acknowledged to have established the lineage from which transgender individuals originate. When Arjuna was banished, there is another event in the Mahabharata that highlighted the prevalence of third sexual orientations. There, he anticipated seeing Brihandala, a eunuch who carried out traditions at marriages and labour ceremonies.

Another source of inspiration for transgender people's growth is the Ramayana. When Rama went into the jungle for fourteen years, he called his disciples "men and women" and begged them to come back to the city. The hijras among them chose to stick with him since they did not feel constrained by the directive. As a result of their dedication, Rama bestowed upon them the ability to bestow blessings on auspicious occasions. Indeed, hijras were well-known for their roles in Royal Courts under the Mughal Empire (1526–1857) as political advisors, supervisors, commanders, and custodians of the royal collections. They were prepared to influence decisions made by the state and even included prominent positions in the Islamic institutes that were stringent. These benefits were later eliminated by legislation during the British era.

Transgender people's standing and acceptance in public spaces have been steadily declining since the British era began in the seventeenth century. Being

close to a transgender person in an open circle was considered odd in the "pilgrim space." Clearly freak Indian guys were at risk of both sexual infection and excellent health because of their open proximity. According to the British logic, transgender people's displays were a solicitation for sexual services. By the late 1800s, any non-vaginal penile intercourse between individuals was illegal under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. The Criminal Tribes Act, of 1871 (CTA) provided more oversight and administration for the British organization's reconnaissance and control. As a discernible societal categorisation, transsexual people were clearly being marginalised and labelled as "sexual deviants" and "habitual criminals."

3. LIVING CONDITIONS

The Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 was repealed in 1952 by Nehru, the main Prime Minister of independent India, who referred to it as "a blot on the law book of free India." However, that same year, the Indian government established the Habitual Offenders Act, which, aside from the fact that an entire network may be considered a criminal organisation, protected the great bulk of the CTA's arrangements. The focus shifted from criticising a group to criticising an individual at this point.

Prohibition continues to exist in the transgender network on a social, financial, and strategic level. Transgender people were not included in the Indian government's evaluation process, which is the most reliable source of information on demographics, education, and housing, among other topics, during the first 64 years after autonomy in a long time. When the network had the option to identify as transgender during the unprecedented fact-finding exercise in 2011, a significant fraction of a million individuals (out of 1.2 billion total) identified as transgender. The top three Indian states with the most notable convergence of self-identified transgender people are Maharashtra, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh .

Compared to the overall population's 74% education rate, just 46% of transgender people are skilled. Individuals who continue to be a part of the instructional framework often describe being the target of physical and sexual abuse, harassment, and badgering by more experienced peers and cohorts. Transgender people have a poor rate of employability, and a greater proportion of them turn to prostitution, blackmail, distraction, or begging. Indian folklore lends support to the transgender community, especially upon the arrival of a male child and at weddings. A transsexual would be awarded with financial benefits instead of endowments. These financial awards would end up serving as the main source of funding for the event. Anyway, the practice of giving money prizes instead of presents began to be seen negatively as a result of growing public criticism. They were further driven into sex work or media outlets by factors including poor proficiency rates, low ability levels, and a general reluctance to enlist transgender people.

Internationally, there is a greater chance that transgender people than adults worldwide get infected with HIV. HIV prevalence among transgender people is estimated by the National Aids Control Organisation (NACO) in India to be 7.5%. High-risk behaviour, such as alcohol and drug abuse inside the group, increases the network's risk of HIV infection . Because of institutional

or maybe individual biases, transgender people must navigate segregation while obtaining benefits from medical care. Transgender people are often ejected from their own biological families or escape at a young age due to being provoked. Transgender people live in closed networks known as Deras, under the supervision of masters, or coaches, as they are not allowed to reside on family land and have no other means of support. The continued avoidance and seclusion of the transgender community is a guarantee of a narrow-minded and exclusive mentality. Melancholy and self-destructive tendencies are frequently caused by cultural shame, a lack of social support, and pressure associated with viciousness. According to transgender campaigners, transgender suicides are dreadfully underreported. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) provided information on suicides in 2015, which accounts for 0.005% of all suicides in India during that period. This information serves as support for this attestation. In 2015, the national suicide rate stayed dichotomously at 10.6%.

The main issues that the transgender community faces include

- Discrimination
- Disrespect
- Downtrodden
- Prostitution
- Forced to leave home
- Unwanted attention
- No entry
- Rape
- Lack of educational facilities
- STI
- Human trafficking
- Social exclusion

PUBLIC OPINION

It's amazing how widely held the conclusion is on LGBT rights in India. According to a 2016 study conducted by the Universal Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, 35 percent of Indians supported legalising same-sex marriage while the remaining 35 percent disagreed. According to a Varkey Establishment analysis, 53% of respondents aged 18 to 21 reported receiving assistance for same-sex marriage. According to an ILGA study conducted in 2017, 58% of Indians agreed that gay, lesbian, and promiscuous people should have the same rights as straight people, while 30% disagreed. Additionally, 59% agreed that they should be protected against segregation in the workplace. However, 39% of Indians said that those in same-sex relationships should be prosecuted as thieves, whilst 44% disagreed. Regarding transgender people, 66% agreed that they should have the same rights, 62% agreed that they should be protected from discrimination in the workplace, and 60% agreed that they should be able to alter their legal gender.

Prominent government institutions, including IITs, are said to have considerably greater recognition rates for LGBT people. According to a 2015 poll conducted at IIT Delhi, 72% of participants agreed that being homosexual is just as normal

as being heterosexual". The LGBT clubs at some IITs, including "Saathi" at IIT Bombay, "Indradhanu" at IIT Delhi, "Ambar" at IIT Kharagpur, "Unmukt" at IIT Kanpur, and others, are open to the public.

