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An unbiased India: A study of gender politics post Indian independence

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Abstract

During the colonial era, politics was confined within the hands of the men, particularly a few 'privileged upper section of the society men'. Women's issues far from being discussed, were rather shushed upon. Mostly than not, women have been defined as a problem by various Indian plans and women's issues are so often written around (or under) the state's desire to control female bodies in the name of national population planning. This paper edges in bringing together a narrative of Indian planning around 'women' with several remarks on (and drawn from) Western and non-Western feminisms.

Keywords: India, post-independence, women, health, education, armed force, gender politics, governance, policy-making, NEP

Introduction

Gender issues were subsumed in poverty-related concerns and there were no such specific programs, aimed at women. In the post-independence period, the women's movement has concerned itself with a large number of issues such as dowry, women's work, price rise, land rights, political participation of women, Dalit women and marginalized women's right, growing fundamentalism, women's representation in the media etc. and a large number of Non-Government organizations have taken up this issue. Women's studies and now Gender studies is also an off shoot of the long history of women's movement in India. Various women's studies Centres have been set up and today again these are on the brink of disappearing from the radar and there is a struggle which is now going on. Though a lot needs to be achieved and there are various impediments in making this reality available to a large section of women, the women's movement has brought women's issues centre stage and made them more visible.

During post-independence India, improvements were made in terms of various areas that led to the well-being of women within the society. There were formulations of many programs and schemes that had the main objective of bringing about progress among women. Encouraging them towards the acquisition of education and participation in employment settings are the main aspects that promote women's empowerment. In spite of the initiation of the measures and policies, still, in some of rural communities, women are regarded as subordinates to men. One of the unfortunate areas is, throughout the country, women and girls are subjected to abuse and mistreatment. But with the advent of globalization and industrialization, women are acquiring development opportunities. The women, belonging to urban communities are mainly enhancing their livelihoods through the acquisition of good education and acquiring employment opportunities. The main areas that have been taken into account in this research paper include, the status of women in post-independence India, empowerment of women, gender issues in post-independent India, political participation of women and problems of working women.

This paper covers several key issues relating to women and gender in post-1947 India. A detailed discussion on the construction of 'women' by colonial and anticolonial forces prior to Independence helps place the post-Independence period in context. Because the issues are complex and intertwined, it is argued that in the Indian context, the definition of conventional feminism needs to be substantially enlarged to incorporate the vast canvass covered and the role played by women in realising the aspirations of the common people including women.

Women's issues have been taken up by women's organizations as well as mainstream political parties and grassroots movements, which is a positive development.

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The more visible forms of gender injustice, such as dowry deaths, rape, and alcohol-related domestic violence, have gotten a lot of attention, as expected. Many women leaders became involved in government-led and other institutional activities for women's welfare, such as the rehabilitation and recovery of women who had been lost or abandoned as a result of the mass migration and riots that accompanied Partition, as well as the establishment of working women's hostels and women's vocational centres.

In 1954, Communist women broke away from the All India Women's Conference to form the National Federation of Indian Women, which became more of a party forum than a unified platform for women. Perhaps predictably, there was little evidence of women's "struggles" in the 1950s and 1960s, leading to the perception that there was no women's movement after independence until the 1970s. Following independence, the Indian women's movement went through a similar period. Women have also played a significant role in peasant, tribal, farmer, trade union, and environmental movements, allowing them to raise women's issues within these movements.

Women organized themselves on a separate platform of the Nari Bahini during the Tebhaga peasant movement in Bengal in 1946-47, running shelters and maintaining lines of communication. Women's rights to finance and property were also mobilized by Communist women activists, and village-level Mahila Atma Raksha Samitis (women's self-defence committees) was formed to address issues such as domestic violence and wife-beating. Women's participation was also significant in another major Communist peasant struggle at the time, in the Telangana area of Hyderabad State from 1946 to 1950, and the leadership did pay attention to women's issues such as wife-beating.

