

**BA 5<sup>TH</sup> SEM**  
**SOCIAL WORK**  
**GENERAL ELECTIVE (GE)**  
**SW520G: SOCIAL WORK: UNDDERSTANDING WPMEN EMPOWERMENT**

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**Unit I: INTRODUCTION TO BASIC CONCEPTS**

**Gender stratification in traditional and modern societies**

**Gender stratification**, also termed gender inequality, is a social phenomenon in which there are inequalities related to wealth, power, and privilege between men and women. These gender inequalities may be influenced by culture, biology, or psychology. For example, women in many cultures are expected to put their careers on hold for childbearing and raising a family while men earn the money to support the family. Women are less likely to be employed and more likely to have lower incomes, which translates in most cases to poor health. Women are also less likely to be authoritative in their jobs, negotiate starting salaries, or request pay increases. As a result, men are more likely to receive promotions and are generally higher paid than women.

Gender stratification can also be defined as the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women in society. Traditional and modern societies have different approaches to gender stratification. In traditional societies, gender roles are strictly defined, and women are usually confined to domestic work, while men have more opportunities for education, work, and political power. In contrast, modern societies are more egalitarian, but gender stratification still persists in many areas, such as the workforce, education, and politics.

In traditional societies, women are expected to conform to gender roles that are defined by patriarchal expectations. Women are usually seen as inferior to men and are assigned to do domestic work such as cooking, cleaning, and raising children. Women in traditional societies often have limited education and work opportunities, which exacerbates gender stratification. In many traditional societies, women do not have access to political power, and their opinions and voice are often marginalized.

Modern societies have made great strides in achieving gender equality, but gender stratification still exists. Women still face discrimination and inequality in many areas, such as education, the workforce, and politics. Women are less likely to have access to education than men. Women are also less likely to hold high paying and high-status jobs compared to men. Furthermore, women are less likely to be politically active and less likely to be elected to political office than men.

The most significant barrier to achieving gender equality in modern societies is patriarchal attitudes that persist within society. Men are still seen as the primary breadwinners, and women are often expected to prioritize domestic work above their careers. Patriarchal attitudes perpetuate gender stratification and prevent women from achieving their full potential. This is evident in the gender pay gap, with women earning less than men on average.

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In order to reduce gender stratification in modern societies, it is essential to address patriarchal attitudes and promote gender equality. This can be achieved through education, promoting women's education and opportunities, and affirmative action programs. Women need to be given equal opportunities in the workforce and access to high paying, high-status jobs. Women also need to be encouraged to be politically active and take on leadership roles.

In conclusion, gender stratification is a pervasive issue in both traditional and modern societies. In traditional societies, gender roles are strictly defined, and women are often confined to domestic work. Modern societies have made significant progress towards achieving gender equality, but gender stratification still exists in many areas, such as the workforce, education, and politics. Patriarchal attitudes are the primary barrier to achieving gender equality, and society must take steps to promote gender equality and reduce gender stratification.

### **Gender Stereotyping**

Gender stereotyping is a phenomenon that has been present in society for generations. It refers to the generalizations, assumptions, and prejudices made about individuals based on their gender. These stereotypes are often negative and limit an individual's opportunities in life.

Firstly, gender stereotyping starts at a very young age. Children are taught what is “appropriate” for their gender through the toys they play with, the clothes they wear, and the activities they are encouraged to participate in. For example, young girls are often given dolls to play with and are encouraged to play dress up, while boys are given trucks and tools and are encouraged to play sports. This narrow view of gender roles can adversely impact their emotional and intellectual growth and limit their potential.

Secondly, gender stereotyping creates a rigid and limiting societal structure where individuals are not allowed to express themselves fully. Men are often expected to be assertive, dominant, and aggressive while women are supposed to be nurturing, empathic, and submissive. These stereotypes can lead to limited opportunities in both personal and professional life as individuals fall short of expectations set by society based on their gender.

Thirdly, gender stereotyping can lead to gender inequality in many areas such as the workplace. The stereotype that women are not as capable as men in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) has resulted in a huge gender gap in these fields. This gap limits women's job opportunities, income, and career advancement.

Fourthly, gender stereotyping affects men as well as women. Men are often discouraged from showing emotions or being sensitive, as these are seen as “feminine” traits. This can limit their emotional growth and lead to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.

In conclusion, gender stereotyping is a form of discrimination that affects individuals on multiple levels. It serves to limit opportunities for personal growth and perpetuates gender inequality in society. It is important to encourage individuals to express themselves authentically and to create a more inclusive and tolerant society where everyone is allowed to reach their full potential.

### **Gender Discrimination**

Gender discrimination is a form of prejudice or unfair treatment based on an individual's gender. It involves the practice of treating individuals differently based on their gender, which may lead to unequal opportunities, treatment, pay, and access to resources. Gender discrimination affects both men and women, although women bear the brunt of its

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consequences. It denies women of their basic human rights and perpetuates a culture that promotes inequality and gender disparity.

Gender discrimination is commonplace in workplaces, education systems, and even in social settings. Women are often paid lesser salaries than their male counterparts for the same job, and their opportunities for promotion are limited. Women are also more likely to experience sexual harassment, and they often face barriers when accessing healthcare services. The discrimination against women also affects their political and economic empowerment, limiting their potential to make meaningful contributions that could benefit their communities.

To combat gender discrimination, it is essential to address the root causes and create awareness about its impact. Political leaders should enact and implement policies that promote gender equality and reduce the gender pay gap. Education systems should also facilitate equal opportunities for men and women and promote equal access to education for both sexes. Furthermore, workplaces should have policies that prevent sexual harassment and make it clear that discrimination against women will not be tolerated. Ending gender discrimination is essential for promoting equal human dignity for all genders and building a world that upholds these values.