According to a 2019 summary, Uttar Pradesh (36%), Tamil Nadu (30%), and Delhi (30%) were the Indian states/association entities that showed the highest level of recognition of the LGBT community. The highest percentage of states disapproving of same-sex relationships was found in Mizoram (87%), followed by Nagaland (63%), Jammu & Kashmir (63%) and Kerala (58%). West Bengal (60%) had the highest percentage of unsure responders, followed by Assam (40%), Punjab (39%) and Tripura (37%). One notable exception to the general acceptance of same-sex relationships was the Hindu population. Just 13% of Muslims and Christians acknowledged same-sex relationships, compared to about 22% of Hindus. Christians exhibited the most notable resistance (70%), followed by Muslims (half) and the two Sikhs and Hindus (40%).

4. LEGAL RECOGNITION OF TRANSGENDER RIGHTS IN INDIA

It is important to refer to the Indian Supreme Court's ruling in *NALSA v. UOI* to understand the current state of the transgender network's privileges in India. This ruling was groundbreaking in that it upheld transgender individual's right to their chosen, self-distinct sexual orientation and presented important explicit government assistance measures. The Indian parliament has also enacted legislation recognising transgender people's legal rights.

Constitutional Provisions

The foundation of fundamental rights and obligations is firmly defined by our constitution. Therefore, transgender individuals are entitled to the four key components of fundamental rights, just like people of the other two genders.

Right to Equality

Within the boundaries of India, the Constitution grants every person the same protection from the law and the same standing under its gaze. The phrase "any person" in this context refers to every individual, without distinction based on any categorisation, including station, sex, religion, profession of faith, and so on. In India, the term "transgender person" is used to refer to transgender people, and they are accorded the same status as people of all cis sexes. Because of their differences and lack of adherence to any one class, the transgender community cannot be isolated based only on their non-compliance with domestic laws. The definition of "person" was expanded in the *National Legal Service Authority v. Association of India*, when it was decided that Article 14 of the Indian Constitution applies to both males and females. Since the transgender community is included in the Indian Constitution as well, they are eligible for all the rights guaranteed by the comparable document.

Right Against all Forms of Discrimination

The word "sex" is a cliché about transgender security. Regardless of whether these networks are classified as male or female, they are included in the translation of the word "sex." In a landmark decision, the Indian Supreme Court determined that undeniable aspects of sex include both sex and biological characteristics.

Privates, chromosomes, and optional sexual highlights are examples of organic features. On the other hand, sexual orientation traits include one's mental self-view, the intensely felt mental or passionate sensation of sexual personality and character.

Articles 15 and 16 of the Indian Constitution provide for "sex"-based separation, which commemorates the practice of segregation based on sexual orientation. The term "sex" is not limited to the natural sexual relations between men and women; rather, it is assumed to include those who identify as neither male nor female. Articles 15(2) and 16(4) have also been interpreted to provide social coherence to these networks, such as consistency in open employment. It also grants the states the authority to devise any extraordinary plan for the advancement of these vulnerable minorities who are presently included in the socially instructive and socially marginalised classes.

These articles call for social equity, which transgender people could understand if offices and openings are reached out to them so they can likewise live with nobility and equal status with different genders. These articles read with the Directive Principles of State Policy and other international instruments to which India is a gathering. Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution guarantees individuals from the transgender network the fundamental rights of protection, self-character, independence, and individual uprightness. The State reserves the right to guarantee and recognise the residents' privileges.

The Indian Constitution makes a distinction about who is eligible to live in India in Article 5. None of the requirements listed there call for a certain sex or sexual orientation as a prerequisite to obtaining citizenship. As a result, the state must guarantee that a transgender person can express his feelings, behaviour, and character to the broader public. This articulation cannot be restricted by the state as part of the fundamental right.

Right to Life

One of the most fundamental rights under this article to live with dignity is the freedom to choose one's personality. This right is protected and guaranteed by this Article because it is the most important human right—the right to life, which the State is obligated to protect from violations. One of the most important provisions of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution is the transgender networks' reserve of the right to a dignified life. They have the whole right to speak and live their lives fearlessly when their sexual orientation is acknowledged. On the other hand, nonrecognition undermines the equivalent. Furthermore, their guarantee is reached via the right to reputation. The general population has not treated transgender people with respect; instead, they are frequently humiliated and beaten by those in positions of authority, which has tarnished their reputation and diminished their significance.

Right Against Exploitation

A variety of heinous crimes, including human trafficking and beggarly, are declared illegal and punishable by law. Article 23 of the Indian Constitution covers all forms of separation, which are forbidden, hence its scope is very broad. Inappropriate activities, including prostitution, are usually seen by the broader population. Everyone has the choice to become self-aware, and this

might be ensured in a sense when there is a right against abuse that creates an environment in which an individual is free. Transgender people are the most horrendous victims of mistreatment; because of their skewed financial situation, they are drawn into prostitution and other immoral activities and are typically frowned upon by society. The purpose of this article is to prevent men from abusing men to ensure the independence of the individual personality.

Legal Provisions

The legislative body enacts laws based on holy arrangements that confer lawful holiness through the process of establishing the class's rights. The significant Acts that implicitly but clearly establish the character of this class are reviewed below. A certain sex or sexual orientation lifestyle is not expressly or implicitly required to gain Indian citizenship, according to the Citizenship Act, of 1955, which facilitates this process. An individual must reside in India to cast a ballot (ballotter). The Indian Election Commission has gone above and above in its efforts to register transgender voters.

The General Clauses Act of 1897 defines "person" in much more comprehensive terms. A person may "incorporate any organisation or affiliation or body of people, regardless of whether fused or not," according to the Act. Although the Act's Section 13 states that any reference to the "manly gender" shall be interpreted to include women, the legal context has modified this requirement to the exclusion of any negative content. A careful reading of the above-mentioned Constitutional provisions, as well as those of the Citizenship Act of 1955 and the General Clauses Act of 1897, would demonstrate that, in reality, none of these laws dispute or impede the definition of "individual," and a transgender person would unquestionably fall within the meaning of the term.