There was a new political ferment in the country in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which gave rise to a slew of new political trends and movements, including the Naxalite movement, the JP movement, the Chipko movement, and the anti-price rise movement. Thousands of housewives joined in public rallies and those who couldn't leave their houses joined by beating thalis (metal plates) with lathas during the anti-price rise movement of 1973-75, which was organised by Communist and Socialist women in Maharashtra's urban areas (rolling pins).

However, such an understanding overlooks the inevitable phases of consolidation and quiet no evidence of women's organizations has emerged. Women were also allegedly discouraged from joining the guerilla force, and when they did, they felt they were not fully accepted. Other Communist women later complained that they were pressured to marry male comrades and pushed into working on the 'women's front,' rather than being integrated into the leadership as full members. Constructive work that follows periods of intense struggle is as essential component of the movement.

Research questions

1. What were the conditions of women in British India?
2. How is it different in the post-independence period?
3. Is there any discrimination based in gender in workplaces?
4. What are the measures taken by the government of India to promote women's education, health and equality?
5. How are Indian women finding a balance in balance in

work life and private space?

6. Are there any particular organisations promoting communal politics
7. What are some of the major achievements by Indian women globally?
8. How does independent India look, being run by female power?
9. What are the measures taken by the government to ease gender gap in payment and other chronic issues?
10. What is the role of India globally in promoting gender equality and what are the steps taken by the government in achieving the mentioned goal?

Research objectives

1. To talk about the gender politics existing in the post-independence period.
2. Position of women in various sectors.
3. Growth of women in the field of education, health and overall well-being since and after independence.
4. Various measures or schemes initiated by the government to promote gender parity.
5. Schemes initiated for working mothers for a better ease at jobs.
6. Position of women in Indian armed forces.
7. Role of India globally in fighting gender disparity.

Review of Literature

On the Political Status of Women by Annie Besant is an important book talking about the condition of women in pre-independent India. Annie Besant made a name for herself as a women's rights activist, socialist, and orator. Her first public speech, "On the Political Status of Women," launched her into the field of advocacy around which she built a career. She stated that forcing an educated, free-thinking woman to stay home was akin to imprisoning her. Such women "are being driven into bitterness and into angry opposition, because their ambition is thwarted at every step, and their eager longings for a fuller life are forced back and crushed," she said, "[but] A tree will grow, however, you may try to stunt it."

Women in Indian Politics by S. Lal provides another important insight. In today's era of modernization women have made their presence felt in almost every field and politics is no exception. Although India is known for its male chauvinist societies for ages, the ice is now gradually breaking. Indian politics is now defined and governed by majority of women politicians. It is scarcely news that women are underrepresented in Indian politics. In most parties, the women members are by and large thin on the ground if not invisible in the actual decision-making bodies and rarely influence the more significant party policies. The majority of women in the Indian Parliament are from the elite class while their public role challenges some stereotypes their class position often allows them a far greater range of options than are available to poorer women. Indian Women in Politics Hardcover by B. Goswami is about Indian women in politics and written by Goswami. This book attempts to survey these attempts at a revival of the political status of Indian women particularly in the context of the 73rd and 74th amend

Women and the Politics of Class by Brenner, Johanna is an important insight into women's movement. Johanna Brenner writes with a clarity of purpose that arises out of a lifetime of participation in the struggles of working-class women. A

major voice on the American left. --Mike Davis, May 2000

Is there a future for feminism? The debate over the direction and politics of the women's movement has been joined recently by post-feminists and anti-feminists, in addition to competing feminist perspectives. In *Women and the Politics of Class*, Johanna Brenner offers a distinctive view, arguing for a strategic turn in feminist politics toward coalitions centered on the interests of working-class women. *Women and the Politics of Class* engages many crucial contemporary feminist issues: abortion, reproductive technology, comparable worth, the impoverishment of women, the crisis in care-giving, and the shredding of the social safety net through welfare reform and budget cuts. These problems, Brenner argues, must be set in the political and economic context of a state and society dominated by the imperatives of capital accumulation. Drawing on historical explorations of the labor movement and working-class politics, Brenner provides a fresh materialist approach to one of the most important issues of feminist theory today: the intersection of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, and class. *Women in Power: Profile of Women Presidents and Prime Ministers of the World* by MEERA JOHRI talks about a woman head of the state is still a rarity as borne out by the fact that in the last sixty years, in the one hundred and ninety-five countries of the world, there have been less than a hundred women who have reached the position of president or prime minister. Thus despite all the progress, development and lip-service given to "women's issues", the reality is that women still continue to be the largest suffering minority in many parts of the world. Seen against this backdrop every woman who has served as the prime minister or president of her country represents the triumph of the human spirit and serves as an inspiration for all womankind. From Golda Meir to Margaret Thatcher to Indira Gandhi to Kamla Persad Bissessar, these women have proved that women are as good if not better than men and gender is no bar when it comes to matters of politics and governance.

