



## Breaking Boundaries: Paving the way for Gender Equality

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### *Abstract*

Gender equality is not just a goal; it's a fundamental human right. It's a vision of a world where individuals of all genders have equal opportunities, rights, and responsibilities. Despite considerable progress over the years, the journey toward gender equality is far from over. This article delves into the importance of gender equality, its historical context, contemporary challenges, and the G20's vision for gender equality and empowerment to pave the way for a more equitable future.

### *INTRODUCTION*

Gender equality is a fundamental principle that advocates for equal rights, opportunities, and treatment regardless of gender. It promotes the belief that all individuals, regardless of their gender identity, should have the same access to education, employment, healthcare, and participation in society. Achieving gender equality is not just a matter of justice and human rights; it also benefits society as a whole by promoting diversity, innovation, and economic growth. To make progress in this area, it's essential to challenge and change discriminatory attitudes, policies, and practices, while fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect for all genders.

Gender equality holds immense significance in achieving a fair and inclusive society for several compelling reasons:

- 1. Human Rights and Dignity:** Gender equality is a fundamental human right. It upholds the principle that every individual, regardless of their gender, deserves equal treatment, respect, and dignity. In a fair and inclusive society, the rights of all members are protected and upheld.

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- 2. Social Justice:** Gender equality lies at the heart of social justice. It ensures that all members of society have equal access to opportunities, resources, and representation. Without gender equality, social justice remains an unattainable ideal. **Economic Prosperity:** Gender equality fosters economic prosperity. When everyone, regardless of their gender, can participate fully in the workforce, it leads to increased productivity, innovation, and economic growth. Gender equality isn't just a matter of fairness; it's an investment in a stronger economy.
- 3. Political Representation:** Inclusive political representation ensures that diverse voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes. Gender-balanced representation in politics leads to more comprehensive and equitable policies that benefit the entire society.
- 4. Health and Well-being:** Gender equality extends to healthcare, ensuring that everyone has equal access to healthcare services and support. This contributes to better health outcomes and overall well-being for all members of society. **Education and Empowerment:** Gender-sensitive education empowers individuals to challenge stereotypes, respect diversity, and promote inclusivity. It equips future generations with the knowledge and skills needed to contribute positively to society.
- 5. Challenging Stereotypes:** Gender equality challenges harmful stereotypes and societal norms that perpetuate discrimination. It encourages a society where individuals are valued for their unique qualities rather than being limited by predefined gender roles.
- 6. Intersectionality and Inclusivity:** Gender equality acknowledges that individuals have multifaceted identities. It intersects with other factors like race, sexual orientation, and disability. A fair and inclusive society values and respects each of these facets. **Role of Allies:** Achieving gender equality isn't the responsibility of those directly affected by gender discrimination alone. Allies, individuals who support the cause, play a vital role in dismantling biases and promoting a fair and inclusive society.
- 7. Legal Framework:** Laws and policies provide the legal foundation for gender equality. They protect and promote the rights of all individuals, ensuring that fairness and inclusivity are enshrined in society's framework.
- 8. Global Perspective:** Gender equality is a global aspiration that transcends borders. It reminds us that fairness and inclusivity are shared goals across diverse cultures and nations, fostering a sense of global unity.

In summary, gender equality is not only a matter of fairness and justice

but a catalyst for societal progress. It ensures that no one is left behind, that opportunities are open to all, and that the full potential of every individual can be realized. When we prioritize gender equality, we pave the way for a society that is fair, inclusive, and truly thriving.

## **Historical Perspective**

To appreciate the significance of gender equality today, we must look back at history. Throughout the centuries, gender roles were deeply entrenched, limiting opportunities for women and non-binary individuals. However, brave individuals and movements challenged these norms. Suffragettes fought for women's right to vote, setting a precedent for future equality struggles. Their determination and sacrifice paved the way for significant progress.

Here is a brief overview of key milestones and developments in the historical journey of gender equality:

1. Ancient civilizations comprise of women plays a significant role in the ancient societies as for example in Egypt women own property and engagement in business activities and Greece comprises of women poets and philosophers.
2. Medieval period comprises of patriarchal societies thereby restricting the women rights and however women role is mostly indulged in household activities.
3. The scope Enlightenment and Early feminism is marked in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century highly focused on ideas of equality and rights. As for example Mary Wollstonecraft talked about women rights and education.
4. 19<sup>th</sup> century suffrage movement focused on providing the voting rights of women. New Zealand became the first self-governing country that grant women the right to vote in 1893.
5. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is marked as the global initiative phase where international organization like UN promoted gender equality, culminating in the in the adoption of convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in 1979.
6. Recent progress and ongoing work has increased the role of women in various sectors such as business, politics, education etc. but there is still much work to be done to achieve full gender equity with equality.

