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Gender Equality, Women Empowerment and Social Justice in Viksit Bharat@2047: A Multidisciplinary Perspective on Transformative Nation Building

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Abstract

Viksit Bharat Vision 2047 captures India's vision of becoming a developed nation from a developing nation by the 100th year of independence. This paper focuses on the interlinkage of gender equality, women empowerment and social justice, which this paper considers as vital to the construction of the vision of the envisaged nation. A wide-ranging evaluation of current governmental policies, international best practice, the doctrine of Ancient Buddhism as well as on empirical analytical datasets, clearly shows that women-led development is a conduit rather than an end state for sustainable nation-building. As Malala Yousafzai emphasised - "we cannot succeed when half of us are held back." The need for holistic development is reinforced in international programmes and rational strategies, taken from what the World Bank calls "inclusive growth is growth that creates opportunities for all." The Global Gender Gap Report 2024 has placed India at 116th (or 146th) position among countries that participated in the report with an approximate 64.1 per cent gender disparity. To bridge this chasm the paper calls for the integration of Buddhist philosophical tenets i.e. karuna, pratityasamutpada in governance and thereby create a policy framework which is in tune with the ground realities and generates gender parity. Kofi Annan's comment that "good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development" only adds to the impetus of the holistic approach described herein. The empirical results indicate that improved access of women to economic life, gender-balanced education and political power, e.g. due to a minimum 33 per cent parliamentary quota under the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, will make substantial contributions to India's GDP growth, and social inclusion, by 2047.

Keywords: Viksit Bharat 2047 Gender Equality, women empowerment, social justice, nation building, Buddhist philosophy, implementation of policy, economic development.

Introduction

Prime Minister Narendra Modi conceptualised the idea of Viksit Bharat 2047 as a movement to transform India into a developed, inclusive and self-reliant nation. The vision of the NITمحكمة Aayog for 2047 also similarly envisions a prosperous, inclusive and innovation-driven society. In this regard, the need for gender parity and women's empowerment is fundamental to the country's developmental agenda, which was reiterated in Ruchira Kamboj's exposition that India's rise depends on "gender equality, women's empowerment, and social justice." Viksit Bharat is not confined only to economic yardsticks but to a wider absolute scope of holistic development as espoused by Amartya Sen: "A nation can achieve true development only when gender equality and social justice increase real opportunities for every citizen." Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla goes further and says that "women-led development, with its major foundation of empowerment and child welfare, forms the foundation of the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047". This perspective emphasises the need to tackle crystalline inequalities that have traditionally excluded women and other vulnerable groups from community and society.

The Existing Landscape: Challenges and Opportunities

India’s Gender Gap Reality

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2024 released by WEF, India has a higher gap rate of 64.1 per cent across all three dimensions - economic, political, and technological - at the 129th position out of 146 countries included in the list. Despite the progress achieved since then, disparities in education and political representation still remain and women are not fully empowered. The patriarchal view of the world limits the exercise of modern aspirations. As noted by the UN Population Fund, India's demographic dividend can only be materialised as a strategic advantage only ifequal opportunities are guaranteed for all genders. NITI Aayog dwells on the fact that to tap the demographic dividend it is essential to have policies that provide equitable access to education, skills, and employment for women as well as men. Today, women are increasingly breaking the glass ceilings and taking up the post of scientists, bureaucrats, ministers, and entrepreneurs and are contributing to the overall economic participation.

The Economic Imperative

The economic growth of the country is indelibly paved with the economic empowerment of women. Empirical evidence indicates that the greater the gender parity, the faster the pace of GDP growth, the better the innovation indices, and the greater the social stability. India's dream of becoming a 30 trillion rupees economy by 2047 implies integration of women in all the strata of workforce. Parliamentary deliberations consider the necessary contribution of women to

Viksit Bharat however when it comes to translating these into policy, a gender-responsive budgeting and strategic reforms is required.

Government Initiatives and Policy Framework

Recent Policy Developments

The Indian government has put in place transformative policies geared towards women's empowerment. The Nari Sakti Vandan Adhiniyam, gives 33 per cent reservation in parliament and state legislatures. 33 per cent reservation in parliament and state legislatures is a landmark constitutional amendment and is in line with the best practices for political representation that is observed across the world. The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana was the one that disbursed 60 per cent of loans to the women-run enterprises, and the Jan Aushadhi scheme improved the access of healthcare for women, while the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna guaranteed over 90 million households clean cooking fuel, thus mitigating the health risks of traditional cooking practices.

Digital Financial Inclusion

Digital payment platforms like UPI and BHIM are democratising access to financial services so that women are able to do financial transactions with ease like never before. The JAM trinity of Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile are facilitating the transfer of direct benefits which reduces the leakages and encourage women to avail government scheme. This technology-driven approach explains the possibilities for driving social change forward at an accelerated pace.