Liberty, Equality and Justice - Struggles for a New Social Order by S.P. Sathe and Sathya Narayan is another important work. This commemorative volume celebrates the Platinum Jubilee of the ILS Law College, Pune, and contains a variety of essays by well-known legal experts, focussing on liberty, equality and justice, which form the basis of the Indian Constitution. The views of the authors help in a better understanding of the Indian Constitution, especially in the current Indian social context. The important topics covered include gender justice, child labour, the rights of the disabled and the elderly, the Directive Principles, Freedom of Information, the role of the Supreme Court, the relevance of classical Hindu Law in the current social context, protection of the environment and International Human Rights. The book is a treasure house of interesting ideas and comments and will be useful for all those interested in the subject.

Gender Space and Creative Imagination (The Poetics and Politics of Women's Writing in India) by Rekha is about contemporary women's writing in India and its experiential, ideological and representational topography. It offers a nuanced critique of the gender-space dialectics that underlines and often engages the attention of women writers in this country. By critically examining the selected works of Krishna Sobti, Mahasweta Devi, Kamal Desai, Ambai

and Githa Hariharan, this book puts in perspective the vibrant heterogeneity of their creative corpus and its attendant concerns. Reading afresh these narratives as empowering aesthetic and discursive endeavours that consciously remap women's gendered reality's this book helps to unravel Indian Women writing's aesthetics of creation, critique and conditioning, and simultaneously puts into perspective its activist shift from re-presentation to self-presentation.

Gender and Politics in India by Nivedita Menon presents a view of feminist theory and politics in India in the form of debates within the movement on key issues. The essays focus on important strands and arguments within Indian feminism, providing for inclusion of disparate voices without privileging any one over the other.

Analysis of study

Indian politics has been witnessing a dramatic shift towards feminist politics over the past few years. They have come a long way from being an ornamental part of rallies to influencing the manifestos of political parties, making those more women-centric. The party manifestos are now recognising even the unpaid household labour of women by assuring fixed monthly payments to women heads of household in certain states. Women in India are flourishing not only in social and political spheres but also in the economic sector. As per the *Women in Business 2021* report by global accounting firm, Grant Thornton, the percentage of women in senior management in India stood at 39 per cent against the global average of 31 per cent. The report also highlights that businesses with at least one woman in the senior management role increased to 98 per cent in India.

Gender politics in Governance

As India celebrates its 75th Independence Day today, it is an opportune time for policymakers to retrospect the journey of Indian women to date and bring necessary reforms to ameliorate the living conditions of a common woman. Indian women have been subjected to widespread injustice historically and eradication of this injustice calls for one of history's biggest movements. It is saddening that the female gender continues to suffer discrimination and ferocity in diverse forms under polished labels. The Indian Constitution provides for universal adult suffrage- the right to vote for all adult citizens regardless of wealth, income, gender, social status, race, ethnicity, and political stance - to realise the true spirit of democracy. The equal right to vote proved to be one of the most liberating rights for women and a major bulwark against women stereotypes. Equal voting rights were not just limited to the 'Right to vote' but gradually led to participation in the decision-making process, political crusading, and political cognizance. The Constitution of India guarantees all Indian women equality under Article 14, prohibits discrimination by the State under Article 15 (1), assures of equality of opportunity under Article 16 and mandates equal pay for equal work under Article 39 (d) and Article 42.