Strangely, whether a birth or death occurs, the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, of 1969 makes no mention of the "sex" or "gender" of the person who has to be registered. The Act is neutral. All things considered, it doesn't seem that the Act's provisions mandate disclosing the sex or sexual orientation of each birth or death instance in the Birth or Death statement. Such a requirement may have been included in the arrangements of such statements endorsing the Act's Rules, which are established by the States.

While some rights are only available to Indian citizens, the great majority of the assurances under the Fundamental Rights Chapter are available to everyone. Sex-based recognisability is an essential component of personality. The transgender network is examining a number of fundamental issues, including segregation, unemployment, a lack of educational facilities, vagrancy, clinical facilities for HIV care and sanitation, depression, abuse of hormone pills, tobacco products, alcohol abuse, problems related to marriage and adoption, and more.

Access to Justice

While the US Supreme Court's ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* is being applauded by the US, India, while having the largest sacred majority rule government in the world, is still mired in the heteronormative abyss of undermining chosen sexualities. In *Jayalakshmi v. Province of Tamil Nadu*, police apprehended Pandian, a transgender person, is on suspicion of robbery. He was treated improperly at the police headquarters, which ultimately prompted him to set

himself on fire on the property. As a result, transgender man Narayana was apprehended by police in Bangalore on suspicion of breaking without being informed of the reason for the arrest or allowed to defend himself. If he hadn't assisted in identifying the various transsexual people he knew, the police would have redistributed his journal and severely damaged him. In addition, police have harassed gay persons by threatening to withhold money in exchange for their silence about their identities.

These days, the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act of 1986 and Area 377 of the Indian Penal Code, of 1860, are the legislation that mess with the transgender community. The primary law that prevents the trafficking of women and children into prostitution is the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (ITPA), 1956 (modified in 1986). The 1986 Amendment changed the scope and extent of the Act to include both male and female sex workers as well as those whose sexual orientation was unclear. As a result, the ITPA made male and hijra sex workers illegal subjects and provided a legal basis for the population of transgender sex workers to be apprehended.

The Act for Improving the Administration of Criminal Justice in the East Indies introduced the crime of homosexuality for the first time in a long time. When the Draft Penal Code was prepared in 1837, "Unnatural sexual offences" were covered by Clauses 361 and 362, which were later combined into Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code as a section dealing with offences involving the human body under a separate category of "unnatural offences." Lord Macaulay drafted Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. This framework provides discipline for the arraignment of particular categories of sexual actions that are deemed abnormal. If there is any incidence of a homosexual person or a hijra, it is usually assumed that they are engaging in behaviour that goes against the will of nature. It is obvious that this area has been utilised as much as possible to harass and harass transgender and homosexual individuals. Regrettably, there are now no restrictions on the Sex Reassignment Medical Procedure (SRS) by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) or the Indian Clinical Association (IMA). It is clear from the numerous instances of harassment and violence directed towards homosexual individuals and transgender persons that Section 377 of the IPC has been totally misused to seriously harm such a network. Section 45 of the Army Act, 1950 is a noteworthy model that penalises indecent activities, including the presentations of transgender networks. It's also important to note that sexual minorities in India lack the ability to form associations or affiliations.

The perceived individual with the ultimate purpose of protection claims, compensation, and assignment with the ultimate goal of tip advantages is most definitely not the sexual minority. In actuality, the transgender community in India exists in a precarious space plagued by discrimination, exclusion, and deliberate rejection. It is impossible to ignore the fact that separation is the exact opposite of balance and that each person's dignity will be encouraged by the acceptance of uniformity.

ROLE OF JUDICIARY

National Legal Service Authority v Union of India

In the historic case of National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India, the Indian Supreme Court ruled that transgender persons are a "third gender,"

upheld the equality of transgender people with respect to the fundamental rights enumerated in the Indian Constitution, and granted them the freedom to self-identify as male, female, or transgender. This ruling is a significant breakthrough for gender equality in India. Furthermore, the court decided that transgender persons should be given preference when applying to employment and educational institutions since they were viewed as members of socially and economically marginalised groups.

The primary petitioner in the case is the National Legal Service Authority of India. The primary goal of the case is to provide free legal aid services to the disadvantaged sections of Indian society. The other petitioners in the matter were the Pooja Mata Nasib Kaur Ji Women Welfare Society, a registered society and NGO, and Lakshmi Narayan Tripathy, a renowned Hijra activist.

A two-judge Supreme Court bench consisting of Justices K.S. Panicker Radhakrishnan and Arjan Kumar Sikri presided over the case with firm hands. Prior to being elevated to the Supreme Court, Justice Radhakrishnan served as a Standing Counsel for several educational and social organisations and held appointments to the High Courts of Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, and Gujarat. In addition to beginning his legal career in Delhi, Justice Sikri is a significant figure in disputes involving the Constitution, labour laws, the public service, and arbitration. He served in the Delhi High Court and the Punjab and Haryana High Courts before rising to the Supreme Court.

In this instance, the Court has directed the federal and state governments to permit the legitimate recognition of an individual's sexual orientation, irrespective of that individual's gender identity.

- Legal Recognition for Third Gender
- Legitimate Recognition for Persons transitioning within the male/female binary
- General Health and Sanitation
- Financial Rights
- stigma and Public Awareness

The NALSA ruling should be highly appreciated for denouncing discrimination based on sexual orientation and for providing hope and assurance to a network that has continuously operated well outside the bounds of the law. The appointed authorities have, with great confidence and foresight, granted legal recognition to all persons whose bodies do not correspond with the recognised sexual orientation that is measured after birth. One progressive aspect of the ruling had important implications for the current laws about marriage, adoption, labour, and inheritance. Specifically, these laws must now depart from the parallel arrangement of male and female to support the rights of transgender people.