### **Violence in Family and Community**

Violence in family and community is a grave concern that confronts society. It is a form of behaviour that can manifest in several ways, such as physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse. Violence in family and community is dangerous, and it can have a long-lasting impact on the victim, affecting them physically and emotionally. It also has economic implications to society, as it can lead to the loss of lives, property, and productivity. Therefore, it is critical to address violence in family and community to prevent it from occurring and to provide support to victims.

The impact of violence in family and community can range from short-term to long-term. The immediate harm of violence can lead to injuries such as broken bones, bruises, and cuts. However, the long-term effects of violence can be more severe. Children and women who suffer violence in the family are at higher risk of depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and substance abuse. In severe cases, it can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which can affect the victim's cognitive and emotional responses to situations.

Violence in family and community can create a toxic environment that can lead to a cycle of abuse. Children who grow up in violent homes may learn to become abusers in their adult lives, while women who suffer from domestic abuse may become trapped in abusive relationships, leading to more violence. Therefore, it is essential to provide support to victims to prevent them from becoming trapped in the cycle of abuse. Community centers, shelters, and trauma counselling services are some of the strategies that can help provide assistance to victims.

Violence in family and community has economic implications on society. Besides from the cost of healthcare and medical treatment for victims, it can also lead to loss of productivity. Victims of domestic violence may require time off from work to seek treatment, leading to a loss of income. Moreover, violence in the neighbourhood can lead to the destruction of properties, which can lead to economic losses for individuals and businesses in the community.

In conclusion, violence in family and community is a concerning issue that can have far-reaching consequences. It is essential to raise awareness about the issue and provide support to victims. Society can work together to create a safe and nurturing community for everyone.

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By doing so, we can help prevent violence in family and community and ensure that victims receive the proper care they need to heal and move forward.

### **Reasons for violence in Family and Community**

Violence in family and communities can have a devastating effect on individuals and society as a whole. There are many reasons that can give rise to the violence in the family and community. One of the significant reasons for family violence is a lack of communication between family members. Communication is the key to building a healthy family relationship. When family members fail to communicate with each other effectively, it can lead to conflicts, misunderstandings, and even violence.

Another reason for violence in families and communities is poverty. Poverty causes stress, frustration, and desperation, leading to aggressive behaviour. People living in poor communities have lower levels of education and lack access to basic resources, making them more vulnerable to violence. Unemployment, job insecurity, and poverty can give rise to violence as it not only destroys the individual's self-esteem but also puts an immense strain on the family and community relationships.

Additionally, cultural and societal norms that allow for violence can also contribute to violence in families and communities. For example, in some societies, violence is seen as an acceptable way for men to exert power and control over women, leading to domestic violence. Similarly, gang culture is pervasive in many communities, and young people feel pressure to conform and belong, leading to violence. It is essential that cultural and societal norms are challenged to prevent and reduce violence in families and communities. Overall, family and community violence have deep-rooted and complex causes that require a multifaceted approach for prevention and intervention.

### **Major Feminist thoughts: Social and Radical**

Feminism is a movement that aims to achieve equality between men and women in all spheres of life. It is a complex system of thought that has evolved over time, and there are various schools of feminist thought. Two major schools of feminist thought are social feminism and radical feminism. Social feminism is concerned with the social and economic aspects of women's oppression, while radical feminism seeks to redefine gender relations and overthrow the patriarchy.

Social feminism addresses women's oppression as a social and economic issue. Social feminists believe that women are oppressed because of their gender, and that this oppression is perpetuated by social institutions such as the family, the workplace, and the state. They argue that women's economic and social needs are not met, and that this leads to their further marginalization. Social feminists advocate for policies that redress these imbalances, such as affirmative action, equal pay, and childcare support.

Radical feminism is a more radical and transformative approach to feminism. It seeks to challenge the very foundations of gender relations and to create a genderless society. Radical feminists argue that the patriarchy is the root cause of women's oppression, and that gender is a socially constructed category that perpetuates inequality. They advocate for a radical transformation of society, including the destruction of gender roles, the end of patriarchy, and the promotion of women's empowerment.

The social and radical feminist perspectives have different goals and objectives. While social feminists seek to address the economic and social imbalances that perpetuate women's oppression, radical feminists seek to challenge the very foundations of gender relations.

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Both approaches are important, and they are not mutually exclusive. They demonstrate the diverse and multi-layered nature of feminism as a movement.

In conclusion, social feminism and radical feminism are two major schools of feminist thought that address women's oppression from different angles. Social feminism is concerned with the social and economic aspects of women's oppression, while radical feminism seeks to challenge the very foundations of gender relations. Both approaches are crucial to achieving gender equality, and they demonstrate the diverse and multi-layered nature of feminism as a movement. Feminism is a continual process of critique and reflection, and both schools of thought offer valuable insights into the ways in which we can transform society to achieve true gender equality.

### **Social Feminism:**

Social feminism is a political ideology that emerged in the late 19th century during the feminist movement. This ideology advocates for women's rights and equality with men in all aspects of life, including social, economic, and political domains. It also highlights the interdependence of gender and class struggles, which suggests that women's oppression results from the underlying power relations that exist between different social classes. Thus, individuals who support social feminism aim to counteract social inequality not only between genders but also between different socioeconomic classes.

One of the primary goals of social feminism is to eliminate gender-based discrimination in society. Synonymous with democratic socialism or socialism, social feminism believes in women's rights to access reproductive health, civic rights, and education. Therefore, this ideology strives to address systemic issues that affect women's lives, such as the gender pay gap, unequal access to education, and harassment and abuse in the workplace. The social feminist movement prioritizes building a society that is equal for everyone, not only limited to select individuals from privileged backgrounds but across all socioeconomic groups. Social feminism is an attempt to build a society that promotes equal autonomy and opportunity for all. It recognizes the need for the state to be involved in social welfare policies that help narrow the gap between the privileged and the marginalized sections. One way social feminism seeks to achieve this is by prioritizing the provisions of social benefits and social services like free healthcare, subsidized housing and education. Social feminism is an ideology that seeks to empower marginalized or underprivileged women and fight for their rights to access education, equal pay, and equal economic opportunities. In conclusion, social feminism is a political ideology that advocates for women's rights to be extended beyond the right to vote and encompasses the entire spectrum of existence, including education, healthcare, civic and economic rights.