Empowerment of women as an outcome of equal rights and positive discrimination - offered by the Constitution of India - led to a new era of women accomplishers. This new era witnessed Vijaya Laxmi Pandit turning out to be the first Indian and woman President of the United Nations in 1953, and Indira Gandhi becoming the first female Prime Minister

of India, also accomplishing the title of longest-serving female Prime Minister in the world with an aggregate service period of 15 years. Quite recently in 2019, Gita Gopinath became the first woman to become the Chief Economist at IMF. Political inclusion of women in India has also been on the rise lately.

Women in the last few decades have pitched up their voices for the protection of not only their own rights but also on a variety of issues ranging from environmental conservation to human rights violations. The famous socio-ecological Chipko Movement and Narmada Aandolan forced government organizations and international institutions to withdraw from the projects. Women's movement against Khap Panchayats in Haryana led to action by the SC. The vehement protests in 2012 in New Delhi against the inadequacy of the government in providing necessary protection to women became a landmark in the history of feminist movements in India, ultimately leading to capital punishment of the culprit. The radical feminist protests in Kerala during 2018-19 for allowing entry of women of menstruating age at Sabarimala Temple is another example in case. Women also played a crucial role in anti-CAA protests and continue to influence the course of ongoing farmers' protests.

Gender politics in policy making

As per the report of the Election Commission of India, women represent 10.5 percent of the total members of the Parliament. The plight of women in the state assemblies is even worse, where they nearly account for 9 percent of the leaders. Women's representation in the Lok Sabha has not even grown by 10 percent in the last 75 years of independence. Women workers abound in India's main political parties, but they are often marginalised and refused a party ticket to run in elections. However, there are several factors responsible for the poor representation of women in Indian politics such as gender stereotypes, lack of political network, financial strains, and unavailability of resources, etc. but one prominent factor that hinders the inclusion of women in politics is the lack of political education amongst women in the country. According to Global Gender Gap Report 2020, India ranks 112th in educational attainment out of 153 countries, which reveals a stark involvement of education as a factor that determines women's participation in politics. Women's social mobility is influenced by their education. Formal education, such as that given in educational institutions, provides an opportunity for leadership and instils critical leadership abilities. Due to a lack of political knowledge, women are oblivious to their basic and political rights. The majority of Indian women politicians are highly educated such as Nirmala Sitharaman, Finance Minister of India; Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal; Mahua Moitra, an MP from West Bengal; Atishi Marlena, an MLA from Delhi; Mayawati, former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. This fuels the notion that education does play an important role amongst women when it comes to political representation. The question of literacy not only restricts contesting but also stretches to voting; to begin with, women's total engagement is low in states where female literacy is low and high in areas where female literacy is high. Furthermore, despite improvements in female literacy over the previous decade, female voter participation has remained relatively flat. It is also important to note that no such link between men and literacy can be

established. The disparities between overall voter participation and female voter participation are greater in states with low literacy rates. Males participate in the same proportions whether they are literate or not. In states like Uttar Pradesh, where only 10 percent of the women are representing in state assemblies, out of them 77.5 percent of women are graduates and post-graduates while the number is comparatively lower for men. Similarly, in West Bengal, only 14 percent of the women elected for the state assemblies have around 60 percent literacy rate, and male leaders are considerably low. The comparison here shows the stark reality of political education amongst Indian politicians, as female politicians are much more educated than male politicians but still lag in terms of representation, and portrays an evident link between literacy and politics for women in India. Due to a lack of political education and education in general, women fail to enter politics and gender equality remains a distant dream in India. India has a low rate of girl-child education and is still in the grips of patriarchy which results from traditionally assigned roles to women; however, this, in turn, has led to more dire issues where we are facing a lack of representation in policies and problems of inclusion as an absence of education makes women ignorant of these aspects and become a part of the same vicious circle. The government did make efforts to ensure women's participation in politics from the ground level by promoting women's education ("Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao") and also through constitutional amendments such as reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (Article 243D of the Constitution ensures participation of women by mandating not less than one-third reservation for women); proposal of the Women Reservation Bill, 2008 which reserves one-third of all seats in the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women.