The fact that the ruling was rendered only a few months after the *Suresh Kumar Koushal and Others v. NAZ Foundation and Others* case, which upheld the validity of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, is also impossible to ignore. The Court acknowledged that Section 377 is discriminatory against transgender individuals and clarified that the ruling maintains the Koushal case unabated, focussing solely on the legal recognition of the transsexual community. One of the most creative twists in the ruling was the inclusion of significant rights that are rightfully derived from the Constitution, especially the application of Article

19, which served as a rigorous intellectual exercise in acknowledging the rights of transgender individuals.

Furthermore, the Court offers very compelling remedies. As of right now, three orders have been mentioned: that hijras are currently considered to be the third sex; that transgender individuals have the option to identify as either male, female, or as part of the third sex; and that transgender individuals should receive benefits that are appropriate under administrative policies regarding minorities, as they would be considered a "socially disadvantaged backward class."

The Court subsequently issued a plethora of directives under various headings. These included some specific requests (such as the provision of HIV-positive treatment and user-friendly restrooms); some broad directives (such as the provision of medical care in all medical facilities, the draughting of various social welfare plans for their advancement, and the identification of methods for raising public awareness to ensure their social consideration); and some dubious directives (such as the bearing to genuinely address issues being looked at by them and to take measures to ensure a conscious spot for them in cultural and social life).

True chaos has emerged in large measure as a result of the ruling. Indeed, although the mainstream media and general public were applauding the verdict, several transgender people were drawing attention to its inherent problems and anomalies. Orinam has released an overview of the viewers' and aggregates' reactions. In one of them, Gee Imaan Semmalar provides a thorough analysis of the judgments' core principles and their potential repercussions. He claims that the verdict, which he considers "confusing and confounding," confuses many transgender characters. For instance, it refers to all hijras as "third gender," even though there are actual differences between the two.

The author also notes that opinions fluctuate between broad and narrow interpretations of the word "transgender," as well as between a person's self-assurance and its natural requirements. Judge Sikri's section of the definition, which categorically excludes Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGBTQ) people from the term, further restricted Radhakrishnan's expansive interpretation of "transgender." Sikri's characterisation blatantly contradicts clear portions of the ruling that state that those who identify as LGB also fall under the category of people who identify as gender nonconforming. Going on to the nine major directives provided by the Court in the ruling, at points these requests seemed to confuse transgender for hijra by using the phrase transgender/hijra many times, namely in the fourth and fifth orders. Due to this, the ruling was seen as just pertaining to the recognition of hijras as a third gender, eliminating the recognition of the umbrella term, which also includes other gender variations.

As the author points out, the biggest flaw in the ruling is likely the fact that the NALSA case was dismissed together with the whole criteria upon which the Koushal v. Naz ruling was based. When it comes to sexual direction, a person's personality is irrelevant if they are unable to communicate it. In this sense, a rule or legislation that focuses on the lead—the very expression of character—focuses on the personality itself. Thus, when Sec. 377 forbids homosexuals from engaging in same-sex relationships, it does more than just make certain behaviours unlawful; rather, it rejects the most fundamental expression of a

person's sexuality and, thus, denigrates sexuality and, consequently, character in general.

Furthermore, opinions on the need for clinical advancement approaches to differentiate self-distinguishing proof of sexual orientation are vague, if not contradictory. Judge Radhakrishnan assembled the case from the outset about the Argentinean model of sexual orientation recognition, which excludes any kind of professional approach. Instead, he suggested "psychological tests" on several instances to assess transsexual people's self-personalities. These conflicting affinities suggest that the judgment's justification and implementation are subject to arbitrary changes, which would limit the government's approach to dealing with minorities in society.

TRANSGENDER PERSON (PROTECTION OF RIGHTS) BILL, 2016

On August 2, 2016, Mr Thaawarchand Gehlot, the Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, introduced the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 in the Lok Sabha.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BILL

Definition

According to the Bill, a transgender person is someone whose gender identity does not correspond with their biological gender. It encompasses those who identify as genderqueer, transgender, intersex, and/or have sociocultural identities like hijra or kinnar. A person is considered to have intersex variants if they differ from the normative standard of a male or female body at birth in any of their major sexual features, external genitalia, chromosomes, or hormones.

Prohibition Against Discrimination

The Bill forbids discriminatory practices against transgender individuals, such as denial of service or unjust treatment with regard to:

- instruction
- work
- medical care
- access to or use of publicly available resources, opportunities, and amenities
- freedom of movement
- the ability to live on, rent out, or use property in any way
- the chance to occupy a public or private office
- entry to a public or private facility that is responsible for the care or custody of a transgender individual

Right of Residence

The measure grants transgender individuals the freedom to live anywhere they choose and the ability to live with a household. The transgender person may be replaced in the rehabilitation centre per the decisions of the appropriate court if the transgender person's immediate family is unable to care for them.

Employment

It is illegal for a government or commercial organisation to discriminate against a transgender person when it comes to hiring, recruiting, or promoting them. The measure also requires any institution that employs more than 100 people to appoint a person as the complaint officer in order to handle any transgender-related complaints.

Education

This law requires all educational institutions that receive funding or recognition from the appropriate government to offer inclusive sports and recreational opportunities that are free from discrimination to individuals who identify as transgender.

Health Care

The measure requires the government to take action in order to offer transgender people health services, such as sex reassignment surgery and dedicated HIV surveillance centres. Additionally, it requires the government to create a comprehensive medical insurance program tailored specifically for transgender individuals and to evaluate the medical curriculum to address health concerns about transgender persons.

Certificate of Identity

A transgender person may apply for a certificate of identity from the district magistrate to declare their gender. Based on the District Screening Committee's recommendations, the District Magistrate will grant such a certificate. The Committee's members will be:

- I. the Officer in Charge of Medicines;
- II. Social Welfare Officer for the District
- III. a psychiatric professional;
- IV. a transgender community representation; and
- V. a representative of the concerned government.

WELFARE MEASURES BY GOVERNMENT

The law stipulates that the relevant government must take appropriate action to guarantee the full inclusion and involvement of transgender people in society. It must also take action to save them through self-employment, vocational training, and rehabilitation. The government ought to create policies that are particularly attentive to the needs of transgender people and encourage engagement in cultural events.