Educational Reforms

The New Education Policy (NEP 2020) adopts the concept of gender sensitive pedagogy and targets 100 per cent literacy by 2030 (up from 53.67 per cent to 65.46 per cent as per the 2011 Census). Scholarships, transport and safety ensure targeting of girls educational participation, focusing on STEMS domains particularly to sustain the Indian ambition as a global innovation location.

Learned Global Best Practices & Lessons

Nordic Model of Gender Equality

Iceland, Norway, and Finland are good examples, with strong gender equality that is supported by a complex of policies relating to work life balance, parent leave and political representation. Iceland's mandatory corporate board gender quotas & its transparent salary reporting were effectively used to narrow the gender pay gap. Comparative adaptation of these policies can provide inputs to India's contextualized policies without consequences of loss of transparency and accountability.

Rwanda The Political Representation

Rwanda attained 61 per cent female parliamentary representation by reservation of seats and merit-based selection that provides a relevant model for women's reservation in India.

Economic Integration within South Korea

South Korea's transformation of its society from a traditional one, to one of modern economy and the high rate of women participating in the workforce, provides lessons on childcare infrastructure, working hours flexibility and cultural transformation.

Buddhism Philosophy and Governance

Compassionate Leadership

Buddhist philosophy brings the role of karuna at the forefront as one of the primary virtues while leading or ruling. In the context of female's empowerment, policies based on this view recognise the interconnectedness of social challenges, and address them holistically. The idea of pratityasamutpada argues that, in contrast, women's empowerment is an aspect of the well-being of society and not an isolated objective.

Mindful Governance

Mindfulness in decision-making stresses the importance of being aware of consequence and thinking ethically as well. Applied to work on gender policy, such an approach promotes evidence-based, long-term social impact assessments, and with the concept of right livelihood (samma ajiva) situates the issue of women's economic empowerment as a way to their dignity and self-determination.

Judicial Milestones: Judicial Judgments of Supreme Court and High Court in the Making of Gender Equality

The Indian judiciary has been pivotal to bring about the development of gender equality by some landmark judgments.

Transformative Supreme Court Judgments (1997-2025)

A selection of landmark rulings that expanded constitutional rights and social justice in India.

Case Name (Year)	Key Outcome	Core Principle Demonstrated
Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (1997)	Established legally binding guidelines against workplace sexual harassment, later codified into the 2013 Act.	Prajna (Wisdom): Judicial innovation to fill a legislative vacuum and protect fundamental rights.
Joseph Shine v. Union of India (2018)	Struck down the archaic adultery law (IPC 497) for treating women as their husbands' property.	Samata (Equality): Affirmed individual autonomy and equal dignity for women within marriage.
Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala (2018)	Upheld the right of women of all ages to enter the Sabarimala temple.	Samata (Equality): Asserted that constitutional morality and equality override discriminatory religious customs.
Secretary, Ministry of Defence v. Babita Puniya (2020)	Granted Permanent Commission to women officers in the Army, rejecting arguments based on gender stereotypes.	Samata (Equality): Mandated substantive equality and equal opportunity for women in the armed forces

Progressive Interventions of the High Court

High Courts in India have adjudicated the case of Equal Pay, Maternity Rights, Women-responsive governance and property rights. The Delhi High Court ordered the equal pay for equal work in government schools; the Madras High Court extended the benefits of maternity to contractual employees, which shows the role of the judiciary in effectively converting principles to the local level.

The School-To-College Pipeline- A Framework for Equal Opportunity

Early Intervention and Early Education

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) flagship programme addresses the adversities of sex selection and female child survival combining awareness campaigns and incentive structure. The success of the programme in sharpening the sex ratio in states like Haryana is the success of the impact of specific interventions at an early stage. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) was 1.03 for the primary level which means more girls than boys are enrolled in school.

Transformation of Secondary & Higher Education

Infrastructure initiatives, for example, the Swachh Vidyalaya campaign addressed certain critical barriers to education by ensuring separate toilets for girls. Subsequent gains in the enrolment of girls in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh demonstrate the usefulness of focusing on practical needs. In the 2022 financial year, more than 20 mm female students are enrolled

in higher education institutions. however, enrolment lagging is apparent in the field of commerce, engineering, IT & computer science, management and law, with engineering showing a large gender gap.

New Education Policy (NEP 2020)

The NEP 2020 brings in Gender Inclusion Funds, STEM scholarships, mentorship programmes, mandatory gender audit of curriculums and Gender sensitisation programmes across by various stakeholders. This policy framework aims to raise the participation of girls in the area of STEM through financial incentives, guidance, and institutional support.