Gender politics in primary, secondary and higher education

India's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and their signing of a Global fit for children obligations set a framework for committed action by the government and civil society at large. The Constitutional bill on December 2002 had made free and compulsory education a fundamental right for all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years, which led to the Education for all campaign of the Indian government, the national program to achieve universalization of elementary education. There is a huge gap between the policies of India's laws and forward-looking laws and its strong educational practices integrated into structures and institutions. Girls and women are often bound by gender roles and outdated traditions, which make gender inequalities apparent. About twice as many girls as boys are expelled from school or have never been sent to school, especially if they belong to a social and economic group that looks down on them. For many girls who drop out of school at the age of ten or eleven, the future means working in fields or on road construction sites and then earning a living. The NPE emphasizes key values such as equality between men and women, eradicating social ills and degrading practices, small family practices, etc. The NPE and program of action highlight the need to improve the social, nutritional, and health status of the girls and also to strengthen support services such as drinking water, fodder,

fuel, and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as an integral component of the Universal Elementary Education (UEE). The program of action emphasizes the need to revise textbooks to remove gender bias and gender-sensitize all educational personnel so that equality between sexes could be internalized through gender-sensitive, gender-sensitive curriculum, which includes gender and its practice.

1. Effective pictures and illustrations should show to the children that a woman is not merely a mother, but she can be a teacher, a doctor, a professor, an engineer, and so on. It should include in the textbooks and reading materials.
2. Depicting men and women in shared roles and one can display the talent of women.
3. One can counter prejudicial references in textbooks if noticed. Textbooks should be made non-racial and non-sexist.
4. A gender-sensitive life skills approach to curriculum transaction includes all the skills necessary for day-to-day functioning and covers areas such as family life education, legal literacy, and lifesaving skills, etc.

India has failed to provide universalization of education as it remains under the stranglehold of major stratifications leading to discrimination. Early marriage, social discrimination, and lack of education infrastructure have resulted in 60 million girls missing out on primary education and the gender gap remains a problem in the country. The Indian government has expressed a strong commitment towards education for all but still projects one of the lowest female literacy rates in Asia as there are almost 300 million rate women in India. Gender inequality persists, as social and legal institutions do not guarantee women's equality in basic human rights. It is a major area of concern at the school level and the literacy questions remain the largest juggernaut in the Indian management of education.

1. **Schooling:** India aims to meet its Millennium Development Goals for Gender Equality in Education by 2015. Despite some gains, India needs to triple its rate of improvement to reach a GEEI score of 95% by 2015 under Millennium Development Goals. In rural India, girls continue to be less educated than boys. Recently many studies have investigated underlying factors that contribute to greater or less educational attainment by girls in different regions of India. As the family size increased by each additional child after the first, on average there was a quarter of a year decrease in overall years of schooling, with this statistic disfavoring female children in the family compared to male children.
2. **Secondary Education:** In examining educational disparities between boys and girls, the transition from primary education to secondary education displays an increase in the disparity gap, as a greater percentage of women for men who leave their study journey after the age of twelve as per the Statistics on dropouts in high school transformation and influences in Rural India. The study indicated that among the 20% of students who stopped schooling after primary education, nearly 70% of these students were females. The most common reason for girls to stop attending school was the distance travel and social reasons. In terms of distance of travel, families expressed fear for the safety and security of girls, traveling unaccompanied to school

every day.

3. **Post-secondary education:** Participation in post-secondary education for girls in India has changed over time. The overall participation of girls in higher education has increased over time in recent years. However, there are ongoing differences in terms of distribution across sectors. While boys tend to better represent all academic disciplines, girls tend to focus on selected subjects while lacking representation in other fields of education. The dropout rate is higher for boys than for girls. This practice has been postponed to secondary education where dropout rates are higher for girls than boys.

Reservation of female students

Under the Non-Formal Education program, about 40% of the centers in the state and 10% of the centers in Union Territories are exclusively reserved for females. Since 2000, about 0.3 million NFE institutions catered to 7.42 million children, of which about 0.12 million were for girls only. State-owned engineering, medical colleges, and others like Orissa have reserved 30% of their seats for women. The Prime Minister of India and the Planning Commission also voted for the establishment of the Indian Institute of Technology for women only. Although India has seen significant improvements in women's literacy rates since the 1990's the level of women's education remains largely threatened.

