

A Step towards Attaining Gender Equality

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Abstract: Today when India is celebrating the 75 years of Independence – ‘Amrith Mahotsav’. It becomes matter of top concern to reflect upon the status of the measures taken to meet gender disparities in the country. Ever Since Independence India has reported massive advancement in research and technology, has witnessed massive economic growth. However, when it comes to Gender equalization – the statistics at international level reveal that quality efforts are lacking as is revealed from the report of GDI’ 2019(GDI ‘2019 – India ranked in group 5 as compared to most of the developed nation ranking in group 1 and 2) the World Economic Forum released a report on Gender Gap in 2011, according to which, the Gender Gap Index of India is 113 among 135 countries.

To meet this challenge, consistent efforts have been made from diverse organizations at national level and world over. This article presents the initiatives taken to attain equity in gender bias at international, national and local levels.

Keywords: Women, Equality, gender, organization, opportunities.

“Find your identity, your true self, and live your mission...Your power is your radical self. Find it.”

- Aya Chebbi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Half of the world’s population is represented by the Women –the creators of entire human race. This also implies that they are the source of half of human potential, creative abilities.

The concept of Gender equality besides being a fundamental right is vital to establish in order to attain peaceful societies, as this can lead to the establishment of sustainable development with its real essence.

Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go to achieve full equality of rights and opportunities between men and women .Therefore, it is of paramount importance to end the multiple forms of gender disparities and secure equal access to quality education and health, economic resources and participation in political life for both women and girls and men and boys. It is also essential to achieve equal opportunities in access to employment and to positions of leadership and decision-making at all levels

National Development is the reflections of wellbeing and prosperity of its citizens. The human societies from generations have been male dominated. Kudos to the consistent efforts from NGOs, Government initiatives and Societal efforts that today, in India Gender equality is no more a moral pressure or social issue but a social, economic challenge

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Equal Rights have been granted to all the citizens in India, yet from generations discriminatory attitudes exist and it rules the society making women its victims; which is a sad truth of society.

To meet this challenge, consistent efforts have been made from diverse organizations world over. This article presents the initiatives taken to attain equity in gender bias at international, national and local levels.

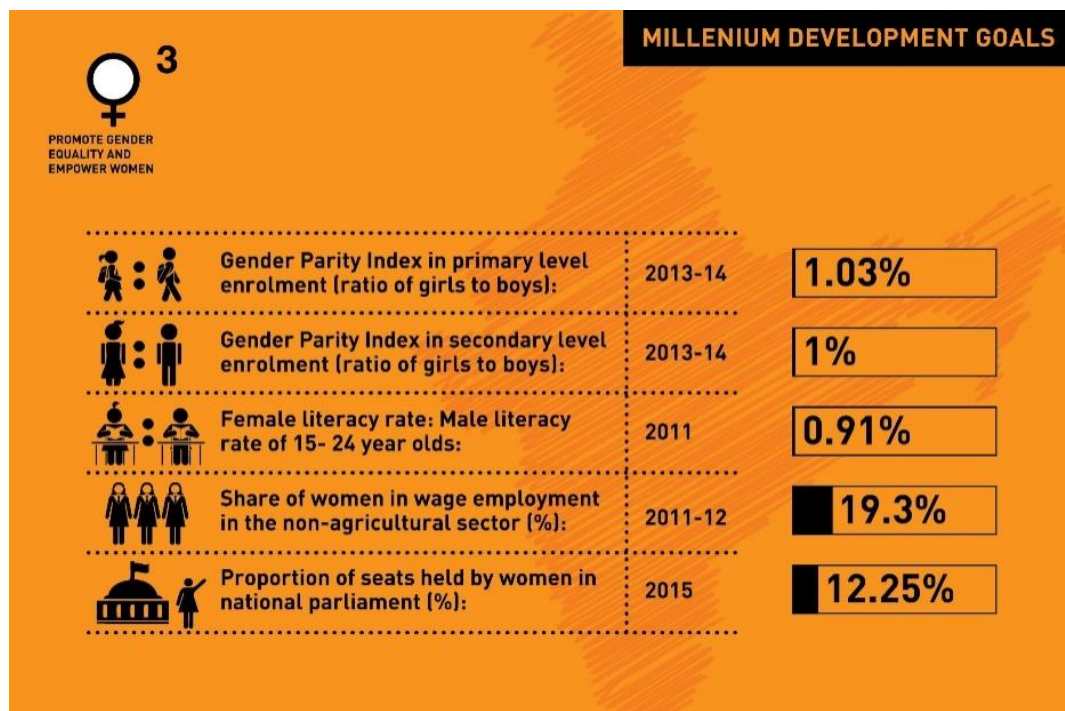
2. GLOBAL INITIATIVES IN EQUALIZING GENDER GAP