### **Radical Feminism**

Radical feminism is a feminist theory that seeks to challenge and eliminate the root cause of gender discrimination and oppression. Unlike other forms of feminism, which focus on advocating for women's rights within the existing social, political, and economic structures, radical feminism aims to fundamentally transform these structures by completely uprooting the patriarchy.

Radical feminism emerged during the 1960s and 70s as a response to the limitations of liberal and socialist feminism. It is characterized by its emphasis on the intersectionality of gender with other forms of oppression, including race, sexuality, and class. Radical feminists believe that the oppression of women is not a result of individual or cultural attitudes but is

instead deeply ingrained in the structures of society. In this view, the patriarchy is not just a system of male-dominated power, but a fundamental socialization process that shapes the behaviour of both men and women.

Radical feminism encompasses a range of ideas and practices, but its core principle is that the elimination of patriarchy is essential to achieving gender equality. To achieve this goal, radical feminists advocate for a range of strategies, including consciousness-raising, direct action, and self-defence. They also believe in the importance of women-only spaces and the liberation of women's bodies from patriarchal control. Arguably, its most controversial claim is that the oppression of women is so ingrained in society that it would be impossible to achieve gender equality without the complete dismantling of social, political, and economic systems as they currently exist.

## **UNIT II: PERSPECTIVES OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA**

### **Problems Faced by women in India: Social, Economic, and Political**

India is a developing country that is home to over 1.3 billion people. Despite the country's rapid economic growth in the past two decades, gender inequality is still rampant throughout India's social, political and economic spheres. Despite numerous reforms and policies being implemented, women in India continue to face immense social, political and economic problems. This essay will analyze the Social, political and economic problems faced by women in India.

***Social discrimination*** is one of the most significant problems that women face in India. The patriarchal system and rigid gender roles in India have created a structure where women's voices are often ignored. From the moment they are born, girls are discriminated against in many aspects of life. Female infanticide, girl-child marriages, and honour killings are still prevalent in many parts of the country. Moreover, women are frequently made to feel unsafe in public spaces. The rampant sexual harassment and violence that Indian women are subjected to illustrate the seriousness of this issue.

***In terms of Political discrimination***, women remain grossly underrepresented in Indian politics. Although there have been several female political leaders, the Indian parliament and state assemblies consist of just about 23% of women. Women face numerous hurdles in entering the political space, including gender bias, lack of support from political parties, and a lack of financial resources. These factors have further perpetuated gender inequalities, particularly in terms of policymaking and women's representation.

***Economic inequality*** is another major issue faced by women in India. As per records of 2019, the gender pay gap in India was 19%, implying that women earn 19% less than men for performing the same job. A larger proportion of women remain unemployed despite being well-educated due to the lack of opportunities available to them. Moreover, they are frequently engaged in low-paying and labour-intensive jobs, particularly in the unorganised sector. Due to this, Indian women tend to be financially dependent on their husband or father, making them vulnerable if their husband passes away or leaves the family.

The government has implemented several laws, policies and schemes to empower women and mitigate these issues. For instance, laws such as Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, and Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 were passed to eradicate the issues of dowry and domestic violence against women. Additionally, schemes such as The Women Empowerment Scheme, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh and Mahila E-Haat have been implemented to support Women financially and provide employment opportunities. However, these efforts still lack proper implementation, resulting in inadequate outcomes.

In conclusion, Women in India continue to face significant social, political and economic problems. It is crucial that India's policymakers continue to adopt effective measures to support and empower women, creating a society where women have access to equal opportunities in all spheres of life.

### **Social Problems faced by women in India**

India is a country with a diverse population and rich cultural heritage, but unfortunately, it is also a country where women have been facing social problems for a long time. Despite the efforts made by the Indian government to promote gender equality, women in India still face a wide range of challenges. One of the biggest challenges is gender-based violence. Women in India have to deal with domestic violence, dowry-related violence, sexual harassment,

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rape, and acid attacks. Such violence has a profound effect on women's physical and mental health, and it is a major obstacle to their social and economic development.

Another social problem faced by women in India is discrimination in education and employment. Women in India are often deprived of the right to education, especially in rural areas, and they are not given equal opportunities in the job market. They are paid less than men for the same work, and they are often employed in low-paying and low-status jobs. Discrimination against women in education and employment not only robs them of their basic rights but also limits their contribution to society.

Finally, the lack of political representation for women is a social problem faced by women in India. Despite the legal provisions for reservations for women in political bodies, only a small percentage of women are represented in parliament and state legislatures. This results in a lack of focus on women's issues in policymaking and a lack of accountability for officials who fail to address women's concerns. Political representation for women is crucial for ensuring their participation in decision-making processes and for making policies that serve the needs and interests of women in India. In conclusion, the social problems faced by women in India are complex and multifaceted. These problems require a coordinated effort from the government, civil society, and individuals to promote gender equality and create a safe and inclusive society for women.

### **Economic problems faced by Women in India**

Women in India face several economic problems, resulting in a gender gap in various economic indicators. One of the biggest economic problems faced by women in India is the lack of equal pay for equal work. Despite legal provisions, women tend to earn less than men for the same job, often leading to their economic marginalization. This gap is due to many reasons, including societal stereotypes that deem jobs suitable for men, discrimination in the workplace, and lack of opportunities.

Another major problem faced by women in India is the lack of access to formal credit. Women entrepreneurs and self-employed women face significant challenges in accessing credit compared to men. This issue can have serious implications for small businesses, where money is needed to fuel expansion and growth. Women also face challenges in getting loans due to limited collateral and lack of financial literacy.

Lastly, women in India also face challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities. Women often take on the caregiving responsibilities for their families, leading to less time spent at work and fewer opportunities for economic growth. This challenge can further exacerbate economic issues among women, especially those who require higher wages to meet the needs of their families. To overcome these economic problems, measures need to be taken to create more opportunities, eliminate discrimination, and bridge the gender pay gap.