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees women the right to equality and Article 15 (1) explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and Article 15 (3) provides for measures to the detriment of women by empowering the state to provide them with special provisions. Article 16 of the Constitution provides for equal opportunities for all, in matters relating to public employment or appointment to any office and specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. These articles should all form the basis of the formation of our legal constitution. Our natural obligation to discard practices that degrade women's dignity has been elevated to a critical level of responsibility by Article 51-A. The guiding principles of the State policy contained in Part IV of the Constitution direct the State to protect women's rights including the right to equal pay for equal work, the right to health and sanitation, the right to childbirth benefits, and to respect international conventions. Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, The Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994, the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 are some of the laws that exist because of provisions of the Constitution of India.

Gender politics in health

Women in science

Empirical evidence of gender inequality, especially in demographic terms is visible in the social organisation of Indian science. While there are no statistically significant differences in terms of writing books, articles and presenting papers at conferences, the two groups (men and women scientists) differ in terms of academic rank. While there is little apparent discrimination between men and women scientists, gender stratification has a role to play in the differential. Research performance appears to be unrelated

to the differential ranking of men and women scientists, though the glass ceiling does exist. There is no difference between men and women scientists in terms of recognition measures, such as awards and membership in professional organisations. The role of gender, as an ascriptive factor, is a reference point from which differentiation does take place within Indian scientific institutions; and there is a strong association between scientific careers for women and the class structure. Social stereotypes infiltrate the workplace; there are latent aspects in the work environment that place women academic scientists at a disadvantage. These disadvantages are a function of a "patrifocal" structure of Indian society, a general "lack of critical mass" of women scientists and a lack of "universalism" in science.

Maternity care in India

Maternity care in India has for a long time remained an exclusively women's domain. Maternity care has been overshadowed by developmental goals and educational extension practices as it were. Two trends may be seen in this regard. First, the public health and hygiene concerns that emanated from allopathic understanding of the "white man's burden". The colonial masters and their wives thought rather poorly of the dirty and unhygienic practices of birthing followed by uneducated women who produced several babies for their husbands. Closely connected with this attitude has been the second trend – that of the anti-natalist population policy followed in India soon after the turn of the past century and officially proclaimed soon after India attained political freedom in 1947. The focus had been on convincing and converting people to have fewer children, and eventually women began to be brought under the scanner when it was realised that as bearers of babies they need to be targeted. For over a couple of decades now, female contraception, especially the very high rate of sterilisation of women and institutional childbirth has been the primary high light of the population policy in India.

It is rather strange that there has not been in India the kind of passion and deep cleavages dividing the society and research initiatives around childbirth and contraception in the West. While the feminists had to struggle for long before getting the right to abort in 1969, it was given to Indians in 1971 to persuade couples to abort undesired foetuses to attain a small family. However, Indian health researchers and feminists have been interested in maternity issues now for over a decade in view of the strikingly declining proportion of girl children in the age group of 0-6 years revealed by the figures of 2001 census in India. This trend has been set off after the introduction of new reproductive technologies.

Gender politics in armed force

On August 18, 2021, the Indian military moved one step further regarding women's participation in the military. Women can now take the NDA exam and enter the armed forces after the 12th-grade board exams. The Indian Army also granted time scale Colonel rank to five women officers in August 2021. This is the first time women officers serving with the Corps of Signals, Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME), and the Corps of Engineers have been approved to the rank of Colonel. Earlier, the promotion to Colonel was only applicable to the women officers in Army Education Corps, Army Medical Corps and Judge Advocate General. Though India is now gradually

seeing several developments regarding women's participation, The assertion of the MoD regarding a gender-neutral army needs to be seen and questioned in light of women's participation and gender reforms in militaries all over the world. Nigeria, in March 2021, launched the gender policy for its armed forces. It focuses on gender mainstreaming and integrating gender into recruitment, training, planning, budgeting and operations. Nigeria is a signatory to United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security, and the implementation of a National Action Plan (NAP) based on resolution 1325 has been crucial in bringing gender reforms in its armed forces. Despite making crucial contribution to peacekeeping and women's participation in it, India has not implemented a NAP yet.