The United Nation with the aim of promoting and encouraging respect and human rights for all without any distinction in race, sex, language and religion established a commission on the Status of Women – this body was primarily formed for gender equality and advancement of women. The 5th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG5) aims at eliminating all forms of gender-based discrimination and violence everywhere in the world by 2030, and guaranteeing all women and girls equal opportunities and rights to empower them to be full members of society.

According to the UN, 143 countries in the world legally guarantee equality between men and women. But in practice, gender inequalities still remains in most parts of the world. Women and girls represent half of the world's population and yet, their potential remains mainly untapped because they are too often still subject to sexual or physical or emotional / psychological abuse and are exploited. An interesting initiative for equalizing gender gap at global level was the birth of Global Feminism in 1985 during the organization of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievement of United Nations. In addition to this establishment of Commission on the Status of Women: (CSW) by global intergovernmental bodies intensified the efforts for empowerment of women, it is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The CSW is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Celebration of Special Days for women is another initiative at global level recognizing the contribution of women in the society on 8th March. International Women's Day, International Day of Girl Child on October 15, International Widow Day on 11th October and many more.

The Millennium Development Goal also includes Gender Equity in its 3rd goal. The Following diagrams provide the summary of the same.



(Source: <https://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/post-2015/mdgoverview.html>)

Picture 1 on MDG 3

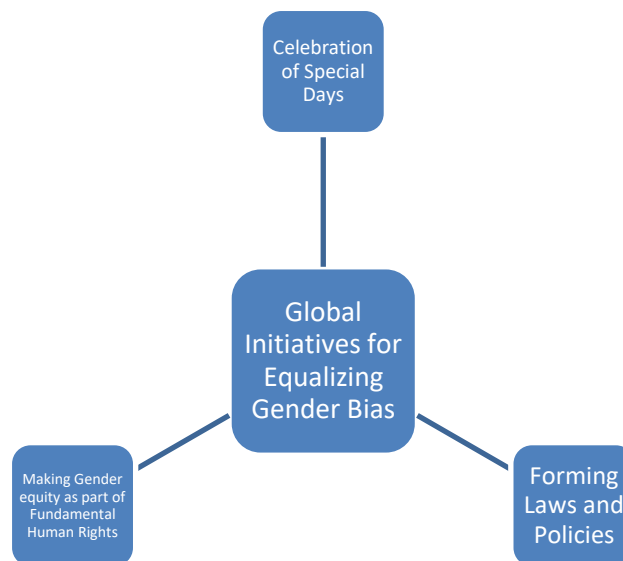


Diagram 1: Global Initiatives on bringing Equity in Gender Bias

3. MEASURES TAKEN BY INDIAN GOVERNMENT TO MINIMIZE GENDER BIAS AND BRING EQUITY

According to the National Sample Survey Report (2011-12), the workforce participation rates of male is 54.4% and female is 21.9%. As per the India Country Report, 2015 by Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation on the Millennium Development Goals, the percentage share of females in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector during 2011-12 increased to 19.3% which is higher than 18.6% reported during 2009-10 by National Sample Survey Organisation.

The matter is attended by the government through the Ministry of Women and Child development by formulating schemes such as

- Swadhar and Short Stay Homes to provide relief and rehabilitation to destitute women and women in distress.
- Working Women Hostels for ensuring safe accommodation for working women away from their place of residence.
- Support to Training and Employment Program for Women (STEP) to ensure sustainable employment and income generation for marginalised and asset-less rural and urban poor women across the country.
- Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) to provide micro-finance services to bring about the socio-economic upliftment of poor women
- National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) to strengthen the overall processes that promote all-round Development of Women
- One Stop Centre to provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence.
- Scheme for Universalisation of Women Helpline intended to provide 24 hours immediate and emergency response to women affected by violence.
- Equal Remuneration Act, 1973 provides for payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers for the same work of similar nature without any discrimination.
- Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) Scheme is being implemented as Conditional Maternity.
- The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 has been enacted, which covers all women, irrespective of their age or employment status and protect them against sexual harassment
- Beti Padhao and Beti Bachao Scheme with the objective of Prevention of gender biased sex selective elimination, ensuring survival & protection of the girl child, Ensuring education and participation of the girl child

The impact of such initiatives from government is reflected in improved life style and economy in India as compared to past 3-4 decades.