### **Political problems faced by Women in India**

India is a nation that boasts of progress and development, but unfortunately, the nation is still grappling with the persistent issue of political problems faced by women. Despite the long-standing promise of gender equality and promising growth in women's empowerment, women in India continue to experience political oppression, discrimination, and marginalization. Women in the country continue to face several political problems, including gender-based violence, limited political representation, and curtailed legislative rights.

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One of the most pressing political problems faced by women in India is gender-based violence. Women are often victimized by physical, mental, and sexual violence, which hinders them from being active participants in political life. This violence not only undermines the dignity of women but also limits their opportunities to fully engage in political activities. Moreover, women face barriers in accessing resources, such as education and health, which further curtails their ability to participate in the political process.

Another major political problem faced by women in India is limited political representation. Despite being a democracy, there is a meager representation of women in politics, both at the national and state levels. Women are dramatically underrepresented in Parliament, legislative bodies, and government agencies, with only a fraction of decision-making power. However, even when women do make it in public office, they are still subject to harassment, discrimination, and violence from their male colleagues.

In conclusion, despite the commendable steps taken to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in India, the issues of political oppression, discrimination, and marginalization persist. The government must implement policies that ensure the political participation of women and create a safer environment. Additionally, NGOs and other organizations must work toward empowering women and supporting them to engage in political processes, such as voter registration and candidate nomination. Only then will the nation truly achieve democratic representation and gender equality.

### **Changing Role and Status of Women in India**

Over the last few decades, India has come a long way in terms of women's rights and gender equality. The role and status of women in India have undergone a significant transformation in recent times. Historically, Indian women have been oppressed and marginalized.

However, the changing socio-economic and political scenario has brought about a gradual shift in their position in society. In this essay, we will explore the changing role and status of women in India and the various factors that have contributed to this change.

One of the primary reasons for the changing status of women in India is the increased access to education. Education has helped women in breaking free from the traditional roles assigned to them by society. Women are now more aware of their rights and their capabilities. This has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of women entering the workforce. Women are now occupying positions in various fields, which were previously considered taboo. More and more women are now holding top positions in various organizations and institutions, challenging the traditional patriarchy.

The government has played a vital role in the empowerment of women in India. Various policies and schemes have been implemented to provide equal opportunities to women in different fields. The reservation system has also helped women attain political representation. The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian constitution have ensured reservation for women in local bodies and Panchayats. The government has also launched various programs to encourage entrepreneurship among women. These initiatives have helped women in India become financially independent, making them less dependent on men.

Another significant factor that has contributed to the changing role of women in India is the women's rights movement. Over the years, women's advocates and activists have fought hard to raise awareness about the issues faced by women in India. The #MeToo movement, for instance, has highlighted the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault against women in the workplace. Feminist movements have helped eradicate notions of male superiority and promote gender equality. These efforts have encouraged women to speak up about their rights and fight for what they deserve.

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Despite the progress made, there is still a long way to go in terms of gender equality in India. Women in rural areas still face a lot of discrimination, and the gender wage gap persists. Moreover, many women are still subjected to social evils like dowry, female foeticide, and child marriage. As the country continues to develop economically, it is crucial that women's rights are included in the national agenda. India must ensure that every woman has equal access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

In conclusion, the changing role and status of women in India reflect a positive shift towards gender equality. Access to education, gender-inclusive policies, activism, and social awareness have all contributed to this transformation. However, to achieve true gender equality in India, it is necessary to address the issues faced by women in rural areas and other marginalized groups. A society that treats its women equally is a society that is empowered, progressive, and prosperous.

### **Women Empowerment: Concept and Objectives**

**Concept:** Women Empowerment is a critical aspect of human development. It refers to the process of giving women the freedom, rights, and opportunities that enable them to take control of their lives and make decisions that have a positive impact on their families and society as a whole. It is essential to empower women since they face various gender-based discrimination and inequality, which hampers their growth and development. Empowering women has a positive impact on society in terms of improving social, economic, and political conditions.

Empowering women means providing them with access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, which is essential to their personal, social, and economic development. Education is essential for women to develop the skills and knowledge required to pursue a career and make informed decisions in life. Health care provision is essential to ensure that women are healthy, thereby enabling them to work productively and contribute to the growth of the economy. Economic empowerment is critical in ensuring that women have the financial power to control their lives and make independent decisions.

Women empowerment has various social, economic, and political advantages. Empowering women leads to the improvement of standards of living, reduces poverty levels, and enhances economic growth. Women empower each other by creating economic opportunities for each other and holding leadership positions as decision-makers in various sectors. Empowerment leads to a reduction of gender inequalities and discrimination, thereby promoting gender equality. Women also get a voice in political processes, increasing their representation in critical decision-making processes that affect their lives and communities. Women empowerment transforms society by addressing issues such as gender inequality, poverty, and social injustices. It is therefore critical and needful to educate, encourage and promote Women empowerment in every aspect.

### **Objectives**

Women's empowerment is a critical goal in any society that prioritizes equality and justice for all. This objective has become a key component of sustainable development, and it requires extensive efforts to raise women's social, economic, and political status. As a result, numerous programs globally focus on empowering women in a variety of areas, including education, health, economic opportunities, and political representation. Here are basic five objectives of women empowerment:

1. **Promoting access to quality education:** One of the primary objectives of women empowerment is to promote access to quality education among women and girls. Education is a powerful tool that enhances women's social and economic standing. Women who are educated have better job opportunities, earn more income, and are better equipped to provide for their families. Additionally, women's education leads to improved health outcomes for themselves and their children, which contributes to the country's overall development.
2. **Improving health outcomes for women and girls:** Another critical objective of women empowerment is to improve the health outcomes of women and girls. Many women in developing countries lack access to quality healthcare, which leads to high maternal and infant mortality rates. Women's empowerment efforts focus on increasing access to maternal healthcare services, educating girls about reproductive health, and raising awareness about breast cancer and other prevalent health issues affecting women.
3. **Creating economic opportunities for women:** Women are vital contributors to economies worldwide, and providing them with economic opportunities is essential for their empowerment. Women's economic empowerment initiatives focus on providing women with education and training, access to capital, and business development services that enable them to start and grow businesses. When women have the opportunity to participate in the formal job market, it increases their economic independence and stability, which results in more significant participation in society and decision-making.
4. **Increasing political participation and representation for women:** Women's presence in the political arena is critical for ensuring equal representation and decision-making. Women's empowerment initiatives focus on increasing women's participation in political, civic, and public life by creating an enabling environment that removes barriers to women's participation. This objective requires increasing the number of women in leadership positions, reducing gender stereotypes, promoting equal opportunities for women, and supporting women's rights organizations and movements.
5. **Eliminating violence against women:** This objective is essential in the context of women empowerment as women are disproportionately affected by violence, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Gender-based violence is a significant barrier to women's empowerment, limiting their participation in public life, education, and opportunities. Efforts aimed at eliminating violence against women include providing legal protection, education and awareness-raising, promoting gender-equal attitudes, and providing support services to victims of violence.

In conclusion, women's empowerment is a complex process that requires extensive efforts by governments, civil society, and international organizations. It is critical to promote policies and programs that ensure women's full participation and inclusion in society. The five objectives outlined above demonstrate the importance of providing women with access to education, health services, economic opportunities, political representation, and eliminating violence against women.

## **WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AS HUMAN AND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT**

**As a Human Right:** Women empowerment refers to the process by which women gain equality in society, allowing them to have access to the same opportunities as men. It

includes the ability to make their own choices, have control over their lives, and be free from gender-based discrimination. Women empowerment is a human right that is recognized internationally, and it is essential for the advancement of society as a whole.

It is a fundamental right of every human being to be treated equally, regardless of their gender. Women empowerment is a vital aspect of this principle, as it provides them with the opportunity to participate fully in society. In many parts of the world, women are still treated as second-class citizens and are excluded from decision-making processes. This is a violation of human rights, as it denies them the opportunity to exercise their freedom of expression and pursue their dreams.

Women empowerment is also necessary for reducing poverty and fostering economic growth. Women make up half of the world's population and are responsible for a significant portion of economic activity. However, they are often excluded from the formal economy and are unable to access resources or education that would enable them to become self-sufficient. By empowering women, economies can grow and poverty can be reduced.

Women have the ability to create and run successful businesses, but they need support and opportunities to do so.

Gender-based violence is also a grave violation of human rights, and women are more likely to experience it than men. Women empowerment can help prevent and reduce gender-based violence by providing them with the tools and resources necessary to protect themselves. It also includes education on consent and healthy relationships, which is essential for reducing the prevalence of violence against women.

In conclusion, women empowerment is a human right that is essential for the advancement of society. It enables women to have control over their lives and make choices that determine their destiny. Women empowerment is necessary for reducing poverty, fostering economic growth, and preventing gender-based violence. It is time to recognize the importance of women empowerment and work towards creating a world where women have equal access to opportunities and resources.

**As a Constitutional right:** Women empowerment means giving women the power to create their own lives and enable them to live with dignity and equality. It is a collective process that involves supporting women's rights and access to resources and opportunities. One of the central drivers of women empowerment is the recognition of women's constitutional rights. These rights are crucial in ensuring that women have a voice and representation in decision making and can participate fully in the social, economic, and political life of their communities.

The concept of women empowerment is not only a moral and humanitarian issue but also a legal issue. In many countries, the constitution provides the framework for women empowerment. The constitution safeguards the fundamental rights of women and prohibits any form of discrimination based on gender. The constitution obligates the state to protect and promote the rights of women and ensures their full participation in the development process of the country. Women's constitutional rights guarantee moral and ethical standards and ensure that women are given equal opportunities, rights, and freedoms like men. Constitutional rights play a crucial role in promoting gender equality and empowering women. The constitution guarantees equal protection of the law for all citizens without discrimination. The constitutional rights of women include the right to education, freedom of speech and expression, equal pay for equal work, and political participation. These rights enable women to claim their social, economic, and political rights and become active participants in the development process of their country. Women empowerment, therefore, is not only important for women but for the development of the nation as a whole.

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The constitutional rights of women have been recognized in many countries, but there are still many challenges to overcome. Women empowerment cannot be achieved without a supportive and enabling legal environment. In many countries, women still face discrimination and violence, mainly because of the lack of a strong legal framework that protects their rights. To address this situation, governments must enact laws and policies that promote gender equality and empower women. These legal provisions must be supported by effective implementation mechanisms that ensure women's constitutional rights are respected and upheld.

In conclusion, women empowerment is a critical human rights issue that must be addressed through constitutional rights. Women's constitutional rights guarantee the protection and promotion of their rights and ensure their full participation in social, economic, and political life. Governments must take proactive steps to promote gender equality, including enacting laws and policies that promote women's rights and creating enabling environments that enable women to achieve their full potential. Women empowerment is not only critical for women but for the development of the entire nation. Therefore, women's constitutional rights must be respected and upheld to realize the full potential of women in society.

## **UNIT III: KEY FRAMEWORKS TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

### **Women in Development**

Women in development (WID) is a concept that refers to the integration of gender issues into development plans and policies. The WID approach addresses the unequal distribution of resources, wealth and power between men and women in many societies worldwide. WID is focused not only on advocating for women's rights but also on ensuring that women have equal access to resources and opportunities so that they can participate fully in economic, social, and political development.

The WID approach starts by recognizing the essential role that women play in development. For example, women are often responsible for a significant share of agricultural labor in many rural areas, and they typically have a deep understanding of local environmental and community issues. Moreover, the WID approach recognizes that women are often excluded from decision-making processes regarding development projects, resulting in the underutilization of their skills and knowledge.