Offences and Penalties

The following offences against transgender people are acknowledged by Bill:

1. involuntary or bonded work (apart from mandatory public service by the government),
2. refusing to utilise public spaces,
3. Leaving the home and the village,

4. Abuse that is financial, emotional, verbal, sexual, or physical.

These violations include fines in addition to jail terms ranging from six months to two years.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR TRANSGENDERS

The NCT will include:

- I. The Chairman of the Union Minister for Social Justice;
- II. Vice-Chairperson and Minister of State for Social Justice;
- III. The Ministry of Social Justice's Secretary;
- IV. A single delegate from the ministries of Human Resources Development, Home Affairs, and Health

Representatives from the National Human Rights Commission and NITI Aayog are among the other participants. Additionally, state governments will be represented. Five representatives from the transgender community and five specialists from non-governmental groups will also be on the Council.

The National Council on Transgender Persons advises the federal government on plans and strategies for this population and keeps track of the results of laws, regulations, and initiatives aimed at promoting the welfare of transgender individuals. In certain circumstances, it also addresses the transgender person's complaints.

TRANSGENDER PERSON (PROTECTION OF RIGHTS) ACT, 2019

The Transgender Person Protection of Rights Act of 2019 was approved by the Indian Parliament to protect the rights, welfare, and other connected concerns of transgender people. On July 19, 2019, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment introduced this act in the Lok Sabha. This bill was created in response to the 2018 transgender individual bill's expiration. This legislation was created on their behalf since transgender organisations' attorneys and activists in India fiercely opposed the transgender person bills of 2016 and 2018.

The 2016 bill was first referred to a standing committee, which released its findings on it in July 2017. The Lok Sabha introduced and approved an amended version of the bill in December 2018. On December 5, 2019, the Indian President signed it into law.

The 2018 bill not only ordered applications submitted to the District Magistrate to be screened through a District Screening Committee for the issuance of transgender individual identity certificates, but it also condemned the custom of begging that transgender people in India, such as the hijras and jogtas, engage in. Some even depend on it for employment. Five people were to be on the screening panel: a delegate from the transgender community, a psychologist or psychiatrist, a district social welfare official, and the chief medical officer. In addition, the 2018 bill prohibited obligatory reservations for transgender individuals and stipulated reduced penalties for transgender-related offences compared to cisgender-related offences under the Indian Penal Code.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BILL

Definition

According to the Bill, a transgender person is someone whose gender identity does not correspond with their biological gender. It encompasses those who identify as genderqueer, transgender, intersex, and/or have sociocultural identities like hijra or kinnar. A person is considered to have intersex variants if they differ from the normative standard of a male or female body at birth in any of their major sexual features, external genitalia, chromosomes, or hormones.

PROHIBITION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

The Bill forbids discriminatory practices against transgender individuals, such as denial of service or unjust treatment with regard to:

- 1) education;
- 2) employment;
- 3) healthcare;
- 4) access to, or enjoyment of goods, facilities, opportunities available to the public;
- 5) right to movement;
- 6) right to reside, rent, or otherwise occupy property;
- 7) opportunity to hold public or private office; and
- 8) access to a government or private establishment in whose care or custody a transgender person is.

Residence

Each transgender person is entitled to live with him and be a part of his home. A competent court may order the placement of a transgender person in a rehabilitation facility if the individual's immediate family is unable to provide for them.

Employment

It is illegal for the government or any commercial organisation to discriminate against a transgender person in any aspect of their job, including hiring and advancement. To handle complaints against the Act, each business must choose a person to serve as a complaint officer.

Education

Transgender people must have equal access to inclusive education, sports, and recreational opportunities at educational institutions supported or acknowledged by the relevant government, without facing discrimination.

Health Care

The government has to act to give transgender people access to medical services, including sex reassignment surgery and dedicated HIV surveillance centres. The government will revise medical curricula to accommodate transgender health challenges and offer comprehensive health insurance plans to them.

Identity Certificate

A certificate of identification designating one's gender as "transgender" may be requested from the District Magistrate by a transgender person. Only after undergoing surgery to transition from male to female identity may the person receive an updated certificate.

Welfare Measures

According to the Bill, the appropriate government will take action to guarantee transgender people's full inclusion and involvement in society. It must also take action for their rescue and rehabilitation, provide them with self-employment opportunities and vocational training, develop transgender-sensitive programs, and encourage them to participate in cultural events.

Offences and Penalties

The following offences against transgender people are recognised by the bill:

- (i) forced or bonded labour (apart from mandatory government service for public purposes);
- (ii) denial of access to public areas;
- (iii) expulsion from one's home and village; and
- (iv) abuse on any level, including physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, or financial.

These offences include fines and jail terms ranging from six months to two years.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

The NCT will include:

- I. The Chairperson of the Union Minister for Social Justice;
- II. Vice-Chairperson and Minister of State for Social Justice;
- III. The Ministry of Social Justice's Secretary;
- IV. One delegate from each of the following ministries: Human Resources Development, Home Affairs, and Health. Representatives from the National Human Rights Commission and NITI Aayog are among the other participants. Additionally, state governments will be represented.
- V. Five representatives from the transgender community and five specialists from non-governmental organisations will also be on the Council.

In addition to providing advice to the federal government, the Council will keep an eye on the effects of initiatives, laws, and policies pertaining to transgender people. Additionally, it will address transsexual people's complaints.

CRITICISM

The Lok Sabha's passage of this measure was sharply attacked by attorneys, activists, students, and transgender people. In several Indian towns, transgender people staged protests, denouncing the measures as retrogressive and against the 2014 ruling of the Supreme Court. The 2018 bill criminalised begging, which would have an impact on transgender people in India, including jogtas and hijras, who beg as a means of subsistence and as part of a ritual.