In 2007, India became the first country to provide All-Female Formed Police Unit (FFPU) for UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia. There were 105 female officers from India's paramilitary troops, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). In 2019, India's first female engagement team was sent to Congo. Despite making considerable contributions regarding women's participation in UN Peacekeeping Missions, India is yet to frame a National Action Plan based on the WPS agenda to increase the participation of women at the domestic level in India's security and military domain. Most of the reforms regarding women in the Indian military have been coming from the country's Supreme Court, which has played a crucial role in opening up the military for women, critiquing in harsh terms the arguments made by the government during the proceedings as rooted in 'gender stereotypes'. Although a series of steps are being taken, from allowing women in Sainik Schools to inducting the first batch of women in Military police, a great deal more needs to be done to make the Indian military more gender-inclusive. Increasing opportunities for women's participation in the Indian military is just the first step.

If India wants to move towards a more gender-integrated military, It needs to critically examine the military's prevalent gendered narratives and discourse. It was only in 2018 that homosexuality was decriminalised in India, and the Indian military hasn't even opened up even a conversation of allowing queer people in the military. Homosexuality is a punishable offence in the military. The distinction between civilians and military culture is provided as a reason to keep the status quo intact. One might argue that India is not ready for this conversation yet, but 'later is a patriarchal time zone' (Enloe 2004) ^[28]. The conversation needs to begin now. Women's participation without engaging with the questions of gender and sexuality in the military will perpetuate the same masculinist culture and marginalisation of women in the military.

Conclusion

Women's participation has suffered for ages and looking at the grave circumstances we are in, these raw steps are nugatory, therefore, there is an urgent need for policies that can ensure better representation of women in the country such as more strict policies and implementation of girl-child education in the country; initiatives from the recognised political parties to ensure that women receive a minimum agreed-upon representation in state assembly and parliamentary elections; passage of Women Reservation Bill; safe political space for women and debunking of the

stereotyped role of women. Extrapolating these aspects, women's political participation in India still has a long way to go, particularly at greater levels of government. However, with more female political leaders and more women practising their democratic rights, we may expect policy changes that will help India improve its political performance.

There is no doubt that Gender Disparity has a long history. The education sector can certainly play a vital role in eliminating this gender inequality. It is very important to make people aware of the benefits of gender equality. It is important to note that the inclusion of the concept of gender equality in the curriculum and the enactment of laws to eliminate gender inequality has a significant impact on the need to achieve the constitutional goal of establishing an equitable society. Education should be used as an agent for basic changes in the status of women. Education, as a human right, must include the principles of non-discrimination, equality, and justice. It cannot be a commodity sold to those who can afford it. It should be a right and a right guaranteed by the government. We should be considered a landmark women's empowerment, leading to National Development, which enables women to respond to challenges to protect the better lives of themselves and their children. These realities cannot be separated from the planning and implementation of education policies. Therefore, in the lack of constructive, purposeful, and progressive legislative changes it is clear and consistent, and can effectively deal with these facts and, the goal of the development of the Millennium will always be a hoax. Awareness about the importance of girl's education among the members of society is very important.

Hence just having more women doesn't make the institution "gender-neutral". There's a big difference between participation, representation and integration. It is possible to achieve equality in representation without actually working at the roots and making the military more conducive to women's participation. Even in terms of representation, India still needs to do much more. As of February 8, 2021, the percentage of women in the Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Indian Navy is 0.56%, 1.08% and 6.5%, respectively. Militaries the world over are masculinist organisations, and the culture is set in a way that makes the integration of women replete with challenges. Feminist Scholars have highlighted how if attention is not paid to the discursive and performative elements of gender dichotomies, the discursive structures of gender subordination remain even in a gender-integrated military (Sjoberg 2007) ^[29]. Hence it is crucial to pay attention to these discursive elements and language used in official and unofficial settings.

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