Case Studies and Success Stories

Kudumbashree Model, Kerala

Kerala, Kudumbashree programme shows effectiveness of community based women's empowerment for stimulating local economic growth. With more than 4.5million women members in 300,000 neighbourhood groups, the initiative has resulted in a parallel, women-led economy. It has a three-tier structure - neighbourhood groups, area development societies and community development societies - which creates an extensive support apparatus.

Self-Help Group Federation Model

The move towards turning traditional self help groups into federated forms leads to sustainable economic institutions. Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have taken this to the next level, with women's federations handling billions of rupees in annual financial transactions, in the process giving rise to the community-owned financial institutions reducing the need for traditional banks.

Digital Literacy and Empowering

The initiative on Digital Sakhi in the state of Uttar Pradesh has trained more than 60,000 women as digital literacy champions in rural areas. These individuals help in the facilitation of digital payments, online government services, and e-Commerce participation and bridge the gap between traditional communities and digital India.

Concerns of Modernity and Innovation

Cultural and Social Limitations

Deeply ingrained cultural beliefs have continued to hinder women's participation in the public sphere. Honour based restrictions, practices of early marriage and domestic labour distribution continue to pose important obstacles. The pandemic's impact on women's employment and

education because of the virus known as coronavirus (often abbreviated to CV, in case you missed the ruminations about CV2019), is a perfect illustration of the fragility of the progress.

Technology as an Equaliser

Artificial Intelligence and Racism

As India progresses with the digital transformation, it is becoming imperative to ensure that all AI systems are free of gender bias. Ethical AI governance that ensures gender equality is the key to digital inclusion.

Block Chain in Financial Inclusion

The Blockchain technology offers possibilities for financial inclusion in transparency and security. Smart contracts can be used to automate the distribution of benefits; decentralised identity systems can be used to secure digital identities.

Telemedicine and Healthcare

Telemedicine expansion focuses on women's healthcare, particularly in rural parts where it is scarce. Digital platforms for maternal health, mental health support and preventative care can have a significant impact on improving health outcomes.

The Economic Models and Future Road Map

Theoretical Frameworks

Human Capital Theory refers to the theory of investment in education and skills which directly increase economic productivity. Applied to gender equality, this theory provides the economic basis for women and their education and skill development.

Intersectionality Theory underscores that individuals experience multiple forms of discrimination that intersect with each other including identity such as gender, caste, class, religion, etc. For many of India's varied population, this theory re-emphasizes the need for differentiated approaches to women's empowerment.

Future Road Map for Viksit Bharat 2047

Short-Term Goals (2025 to 2030): Short-term goals include the enforcement of the Women's Reservation Act, the creation of more childcare infrastructure, and strengthening safety. Specific targets include increasing the labour force participation of women up to 40 per cent; and 100 per cent financial inclusion for women.

Medium-Term Objectives (2030-2040): Emphasis is on consolidating gains & addressing structural inequalities Some of the expected results will be a major improvement in the gender representation of women in leadership, across sectors, and achieving gender parity at the higher education levels.

Long-Term Vision (2040 - 2047): By the year 2047, India is supposed to get a strong gender parity in all dimensions measured by international indices. Women's leadership will be the norm in all sectors, and gender-based discrimination will be significantly abated. India should be a paradigm for other developing countries to speed up the process of gender equality.

Measuring Progress: Important Performance Indicators

Success in gender equality by 2047 can be measured against certain indicators such as women's labour force participation rate, proportion of women in leadership positions, access to formal financial services, education attainment rates and health outcomes. India should have the ambition of being among the top 50 countries on the Global Gender Gap index by 2047.

Qualitative evaluations of social attitudes, cultural changes and institutional changes are equally important, providing information about the depth of change. Technology enabled monitoring systems can give real time information about gender equality indicators and enable corrective action based on evidence.

Conclusion

The quest for Viksit Bharat 2047 is inextricably linked with the goal of gender equality, women empowerment and social justice. The convergence or progressive policies, technological innovations, and cultural evolution are paving the way for the realisation of this vision. The meeting of ancient Buddhist wisdom with principles of good governance today provides a unique approach, centred on compassion, mindfulness and connectedness. Sustained commitment - of government, civil society, the private sector and individuals - is indispensable. Where there are formidable challenges, there are significant opportunities. As India gears up for a century on its day of independence, half of the Indian population making it possible to enjoy equal opportunity is both a moral imperative as much as a strategic necessity. The transformation envisaged in Viksit Bharat 2047 requires stronger leadership, innovative solutions and uncompromising commitment to justice and equality, which will enable not only economic development but also social cohesion and sustainable prosperity to all the citizens.

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