

## **ORGANIZATIONS USE A FEMINIST VIEWPOINT TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY VIA SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND LEGAL REFORMS IN INDIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the feminist approach adopted by various organizations in India to promote gender equality, empower women, and address gender-based discrimination. It analyzes the strategies, programs, and frameworks implemented by governmental and non governmental organizations through the lens of feminist theories. The research identifies key successes, ongoing challenges, and future prospects for feminist organizational practices in the Indian socio-cultural and economic context.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, Indian Organizations, Feminist Theory, NGO, Government Policy.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Because of the increasing awareness of systematic gender imbalances in the legal, economic, and social spheres, several Indian groups have made pursuing gender equality their top priority in recent decades. Adopting a feminist perspective, these organizations challenge patriarchal structures and advocate for reforms that promote equity, dignity, and rights for women and other marginalized genders. The feminist lens not only interrogates existing power imbalances but also provides a transformative framework for envisioning a more inclusive society.

In India's complex socio-cultural context—shaped by caste, class, religion, and regional diversity—feminist organizations play a critical role in redefining norms and creating spaces for dialogue, resistance, and empowerment. From pushing for progressive legislation and workplace equality to promoting financial independence and community-led interventions, these organizations engage in multi-level advocacy aimed at long-term structural change.

This paper explores how organizations in India adopt and apply feminist principles to drive legal, economic, and social reforms. It examines the approaches, strategies, and impacts of these efforts while analyzing the challenges that continue to hinder progress in achieving gender justice.

### **REVIEW LITERATURE**

Organizations in India utilize a feminist viewpoint to promote gender equality through social, economic, and legal reforms by addressing deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and advocating for comprehensive legal changes. Legal reforms have been pivotal in advancing women's rights, with significant legislation addressing domestic violence, sexual harassment, and workplace

equality, although challenges in implementation persist (Saxena, 2024). As seen by the small number of rape cases and the objectification of women in court proceedings, feminist viewpoints criticize the current legal system, contending that although many laws advance formal equality, they frequently fall short of achieving substantive equality (Bhadra, 2017). Efforts to bridge these gaps include awareness campaigns and collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations to foster a more inclusive environment for women (Pathan, 2024). Despite constitutional commitments to equality, Due to historical and cultural customs, women in India still confront several obstacles, necessitating on going reforms and societal change (Singh, 2024). The role of law in promoting gender equality is crucial, yet it is often viewed with skepticism due to its limited impact compared to other domains of women's empowerment (Nussbaum, 2001). Therefore, a feminist approach in India emphasizes the need for feminist lawmaking and societal transformation to achieve genuine gender justice and equality (Bhadra, 2017). When scalar rules and administrative processes are developed to address gender imbalance, gender budgeting is one technique that can better budgeting. Budgeting for gender is helpful when done right (Stotsky, 2016). This type of budgeting that considers gender disparities is referred to by various names, including "gender budgets," "women's budgets," and "gender-sensitive or responsive budgets." All of these terms refer to the efforts of promoting gender equality and equity through government budgets. The key aims of a gender-sensitive budget are to ensure more efficient targeting of public expenditure and counteract any adverse gender specific repercussions of budgetary actions (Sodani & Sharma, 2008). Addressing the gender disparity in positions of decision-making is essential to halting this trend of women's marginalization. The causes of this odd split provide a classic illustration of caste, class, and gender alignments and divisions under political pressure (Narasimhan, 2002). The difficulties in assessing Mahila Samakhya (MS), a government-sponsored initiative for the education and empowerment of underprivileged women, are examined in this article. With no set goals, the program seeks to empower these women to move beyond literacy and participate in a learning process that supports their collective agency and action to challenge and surmount ingrained gender obstacles (Jandhyala, 2012). It is commonly recognized that gender-based violence (GBV) is widespread in India and that it negatively affects women's reproductive, mental, and physical health. Comparably, not much study has been done in India on the risk factors linked to GBV types other than physical violence. The viability and advancement of GBV interventions based at medical facilities in India were examined in this dissertation (Chibber, 2009).

### **THE FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON FORMAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS**

The feminist perspective on formal economic and political rights emphasizes that legal equality is essential for achieving gender justice. Several organizations advocate for gender neutral legislative measures to reform policies that are often biased. For example, Radio Active highlights corruption and gender bias in India's policies, stressing the need for inclusive legislative reforms. B. Safe criticizes sexual harassment laws, arguing that protections should apply to all workplaces, not just those with ten or more employees, and that these laws should safeguard all genders rather than only women.

Beyond legal frameworks, the organizations also stress economic issues such as equal labor rights and fair compensation. Radio Active advocates for recognizing women's unpaid labor in legislative measures, while Safe City emphasizes the importance of equal opportunities. Mara.in takes a broader approach by incorporating social factors that hinder gender equality, acknowledging that statutory rights alone cannot drive change. They believe continuous dialogue is necessary to address the systemic barriers to reporting sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination.

The Better India promotes a multifaceted approach, recognizing that gender equality requires efforts across different layers of society. They advocate for comprehensive policies, including improvements in urban infrastructure and cultural shifts in gender roles. Ultimately, these organizations argue that achieving equality requires reforms that go beyond formal legal rights, incorporating social awareness and institutional change to create a more inclusive society.