Understanding this historical perspective in gender equality will bring progress in the society and overcome the challenges thereby promoting gender equality in the present society.

## Contemporary Challenges Along the way

Contemporary challenges along the path to gender equality reflect the ongoing struggle to achieve parity and eliminate discrimination based on gender. Despite progress, several significant challenges persist:

- 1. Gender Pay Gap:** Women continue to earn less than men for performing the same job or work of equal value. This wage gap affects women's financial security and their ability to accumulate wealth.
- 2. Underrepresentation in Leadership:** Women remain underrepresented in top leadership positions in various fields, including politics, business, academia, and technology. This lack of representation perpetuates gender inequalities.
- 3. Workplace Discrimination:** Discrimination and bias persist in hiring, promotion, and workplace practices, limiting women's career advancement and opportunities.
- 4. Work-Life Balance:** Balancing career and family responsibilities disproportionately falls on women. Inadequate family leave policies and affordable childcare options hinder progress in this area.
- 5. Gender-Based Violence:** Gender-based violence, including domestic violence and sexual harassment, continues to affect women's physical and mental well-being. Stigma, insufficient support systems, and underreporting remain issues.
- 6. Healthcare Disparities:** Gender disparities in healthcare access, research, and treatment persist. Women's health concerns, such as reproductive rights and maternal health, still face challenges.
- 7. Digital Gender Divide:** Women and girls often have limited access to digital technologies and face online harassment. Bridging the digital gender divide is crucial for economic and social empowerment.
- 8. Intersectionality:** Intersectional discrimination, which considers the compounding effects of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and more, underscores the need for more comprehensive approaches to equality.

Addressing these contemporary challenges requires a concerted effort from governments, organizations, communities, and individuals. Policies promoting gender equality, cultural shifts challenging gender stereotypes,

and education on gender issues are all vital components of the ongoing journey toward achieving gender equality.

## **G20's Vision for Gender Equality and Empowerment**

The G20, a group of the world's largest economies, has recognized the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment as critical elements for achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Their vision for gender equality and women's empowerment includes several key principles and initiatives:

- 1. Economic Participation:** The G20 acknowledges the need to increase women's participation in the formal labour market and close the gender gap in workforce participation. This involves removing barriers to women's entry into the workforce, addressing wage disparities, and promoting women's entrepreneurship and leadership in business.
- 2. Education and Skills Development:** Education is seen as a fundamental tool for women's empowerment. The G20 supports initiatives that ensure girls and women have equal access to quality education and skills development opportunities, recognizing that education is a cornerstone for their economic and social empowerment.
- 3. Financial Inclusion:** Promoting financial inclusion for women is a key component of the G20's vision. This includes improving women's access to financial services, such as banking and credit, to enable them to invest in businesses, save, and plan for the future.
- 4. Gender-Responsive Budgeting:** The G20 encourages member countries to adopt gender-responsive budgeting, which ensures that government budgets consider the impact on women and girls. This approach helps identify and allocate resources to address gender disparities in various sectors, from health to education.
- 5. Data Collection and Reporting:** The G20 emphasizes the importance of collecting gender-disaggregated data to measure progress accurately and identify areas where gender disparities persist. This data-driven approach helps member countries design more effective policies.
- 6. Gender Mainstreaming:** Gender mainstreaming, which involves integrating gender considerations into all policy areas and decision-making processes, is a fundamental principle of the G20's approach to gender equality and women's empowerment.

The G20's vision for gender equality and women's empowerment reflects a commitment to addressing structural barriers and creating an enabling environment for women to fully participate in economic, social, and political life. Member countries work together to exchange best practices and strategies to advance gender equality, recognizing that this is not only a matter of social justice but also essential for sustainable economic growth and development.

## **Conclusion**

With this we conclude for overall well being and growth of nation, scoring high on gender equality is the most crucial aspect. Countries with less disparity in gender equality wider outputs in terms of the progress. The government of India has also started taking steps to ensure gender equality. Several laws and policies are prepared to encourage girls. “Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Yojana” (Save girl, and make girls educated) campaign is created to spread awareness of the importance of girl child. Several laws to protect girls are also there. However, we need more awareness of spreading knowledge of women rights. In addition, the government should take initiatives to check the correct and proper implementation of policies.

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