WID achievements include legislation to secure women's legal rights to own property, receive inheritance and be protected from gender discrimination. In addition, the WID approach has contributed to the provision of more opportunities for women to participate in development - both as beneficiaries of projects and as active participants in planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs.

However, the WID approach has been criticized for assuming that the solution to the problem of gender inequality is to ensure that resources and opportunities are equally distributed. Many scholars argue that this approach does not challenge broader structures, such as patriarchy, and therefore reinforces the status quo. That is why women-centered approaches, such as gender and development (GAD), which take into account gender power relations, have emerged in recent years.

In conclusion, women in development should be a fundamental component of development plans and policies. WID has played a significant role in drawing attention to and addressing gender inequality in economic, social, and political areas. However, it is essential to understand the limitations of the WID approach and support the development of more women-centred strategies, such as GAD, to achieve gender equality fully.

### **Women and Development**

Women and development is an approach that focuses on addressing the gender inequalities that exist in society. It recognizes the important role that women play in development and aims to empower them by giving them access to resources, education, and opportunities. Historically, women have been marginalized and excluded from the development process, which has limited their ability to contribute fully to society. However, the women and development approach acknowledges that women are valuable agents of change who can drive progress in their communities, countries, and the world at large. The women and development approach has several key goals, including:

1. Empowering women: This involves providing women with access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities so that they can achieve their full potential.
2. Reducing gender inequalities: This includes addressing issues such as unequal pay, discrimination, and gender-based violence.
3. Increasing women's participation in decision-making: Women's voices must be heard and their perspectives must be taken into account when making important policy decisions.
4. Improving access to reproductive health services: This includes providing access to contraception, safe abortion, and maternal health services.

Overall, the women and development approach is essential in creating a more equitable and just world. By empowering women and reducing gender inequalities, we can create a more sustainable world that benefits everyone.

### **Gender Development Index**

Gender Development Index (GDI) is a measure of gender-based development that provides an estimated measurement of gender inequality for a given country or region. It is calculated using data on health, education, and income. The GDI is a crucial tool that is used to evaluate and monitor gender developments in various parts of the world. The index provides insights into issues like poverty, education, and health that affect people in different gender categories.

The index was introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a part of its Human Development Report. The GDI takes into account the differences between men and women in several aspects of life. It provides a measure of gender equality across the three dimensions of development: health, education, and income. The GDI scores are calculated using the same Human Development Index (HDI), but adjusted to reflect gender disparity.

GDI measures the ratio of human development achievements in terms of the female and male population. According to the UNDP, the GDI can be represented as a simple percentage, where 0% represents an absolute lack of gender equality, and 100% represents maximum equality. The GDI primarily considers three indices - education, health, and living standards - in which gender gaps are more prominent.

The GDI is an essential tool for policymakers and governments since it can identify areas where further development and attention are required in terms of gender equality. It assists in developing policies and strategies that are focused on the empowerment of women and girls. Furthermore, the index creates awareness about gender disparities in different regions, and the availability of this information increases the likelihood of addressing and resolving these issues.

In conclusion, the Gender Development Index is an essential tool in assessing the level of gender inequality in different regions worldwide. It provides policymakers and governments with a measurement and assessment method to enhance development and achieve gender equality through policies and strategies. Therefore, by considering the Gender Development Index, various stakeholders can work together to ensure that progress towards gender equality is continuous and transparent.

## **UNIT IV: CONTEMPORARY WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES IN INDIA**

### **NREGA**

*The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act-2005 (NREGA), also known as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), is a flagship scheme launched by the Government of India in 2005. The major objective of the act is to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to the rural households, primarily focusing on the empowerment of women and their social and economic well-being. The scheme has been paramount in alleviating poverty and unemployment in rural areas and has become the largest flagship employment scheme in the world.*

The NREGA is the largest employment generation programme in the country that has provided employment to millions of rural workers. It provides a minimum wage of Rs 202 (it is different for different states) per day to the unskilled workers who are registered under the scheme. Apart from this, it has also been successful in promoting women's participation in the workforce, with 50% of the work done under the scheme done by women. The scheme has also been effective in guaranteeing minimum wage for rural workers, ensuring financial inclusion and promoting social equality.

One of the significant outcomes of the NREGA has been the reduction in rural distress migration. The act has been instrumental in providing work opportunities to rural workers within their localities, thus enabling them to avoid distress migration to urban areas. The scheme has also been successful in strengthening community infrastructure and promoting sustainable rural development. Through the creation of durable assets like roads, water conservation structures, check dams, and rural electrification, the act has helped in developing rural areas and improving the standard of living.

The NREGA has also been successful in improving the livelihoods of the rural poor by providing them with economic security, which has resulted in poverty alleviation. A significant number of families have been able to break the cycle of poverty through regular employment opportunities provided by the scheme, resulting in reduced dependency on seasonal agricultural work, which is often inadequate to sustain rural families. The act has also been responsible for creating a demand for skilled labour, resulting in the development of rural entrepreneurship and encouraging rural self-reliance.

In conclusion, the NREGA has been a landmark act in India's rural development. It has been successful in providing rural employment opportunities and ensuring poverty alleviation. The scheme has proved to be an effective policy instrument in enhancing the living standards of rural workers and promoting social equality. However, proper implementation and strict adherence to the scheme's guidelines are necessary for its effective implementation in the years to come. The government should strive to bolster the scheme's implementation, address the issues of red tape and corruption, and ensure that the benefits of the scheme reach the poorest of the poor.

### **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)**

National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) is a flagship programme initiated by the Government of India in 2011. It is the largest poverty reduction programme in the world and aims to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor. The programme is primarily focused on empowering women in rural areas to achieve social and economic independence. NRLM has been instrumental in transforming the lives of hundreds of thousands of women in rural India.