The District Screening Committee was designed to prevent fraudsters from obtaining government assistance programs, but it really created opportunities for ineptitude and bias. It was also stated that the 2019 act's description of transgender people differed from the definition given to the word by foreign experts in the 2018 law.

Transgender individuals have protested the measures. Some transgender people have referred to the Lok Sabha's decision as "black day" and "gender justice murder day." The 2018 bill, however, has been criticised by some as being "draconian and discriminatory". Protesters argued the 2018 bill ignored the Standing Committee's and transgender people's suggestions, institutionalising violence. Members of the Rajya Sabha Opposition declared they would not allow the 2018 bill to pass in its current form after it was passed by the Lok Sabha in December 2018. Transgender people petitioned the District Magistrate for the issuance of transgender certificates, reduced penalties for crimes against them, and the removal of provisions requiring transgender people to make reservations. These requests were deemed regressive to the Supreme Court's 2014 ruling in *NALSA v. UOI*, which violated transgender people's right to equality and other fundamental rights. Human Rights Watch has condemned the law.

The Indian National Congress pledged in its election manifesto to rescind the 2018 law and present a new one after consulting with the LGBT community ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha general elections.

5. INITIATIVES BY STATE GOVERNMENTS

The first state to implement a transgender welfare policy was Tamil Nadu. As per the policy, transgender individuals are eligible for free sex reassignment surgery in government hospitals, free housing, multiple citizenship certificates, full scholarship entrance to government universities for higher education, and the ability to start income-generating programs (IGP). In April 2008, the Tamil Nadu government formed a transgender welfare board, whose president was the social welfare minister. This was the first time that transgender-specific boards of this kind were formed in India. Transgender individuals were also issued unique identity cards and separate ration cards.

In May 2008, the Government of Tamilnadu issued a directive to provide a third-gender option for Government College admissions to better serve the transgender community's educational needs. In 2017, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University started providing free tuition to students who identify as transgender.

6. POSITION IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Examining the state of transgender rights in several countries, including Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, France, and Germany, it was discovered that Nepal was the first to establish a third class of sexual orientation ("other") on citizenship archives. This was due to the Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Sunil Babu Pant and Others v. Administration of Nepal*, which asked the legislature to repeal all discriminatory laws and recognise the fundamental rights of transgender people.

In the case of *Dr. Mohammad Aslam Khaki and Anr. v. Senior Superintendent of Police (Operation) Rawalpindi and Ors*, the Supreme Court of Pakistan

recognised the privileges of eunuchs. The recognition was a belated result of the local police's attack and abuse of eight hijra wedding performers. Because of this painful experience, Mohammad Aslam Khaki, a legal advisor who is learning Islamic law in practice, filed a private petition with the country's Supreme Court asking for hijras to be recognised as a third sexual orientation. This ruling recognised eunuchs' rights as citizens of the country, in accordance with the 1993 Islamic Republic of Pakistan Constitution. It also served as a catalyst for other initiatives aimed at defending their legal rights.

Bangladesh's current situation is as follows. While transgender people have had the right to vote since 2009, the administration's recognition of "hijra" as a third sex category in all national reports and international identification documents made it clear in November 2013 how seriously they took this policy. Germany was the first country in Europe farther to the west to explicitly recognise a "third sexual orientation" class on birth certificates. Another regulation, which went into effect on November 5, 2013, allowed parents to register their children's sex as "not specified" if they had intersex children. France became the second country in Europe, after Germany, to recognise the individuality of the third sexual orientation by rejecting the rigid natural determinism of man and woman. The 64-year-old injured party filed the lawsuit, although her genitalia were introduced as neither fully male nor fully female. She was declared male upon birthing.

7. SUGGESTIONS

- A comprehensive strategy for transgender issues has to be established and supported by society and the government. Nevertheless, plans have been developed but not fully implemented.
- A centred strategy should be in place to provide a protective barrier against their problems.
- Frameworks for enforcing the law and enabling legal action should be strengthened to address the concerns of the transgender population.
- It is necessary to take criminal and disciplinary action against those who abuse transgender people.
- Serious action must be taken against parents who mistreat, ignore, or abandon their children in light of their inherent differences.
- Ground-level arrangements for free legal guidance must be made for the transgender population.
- Schools and colleges must take a consistent and proactive role in providing transgender people with training and a sense of value.
- Social privilege arrangements need to be ensured.
- It is necessary to permit the online situation framework, job postings, and hotline for career planning and guidance.
- It is necessary to provide liberal credit offices and financial assistance to ignite their career as company visionaries or specialists.
- All open and private emergency clinics and centres must contain and transmit distinct ways associated with medical services.

- To reach as many people as possible, mindfulness programs need to be created on a large scale.
- To start, a comprehensive sex training program should be included in the school's educational plan and prospectus to reach out to conscientious students.

8. CONCLUSION

The aforementioned views make it quite clear that transgender persons who identify as other sexual orientations encounter discrimination, exclusion, and narrow-mindedness from the broader population. Private motives give way to the most well-known social incomprehension in this solitude.

Although the legal executive has taken a significant step to remove the stigma associated with the third sex, we now have the opportunity to understand the true implications of this ruling and arrange for its approval. Even dogs are treated better by the love of humanity, so when we throw money at hijras to drive them away, we are not only upsetting these people but also diminishing the most basic human ideal. Such actions will only serve to unite the transgender community in the struggle for a comparable sense of indignation that they have been seeking for a very long time. There are many different reasons why the community is now experiencing amazing reservations, which are often associated with social backwardness and are rarely thought about. Therefore, it is crucial to enact regulations, but they must also be applied to activities that support the transgender network from its inception to the fundamental principle of human respect.

Living on the periphery of society, their claim to morality, a job, and the benefit of inclusive administrations is dependent on the whims of a governmental apparatus that is apathetic. Individual rights in India are frequently hampered by legal execution flaws. There have been clear attempts by the organisation and the legal leadership to de-genderize the transgender community. The biggest challenge is the narrow-mindedness and cultural prejudice towards integrating transsexual people into everyday life. Significant education is needed, starting in the classroom, to help transgender students see themselves as vital members of society rather than as anomalies. Fighting for the most fundamental human rights will no longer be an option for the transgender community once sharpening takes place.