A step towards equalizing gender bias is attended at state level as well in India – measures taken by Government of Gujarat are discussed as follows: Some of the Schemes Initiated by Government of Gujarat can be summarized in the following diagram.

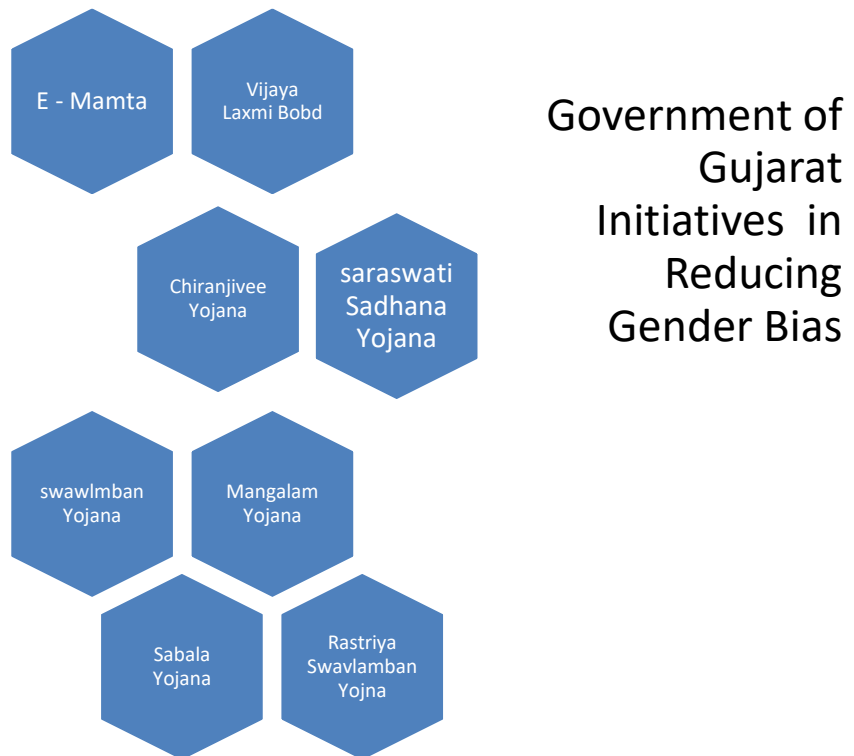


Diagram 2

The first and basic initiative was that the government established the women and child development ministry for social, economic and educational progress of women. Gujarat Government has emphasized on women empowerment by stressing on 3 aspects of development of women viz. Educational empowerment, women health, women safety for uplifting women of poor and common families and women of rural area.

Vidya Laxami bornd Scheme is developed for the girls of rural area and for the girls from below poverty line families at the time of admission in primary and secondary schools. .

To enable the girls living in rural areas to avail the facilities of learning in school “Sarasvati Sadhna Yojna” is implemented where in one lakh fifty thousand girls have been given cycles free of cost.

They have been exempted from the travelling fair in state transport buses to commute safely to schools. To ensure health and wellbeing of adolescent girls “Sabla Yojna” has been introduced. Rastriya Swavlamban Yojna” is implemented to provide pension to the old women and to the widows. For women health, E-mamta programme has been started in which pregnant women are registered through mobile technology and are issued mamta card.

Chiranjivi Yojana is introduced wherein the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe pregnant women are provided medicines, laboratory test, and operation facility free of cost

Over and Above this the effort to equalize gender bias is also made at institutional, organizational and industry level. The impact of such multiple efforts is seen distinctly in the society in form of mushrooming instances of women holding responsible positions as institute leaders, leadership positions in defence, as Pilots, Rickshaw drivers, in security on petrol pump breaking stereotypes, effectively reveal live pictures of social development and success of cumulative efforts from Government, National and International bodies.



Picture 2, 3 and 4 Initiatives at institutional level in Breaking Stereotypes – attaining equality: Glimpses of Parul University, Vadodara, Gujarat campus

Such consistent efforts will contribute in attaining gender equality, the millennium development and sustainable development goals to ensure healthy, happy and empowered lives for the women on this earth.

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