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Under the NRLM, several initiatives have been launched to support rural women in achieving their economic potential. The programme provides support for the establishment of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) through which women can access credit and develop entrepreneurial skills. Women are also trained in financial management, business development, and marketing. Through this comprehensive approach, women are empowered to become entrepreneurs and contribute to the overall development of their communities. One of the key objectives of the NRLM is to build strong institutional platforms for rural poor women. Such platforms serve as a catalyst for creating a conducive environment for the development of rural women. NRLM also helps in capacitating institutions and service providers to meet the specific needs of women in rural areas. This has resulted in the formation of over 7 million SHGs, which have benefitted over 90 million women in rural India.

Through the NRLM, women are also provided with access to health and educational services. Mobile clinics and dispensaries have been established to provide basic healthcare services in remote areas. Women are educated on issues related to sanitation, hygiene, and preventive healthcare practices. Additionally, the programme provides vocational training to women to help them acquire skills that can be used to earn a livelihood.

Overall, NRLM has had a significant impact on rural poverty reduction in India. Women across the country have been empowered to become self-sufficient and contribute to the economic development of their communities. The programme has been successful in reaching out to millions of women in the far-flung areas of the country, transforming their lives and elevating their status in society. As the programme continues to evolve, it is expected to play an even greater role in shaping the future of rural India.

## **Social Security**

Social security is an umbrella term that covers various schemes and programs aimed at providing financial assistance and a safety net to individuals and families who have limited or no access to resources. India has several types of social security programs that cater to different categories of people, including the elderly, disabled, and economically disadvantaged.

One of the most popular social security programs in India is the National Social Assistance Program (NSAP). This program provides financial assistance to destitute and vulnerable sections of society, including the elderly, widows, and disabled. The program covers pension schemes such as the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme, which provides financial assistance to the elderly, and the National Family Benefit Scheme, which provides assistance to families in case of the death of the primary breadwinner.

Another important social security scheme in India is the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY). This program provides health insurance to families living below the poverty line. RSBY covers various medical expenses, including hospitalization, surgery, and diagnostic tests. Under the program, each beneficiary is entitled to a health insurance cover of up to Rs. 30,000 per year.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is another vital social security program in India. The program aims to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to rural households. The scheme covers all rural households in India, and the beneficiaries are entitled to a minimum wage of Rs. 202 per day.

India also has various social security schemes for workers in the unorganized sector. The National Pension System (NPS) is a pension scheme for workers in the unorganized sector. Under the scheme, a worker can contribute a certain amount of their salary to the pension

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fund, and the government will also contribute an equal amount. The scheme allows workers to withdraw a portion of their accumulated corpus for specific purposes such as buying a house or paying for medical expenses.

In conclusion, social security schemes play a crucial role in ensuring that vulnerable sections of society have access to basic needs such as healthcare, employment, and financial assistance. India has several social security programs that cater to different categories of people, including the elderly, disabled, and economically disadvantaged. However, there is still a long way to go to ensure that every citizen has access to the benefits of these schemes. The government must continue to focus on expanding the coverage of social security schemes and increasing the budget allocation for these programs to improve the standard of living for all citizens.

### **Social Security provisions/schemes for women in India**

Social security schemes for women in India have gained a lot of attention in recent times. The government of India has taken various initiatives to ensure social security for women in the country. The schemes are aimed at protecting the rights of women, promoting their welfare and providing them with financial support in times of need.

One of the most prominent social security schemes for women in India is the ***Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)***. It is a maternity benefit program that provides financial assistance to pregnant and lactating women. The scheme aims to improve the health and nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women, and reduce maternal and infant mortality rates. Under this scheme, women receive a cash assistance of Rs. 5,000 in three installments – Rs. 1,000 on registration, Rs. 2,000 on institutional delivery and Rs. 2,000 on the completion of the first round of immunization.

***The Women Helpline Scheme (181)*** is another important social security scheme for women in India. This scheme was launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development to provide emergency assistance to women who are facing violence or sexual harassment. Women can call the number 181, and a team of trained professionals will respond to their call and provide them with the necessary support and guidance.

Other important social security schemes for women in India include the National Scheme for Child Welfare, the Swadhar Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances, and the Mahila E-Haat Scheme. These schemes aim to promote the welfare of women and provide them with financial and social assistance in times of need.

Despite the various social security schemes for women in India, there are still many challenges that need to be addressed. Women in India continue to face discrimination and violence, and there is a need for stronger measures to protect their rights and promote their welfare. The government needs to ensure that these schemes are implemented effectively and that women are aware of their rights and entitlements.

In conclusion, social security schemes for women in India are crucial for ensuring their well-being and promoting their empowerment. The government has taken various initiatives to provide financial and social assistance to women, but there is still a long way to go. It is important to address the social and cultural barriers that prevent women from accessing these schemes and to promote their participation in decision-making processes. Only then can we truly ensure social security for women in India.

### **Reproductive Health**

Reproductive health refers to the overall wellbeing of an individual in relation to sexual and reproductive matters. This includes the ability to have a safe and satisfying sex life, the

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ability to conceive and carry a pregnancy to term, and the ability to prevent and treat sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and other reproductive health issues. Reproductive health is crucial to overall health and well-being, and good reproductive health practices have a positive impact on individuals, families, and communities. Reproductive health is a fundamental aspect of overall health and well-being. Comprehensive sexual health education, access to a range of contraceptive options, and access to quality prenatal and postpartum care are all essential components of reproductive health. Reproductive health issues affect individuals, families, and communities, and it is important to ensure that everyone has access to the resources and services necessary to maintain good reproductive health

### **Health Insurance in India**

Health insurance plays a crucial role in protecting an individual's financial status during a medical emergency. In India, health insurance has become a popular way of securing medical expenses, with the government and private players offering various policies suitable for different demographics. The objectives of health insurance in India are varied, and their achievement is crucial in ensuring better healthcare for all.

The primary objective of health insurance in India is to provide financial support to individuals during a medical emergency. With healthcare costs skyrocketing, a single medical incident can easily lead to crippling financial instability. Health insurance acts as a buffer and ensures that individuals can gain access to quality healthcare without worrying about the cost. The achievement of this objective ensures that no one is denied healthcare because of affordability.