Women Empowerment and Gender Sensitization in India

Dr. Vasudha N*

ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the seminal issues of gender sensitization and women empowerment in the context of India, stressing their indispensability to progress and development in society as well as for national development. Though the Indian Constitution assures equal rights for men and women, deeply ingrained gender inequalities prevail at all levels of education, the economy, society, and politics. Gender-discriminative attitudes and patriarchal norms are still causing marginalization of women and obstructing their inclusive involvement in the nation-building process.

Gender sensitization is not only described as an instrument of awareness but as a transformative process to bring about a confrontation with deep-rooted prejudices and discriminatory practices. The article places emphasis on the importance of education, economic empowerment, access to healthcare, political participation, and legal protection as integral elements of women's empowerment. It also examines current policies, constitutional guarantees, and legislation aimed at ensuring gender equity while emphasizing the requirement for an affirmative shift in public attitudes.

This article concludes with the argument that gender equality is a basic human right and that empowering women holds the key to sustainable development. A transition from passive consciousness to practical change—by means of inclusive governance, gender budgeting, and community participation—is the imperative to guarantee equity, dignity, and opportunity for all women.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Gender Sensitization, Gender Equality, Social Justice, Education, Legal Rights, Patriarchy, Gender Discrimination, Inclusive Development, Policy Implementation.

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India has undertaken a daunting task of modernizing Indian society by alleviating poverty ratio and enhancing the life style of the majority of the country's population. Women have an important role to enhance the socio-economic status of any nation. Both men and women in a developing country need to play an equal role in the society. And in this process women empowerment is the most significant aspect in society. Indian constitution has provided equal rights for both male and female. But if we observe the real scenario women are still under subordination in the society. Even in the contemporary world, most of the girls are not stepping out and they don't even have primary level education and are getting married at early age. Boys are leading a good life compared to the girls and they make these differences due to their traditional ways. India is a developing nation and no country can be developed until and unless women have equal involvement in the social, political and economic development. Gender inequalities is still a deep - rooted issue in each society. In most cases, women are kept away from basic education and even health care and are victims of violations in the society.

Women empowerment is a condition when women are becoming powerful and capable to take their basic needs and decisions by own self. Not only in Indian context, but in most part of world, women have endured thousand years and have been treated as almost non-existent. Almost the entire world, regardless of how progressive they are, has long history of the threatening women.

In India gender sensitization and women empowerment is required more than in other nations as women continue to be illiterate as compared to the men and other section of society from long time. Women are not secure in this nation. They are harassed by their family and at work place due to the gender gap.

Reformation of Indian society with special reference to gender differences can be brought only by gender sensitization. Gender sensitization means attitude, roles, activities and behaviour of men and women in the society. The word 'sex' describes biological and physiological traits of male and female, whereas 'Gender' describes their roles in the society. Sensitization is to transform their prejudices and discriminative behaviour towards the downtrodden section of society like women.

'Gender sensitization' means changes in behaviour through awareness about gender equality issues. But empowerment is to shift from a powerless position to a powerful position to cross the power.

There has been intense transformation in the status of the women compared to ancient to modern era. In modern era women have a role in fields like politics, military fields, economic, service, and technology fields. Therefore, women have taken a respectable place in her own family and Indian society. Nevertheless, stopping crimes against women is still a challenge in Indian society. We can do it less through providing women autonomy, enhancing involvement and decision - making process within the family and public life. Women empowerment and gender inequality is inevitable for any country to attain sustainable development in the nation. Therefore, women are now getting involved in all sorts of activities with men. Women are working in different kind of posts like MLA, MP, IAS, IPS, Governor etc. Majority of the women are also venturing into the field of art, science and technology.

But overall, the real status of women in India is much lower than that which is visible - they are burnt, tortured for non-payment of dowry, kidnapped, gang-raped and treated as a weaker sex just because she is a woman. Indian constitution provides many rights to save the glory of women and laws against dowry. But in reality, it's not possible at ground level. Women's literacy rate is also less compared to men. Their status indicates that the real status of women in India is not up to the mark.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions for women empowerment in India forms the equal rights for women in all the way like fundamental rights and directive principles. The Constitution of India not only provides equal rights but it will also discuss empowerment of women. It instructs the state to adopt measures in favour of women. The constitution speaks of the developmental policies, plans and programmes made for women empowerment in various forms. Regardless of the efforts of the government, the most essential requirement is the transformation of the mindset of the people through sensitization. Gender sensitization is the alteration of behaviour by creating awareness of gender equality issues.

Gender sensitization theories argue that changing the behaviour of teachers and parents towards children can have a causal influence on gender equality. Gender sensitizing "is about altering behaviour and embedding empathy into the perspectives that we have about our own and the other gender. It assists individuals in "examining their own attitudes and beliefs and challenging the 'realities' they believed they knew."

Gender sensitisation is an ally to Gender Equity, Equal Opportunity and Women Empowerment for which creation of sustainable development is a Constitutional goal. The Central & State Governments are doing every effort in creating these promises in the form of Policies & Programs. The achievements made in this regard have a mixed result and there is still long way to achieve the goals of the Equitable Society, Gender Equity and inclusive Development without discrimination which can be achieved by creating awareness among the people regarding the Rights granted under the Constitution and the pro-women Acts and laws influencing women's right and empowerment in India which encompasses a complex pattern of advances and setbacks. The setbacks in development because of Gender inequalities, discrimination, denial/deprivation/ in accessibility/violence against women that presently predominate should not be ignored and bypassed. Governments are fully aware of the position resulting out of Gender inequalities and discrimination.