The Government of India and NGOs utilize intersectional feminism to address the diverse experiences of Indian women based on caste, class, ability, and sexuality has initiated various schemes and policies reflecting feminist principles

S.No.	NAME OF SCHEME	ABOUT SCHEME
1	<b>BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO (BBBP)</b>	Beti bachao, beti padhao" (ministry of women and child development, 2015) is a campaign to prevent gender-biased sex-selective elimination and promote the education and survival of the girl child.
2	<b>MAHILA E-HAAT:</b>	An online marketing platform to support women entrepreneurs (mwcd, 2016).
3	<b>NATIONAL POLICY FOR WOMEN</b>	Incorporates feminist values of empowerment, decision-making, and equal access to resources. (DRAFT, 2016)
4	<b>SEWA</b>	Founded in 1972, sewa organizes women in the informal sector, advocating for their labor rights, healthcare, and financial inclusion (bhatt, 2006).
5	<b>JAGORI</b>	A feminist organization that works on issues of violence against women, sexual rights, and safe public spaces. It uses participatory methods and community engagement (jagori, 2020).
6	<b>CREA</b>	Focuses on sexual and reproductive rights from a feminist and human rights perspective, offering training and advocacy programs across india (crea, 2021).
7	<b>Tata Group and Gender Equality</b>	Tata Steel was among the first Indian companies to implement gender-neutral parental leave and has launched leadership programs for women (Tata Steel, 2020).
8	<b>University Gender Cells</b>	Many Indian universities have gender sensitization cells that conduct workshops on sexual harassment, consent, and gender rights (UGC, 2015).

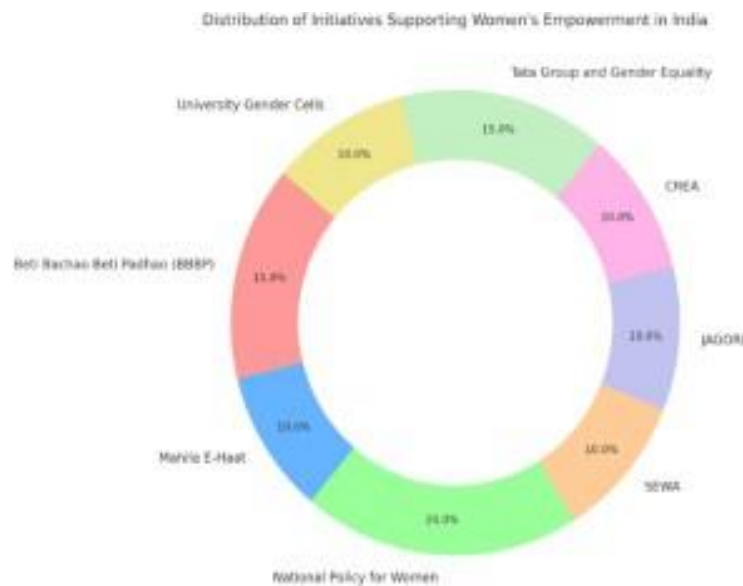


Fig-Percentage of women's schemes and policies

**Indian Women's Rights**-The Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties, and Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution all uphold the principle of women's equality. In addition to granting women equality, the constitution permits the State to implement laws that favor positive discrimination against women. Some of the significant articles are as per the following.

- Religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them[Article15(i)]
- Special provision by state in favour of Women and Children[ Article 15(3)]
- Equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment [Article 16]
- Securing adequate means of livelihood for men and women equally [Article 39(a)]
- Equal pay for equal work[Article 39(d)]
  - Promoting justice on basis of equal opportunity and
- to provide free legal aid[Article 39(A)]
- Renounce practices derogatory to women[Article 51(A)(e)]
- 1/3 reservation for women in panchayats [Article 243(D)] and in municipalities[Article 243(T)]
- Right to Property to Women[Article 300(a)]

**CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS**- Organizations in India that adopt a feminist viewpoint to promote gender equality encounter several challenges and limitations across social, economic, and legal spheres. Social resistance remains a significant hurdle, as deep-rooted patriarchal norms and traditional mindsets can lead to opposition from communities and institutions reluctant to embrace change. In the legal domain, while gender equality laws exist, inconsistent enforcement and bureaucratic delays often undermine their effectiveness,

making it difficult for reforms to translate into tangible outcomes. Economically, resource constraints and funding limitations restrict the scale and reach of initiatives, particularly for grassroots organizations striving to make an impact in marginalized communities. Additionally, intersectionality poses a challenge, as gender equality efforts may inadvertently overlook caste, class, and regional disparities, limiting the inclusivity of reforms. Furthermore, shifting political landscapes can impact policy support, with feminist-driven initiatives often subject to changing governmental priorities and funding availability. Despite these challenges, organizations continue to push for transformative change, advocating for comprehensive reforms to build a more equitable society.

**FUTURE DIRECTIONS-** To enhance the feminist impact of organizations, the following measures are recommended:-

- Strengthening community-based feminist leadership
- Enhancing intersectional policy frameworks
- Increasing funding for grassroots feminist organizations
- Promoting feminist research and education

## CONCLUSION

The feminist paradigm adopted by diverse organizations in India has significantly contributed to the advancement of gender equality through comprehensive social, economic, and legal reforms. By contesting patriarchal conventions and advocating for systemic transformation, these organizations—including grassroots non-governmental organizations, national policy making bodies, and corporate entities—have expanded the dialogue surrounding women's rights and empowerment. Notwithstanding the obstacles posed by socio-cultural resistance, deficiencies in legal enforcement, and constraints in resources, the assimilation of feminist tenets into organizational practices has resulted in meaningful progress.

Prominent initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Mahila E-Haat, and SEWA serve as exemplary illustrations of how feminist frameworks can be strategically mobilized to confront gender disparities. Furthermore, the integration of intersectionality has enriched the inclusivity of these initiatives, recognizing the multifaceted realities encountered by women across various caste, class, and regional contexts. As India progresses, sustained collaboration among governmental entities, the private sector, along with the elevation of feminist leadership and intersectional policy formulation, will be imperative in fostering a just and gender-equitable society.