The second objective of health insurance is to increase healthcare access and improve health outcomes. With the financial burden lifted, individuals gain better access to healthcare, either through hospitalization or treatment for chronic ailments. This objective is achieved through partnerships between insurance providers and healthcare service providers, where insurance providers can negotiate treatment rates or discounts, making it easier for individuals to access quality care.

Health insurance also aims to reduce the out-of-pocket expenses incurred by people when seeking medical care. In India, most out-of-pocket expenses are often incurred due to a lack of affordable health insurance. With health insurance, individuals can now have access to affordable medical cover, reducing the out-of-pocket expenses incurred during a medical emergency or routine check-ups. The achievement of this objective ensures that individuals have better health outcomes and are not forced to forgo necessary medical care due to unaffordable costs.

Another objective of health insurance is reducing the burden on the public healthcare system. In India, the healthcare system is overburdened, with limited resources and availability. By reducing the burden on public hospitals, individuals with health insurance can seek treatment from private hospitals or clinics. This reduces waiting times for procedures and creates a pathway for the public healthcare system to focus on more serious medical emergencies. The achievement of this objective ensures that healthcare is affordable for everyone, and public healthcare can focus on critical medical conditions.

In conclusion, health insurance in India plays a crucial role in protecting individuals from financial instability during a medical emergency. The objectives are vast and multifaceted, from increasing healthcare access to reducing the burden on public hospitals. The achievement of these objectives ensures that health insurance can reach everyone, regardless of affordability, and improves healthcare outcomes for all.

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## **Political Participation-Reservation in Local and State elected bodies**

India is a country that is known for its diversity and is one of the largest democracies in the world. Political participation and reservation of women have been some of the major issues in the Indian political system. Despite progress in many areas, women's participation has been historically limited. In the past few decades, the Indian government has taken several steps to promote women's participation in politics, and many efforts have been made towards this end. This essay will examine the various challenges faced by women in participating more actively in politics and the efforts made to ensure their representation. One of the primary issues that women face in participating in politics is the lack of education and awareness. Many women in India are not aware of their rights and the importance of their participation in politics. In many rural areas, women are still denied access to education and are not given the freedom to interact with others freely. This lack of education hinders their political awareness and their ability to express their desires and needs. Another challenge faced by women in India is the patriarchal nature of Indian society. Women are expected to adhere to traditional gender roles, such as being caregivers and homemakers. Such traditional gender roles have led to a lack of confidence and self-esteem among women, preventing them from participating actively in politics. This becomes especially pronounced in local-level politics, where women are often discouraged from seeking leadership positions due to the prevailing gender norms. Despite these challenges, the Indian government has taken several steps to promote gender equality and ensure women's participation in politics. A notable initiative has been the reservation of seats for women in local government bodies. Reservation policies have enabled women to overcome the traditional barriers to political participation and contribute to the development of their communities. Women who have been elected to local governing bodies have undertaken measures to improve their communities' infrastructure, health, and education systems. Some of the political reservations for women are as:

1. One-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women [Article 243-D(3)].
2. One-third of the total number of offices of chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women [Article 243-D(4)].
3. One-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women [Article 243-T(3)].
4. The offices of chairpersons in the Municipalities shall be reserved for women in such manner as the State Legislature may provide [Article 243-T(4)].

In conclusion, women's political participation and reservation policies in India have come a long way. However, the challenges faced by women in participating actively and equally in politics persist. Women's participation in Indian politics is essential for creating inclusive, fair, and equitable communities. Promoting women's access to education, dismantling patriarchal gender roles, and implementing affirmative action policies are effective measures to ensure that women's voices are heard and included in policy decision-making processes.

## **Key outcomes of Women Empowerment Initiatives in India**

Women empowerment has become a crucial issue in India, given the gender inequality challenges that women have faced for decades. Several initiatives have been put in place to empower women in different areas of social, economic, and political spheres. These efforts

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have yielded numerous outcomes which have been transformative to the lives of women in India. This essay will explore some of the key outcomes of women empowerment initiatives in India.

1. Women empowerment initiatives in India have led to the increased enrolment of girls and women in schools and tertiary education institutions. In the past, girls were discriminated against and prevented from accessing education. However, with the introduction of initiatives such as the “Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao” program, which translates to “Save the Daughter, Teach the Daughter” in English, girls are now given equal access to education as boys. In addition, the government has provided incentives such as free books, school uniforms, and mid-day meals to ensure that girls remain in school.
2. The empowerment of women has led to an increase in their economic independence. This is attributed to the introduction of initiatives such as the “Mahila eHaat.” Mahila e-Haat is an online marketplace for women entrepreneurs to showcase and sell their products. It is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development and Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, which is a nationalized financing agency for women. Such initiatives have enabled women to access finance, sell their products and earn equal pay for equal work. This has not only empowered women to become financially independent but also improved their social status.
3. Women empowerment initiatives have led to an improvement in maternal and child health programs. This is because women are better informed and have access to quality healthcare facilities that were previously unavailable to them. The “Janani Suraksha Yojana” is one such initiative which offers free institutional delivery, cash incentives to mothers, and other facilities to ensure that mothers and their children receive the necessary healthcare. Moreover, women are now better informed and have a more significant role in decision-making concerning their own health and their children's health, which has led to an overall improvement in maternal and child outcome indicators.
4. Women empowerment initiatives have led to an increase in women's participation in political spaces. Initiatives such as the “Panchayati Raj” system have reserved seats for women in local governance. This has given women a voice and an opportunity to participate in decision making within their communities. Women also have rights to representation in parliament and are now more outspoken about their issues, strengthening their ability to make an impact in the political arena.

In conclusion, Women empowerment initiatives have been crucial in transforming the lives of women in India. From increased enrolment in education, to greater economic independence, improved maternal and child healthcare, and political participation, these initiatives have caused a significant positive impact. However, more needs to be done to ensure that women are fully empowered in all areas of their lives