The Civil Societies are trying to do this by pushing the ruling Governments to take cognizance of this. But the scale of the problem is so large that we cannot keep waiting for things to take their own course since the risk caused by neglecting issues of Gender is very phenomenal and massive. The pro-active start towards Gender sensitisation is to ensure adoption of Gender Budgeting at all levels in letter & spirit.

Participation of Women in the processes of Governance is very strongly felt to fulfil the above aspirations. Commitment from the state to ensure women participation in Governance at all levels should be seen in action than in paper. The attitudinal problem of the society against women due to socio-cultural system detrimental to the safety and security of women are posing great threats.

Women are compelled to be silent spectators in all the above scenarios keeping them in a hopeless situation. It is the time to prevent crying over all the ills imposed upon women and get involved in more civilized and responsible acts taking women to a life of dignity, equity, opportunity and empowerment so that they play dominant role in the development of a strong nation. First and foremost, it should be remembered that gender equality is a human right.

A woman is entitled to live with dignity and with freedom from fear. Empowering women is also an indispensable tool for advancing development and reducing poverty. Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities and to improved prospects for the next generation. The Constitution provides for the next generation. The Constitution provides for Gender Equity, Opportunity and Empowerment by creating special provisions to overcome gaps. Patchy success still, large percentages of women are suffering from poverty, poor health, oppression and violence. Governance cannot ignore this alarming situation. It is time to look at our Policies, Programs, and the structure of society once again.

Key issues and areas of concern that need a look into for women empowerment and gender sensitization include

- Reproductive health
- Economic empowerment
- Educational empowerment
- Political empowerment
- Social status and security
- Women's Work and Empowerment
- Molestation
- Importation of Girls
- Intergenerational gender gaps and educational rights
- Health and hygiene
- Kidnapping and abduction for different purpose
- Legal Issues like Domestic Violence, Sexual Harassment, Dowry deaths, Rapes
- Police Response to Women's Issues etc....

There are gendered assumptions and gender-based social discriminations permeating through society, from organisational planning to the routine interactions in the workplace. The ill effects of such assumptions can compromise the effectiveness and success of even the most well-meaning plans. Gender sensitization training is the field-based instrument for examining gender relations and serves sufficient information concerning key factors which affect and are accountable for maintaining or alter the composition of gender relations. Gender sensitization training is also a development intervention focusing on awareness, knowledge, ability and conduct towards gender. It is about building skills, ability to convert such awareness into extremely specific tools which are usable into practice.

Law in India does try to protect women through various Acts and measures that have been passed. Some special laws include -

- The employees State insurance act, 1948
- The family courts act, 1954
- The special marriage act
- The Hindu marriage act, 1955
- The Hindu succession act, 1956 with amendment in 2005.
- The maternity benefit act, 1961
- Dowry prohibition act, 1961
- The medical termination of pregnancy act, 1971
- The prohibition of child marriage act, 2006
- Indecent representation of women (prohibition) act, 1986
- The protection of women from domestic violence act, 2005 Special initiatives for women

Government has also established commissions and plans for the protection of girl child.

- National commission for women - Jan1992
- Reservation for women in local self-government, 1992
- The national plan of action for the girl child (1991-2000)
- National policy for the empowerment of women 2001.

Women empowerment and gender sensitization is a necessary process which includes the following stages:

1. **Empowering women** - First the people residing nearby women have to shift their mindset for women. The government and other institutions have launched numerous schemes like equality for women in all fields like job opportunities, admissions etc. In today's society empowerment of women can be achieved through only if women are given equality and allowed to empower themselves. It is basic right of any Indian citizen to live without any violence and have freedom to participate in social gatherings. Gender sensitization is playing an important role to empower women.
2. **Make people understand the Significance of Gender Equality** - Gender Equality provides equal opportunities, rights for women in all aspects of life. This also talks about equality in their view, financial freedom, business, equal access in all facilities.
3. **Change of Roles** - Women's roles in society are now being modified. In current situation women now appear to be equal in all social activities. The roles that were supposed to be performed only by men in past days is now being performed by the women also. The stereo typical fixed roles are now finding a change in the society.
4. **Identification of their needs** - The roles played by female in society needs to be determined. This is governed by the age factor, urban/rural orientation, social status and educational attainment. Women have common interests, however the choices they have vary region by region.
5. **Compulsory education for all girl children** - In the Indian constitution the basic education is compulsory for all and it's highly required in the development for society. Everywhere in the world have now spent lots of

money for the education and improvement of girls and it's contributing a lot to the decrease in poverty. Educated girls get married late and earn for the survival of their families. They are more conscious regarding her health care and better caretakers than illiterate women. Women are doing multi-tasking in society but they discriminated not only in the womb of their mother and childhood but also at every stage of their life. They are performing a remarkable role in the growth of society as well as for their nation.

Our patriarchal order does not yield equal chances to women to join higher education even if they do desire. Women should be encouraged for higher education. According to Mahatma Gandhi, "If we educate a man, you educate an individual but if you educate a woman, you educate whole family". The sentence is true as a man lives only in his family but a girl when educated manages her father's family as well as her husband family too. It is known that the constitution has initiated numerous rules, laws to empower women to enhance their fortune and glory by developmental schemes but the issue confronting by women in India is still needs to understood. The highest priority of government today is towards enhancing female literacy rate, developing their skills and make them capable enough to stand on their own feet. The root cause problem of Indian society is to provide the equal opportunity in educational sector. As Swami Vivekananda quoted- "that nation which does not respect women will never became great now and nor will even in future". So in the act of creating India in the list of great nations let us endeavour to give women their rightful place.

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Dr. Rafat Anis is working as Senior Assistant Professor in Home Science at Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Government Post Graduate College, Prayagraj. Many students are doing research under your guidance. Till now you have participated in more than 50 national and international seminars and more than 10 workshops. And more than 50 research papers have been published in various general books and magazines and one book has also been published. You are also involved in the work of social welfare and environmental protection. She has also been honoured with Uttar Pradesh State Level Mission Shakti Samman and Environmental Control Board

GLOBAL ACADEMY TURKEY