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HARNESSING INNOVATIONS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

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ABSTRACT

One of the essential Humanitarian right is Gender equality. It is a condition in which all the people, irrespective of gender, have equitable utilisation of opportunities and resources. Half of the world's population is made up of women, who also have half of its own potential and abilities. Over the past few decades, there have been advances in achieving sex equality. There are a number of potential innovations that have been taken to accelerate progress towards gender equality. This research paper examines some key innovations towards gender equality/sex equality and the initiatives taken by the Indian government towards promoting gender equality. This study also explores the importance of gender equality.

Men of quality respect women's equality"

~ Jeremiah Say

INTRODUCTION

Equality is a core Human right and one of the pillars of democratic societies. Every person, whether men and women, is free to develop and have the right to be treated equally. Gender equality aims to eradicate discrimination based on sex/gender and promote fairness or equality. The idea of gender equality has existed since the dawn of human civilisation. But still it can not be achieved completely over the world. Sexism/Gender inequality reflects the gap that occurs due to inequality between men and women. For centuries, gender based discrimination has been caused with the women and they were excluded from social, political and economic life. They were deprived of education, representation and leadership too. Many countries such as India,

Egypt and Indonesia have laws that give less proprietary rights to the women from the ancestral property as compared to men. From Ancient time, women were only associated with

domesticity, taking care of the children. They were regarded as 'GRAHANI'. Therefore, the occupation was predominated by men. But now, that traditional stereotype has been changed. Now, the women could be Independent and men are also engaged in the responsibilities of household. In order to achieve the goal of gender equality, women empowerment should be required in making decisions at public and private level. It took initiatives and addressing. Many authors and feminists had changed history through the power of their pens. **'Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie'** is a prominent author known for her strong stance on gender equality. In her book **'we should all be feminists'** advocating for the removal of stigma associated with feminism and actively promoting gender equality. **'Mary Wollstonecraft'** in her writings **'A Vindication of the Rights of Women'** stated that like men's, the women also deserve the same educational, economical and political rights. The view that men and women have the same capacities is found in **Book V of Plato's Republic** in which Plato has argued that the ruling and guardian class of the ideal republic should be composed of both men and women. **'Oxfam'** asserts that there is no economic, social and environmental justice without Gender Justice. Now, these days the world governments have started taking steps to ensure gender equality. Several laws and policies are enacted or prepared to encourage women. Initiatives have been made on gender equality at the international level.

MEANING OF GENDER EQUALITY

Sex Equality is the idea that men and women are the same in all relevant way; they should have equal rights and opportunities to live fulfilling lives.

DEFINITIONS OF GENDER EQUALITY

According to United Nations, "Gender Equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men".

According to World Health Organization, "Gender Equality is the absence of discrimination on the basis of a person's sex or gender in all sphere of life".

IMPORTANCE OF GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality is essential for overall development of the nation. Here are some importance of gender equality.

1. **Women Empowerment:** Gender equality is important for women empowerment. To enable women to make informed decisions in the sectors like careers and

leadership.

2. **Reduction of Violence:** Gender equality is important to reduce violence against women and promote a respectful or safer society.
3. **Reduction of Poverty:** Gender equality is reducing poverty by encouraging women to start their own business and reducing the gender wage gap.
4. **Promote women Literacy:** Gender equality in education leads to improved women literacy rates among women and girls.
5. **Challenges Discriminatory Laws:** Gender equality challenges discriminatory laws, policies and practices that are male dominated.

HARNESSING INNOVATIONS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Despite notable advancements much work remains in the field of gender equality. Here are some harnessing innovations made for gender equality-

- **MOBILE/ONLINE BANKING**

Online Banking is one of the innovation which enables women in rural areas so that they should access financial services through their mobile phones.

- **E-LEARNING PLATFORMS**

E-learning or Online classes are providing education and skills training to girls in conflict zones or areas where schools are not available. It aims to increase digital literacy among women. It encourages girls to start their career in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

For example, Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), India's Digital India Initiative and Australia's Digital Inclusion Strategy.

- **E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS**

E-Commerce Platforms like Flipkart or Amazon etc. enables the women entrepreneurs to sell their products and services online. Online marketplaces and financial tools support women's entrepreneurship.

For example, Sweden's Women Business Development Program provides funding, training and networking opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

- **HEALTHCARE AND WELLBEING**

Providing healthcare services to women particularly in rural and underserved areas.

For example, Brazil Women's Health Program is an effective innovation which provides comprehensive healthcare services including reproductive health and violence

prevention.

- **DATA-DRIVEN ADVOCACY**

United State's Data 2x Initiative that aims to improve data collection and analysis on the subject of gender equality.

UK's Gender Data Portal provides a platform for collecting gender data and supporting evidence-based policy making.

- **POLICY AND LEGISLATION**

Innovation in the field of law reduces gender inequality and gender violence.

For example, Iceland's Equal Pay Law requires companies to pay equal wages to men and women.

- **INTERNET OF THINGS (IOT)**

It is a device and sensor that enables women to report incidents of harassment at the workplace.

- **VIRTUAL REALITY FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**

Virtual reality based training programs offer a means of skill development, educational access and career opportunities.

- **MOBILE APPS FOR THE SAFETY OF WOMEN**

Several Apps have been made which provides a platform for women to report incidents of harassment and Violence.

For example, Safetipin, Raksha and Himmat.

- **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE POWERED TOOLS**

Artificial Intelligence can be an effective measure for promoting gender equality. Here are some tools powered by Artificial Intelligence which helps in promoting gender equality.

Chatbots: Chatbots powered by AI provide resources and support to the women and girls who experience violence or discrimination.

Smart Home Security: smart Home Security powered AI can provide safety and security to women in their homes.

Job Matching Platforms: Job Matching Platforms powered by AI can help women in finding jobs and employment opportunities according to their skills and interests.

INITIATIVES MADE BY UNITED NATIONS

The UN's Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank are making initiatives regarding gender equality in developing countries.

- UN WOMEN established in 2010, is a global campaign for gender equality. It works to promote women's rights, empowerment and participation.
- THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION, this declaration was adopted in 1995, this is a landmark document which sets out a comprehensive framework for achieving gender equality.

INITIATIVES MADE BY INDIA GOVERNMENT

To advance gender equality, the Indian government has launched a number of projects. Here are several projects launched by the Indian government.

- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, 2015. It seeks to improve girl's education and health while also avoiding sex selective abortion.
- National Policy For Women: This policy was launched in 2016. It aims to promote women empowerment, equality and justice.
- The Sexual Harassment Act, 2013: The Sexual Harassment Of Women At Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 aims to prevent and prohibit sexual harassment against women's at workplaces. It also provides redressal to the women regarding harassment at workplaces.
- The Domestic Violence Act, 2005 : It is an enactment that recognizes women's rights and provides provisions for protection orders, monetary orders and compensatory orders from court against domestic violence. It aims to teach the people that domestic violence is unlawful and should be prohibited by law.
- Stand-Up India Scheme, 2016: It provides financial assistance to women entrepreneurs from Scheduled Castes/Schedule Tribes.

INDIAN CONSTITUTION AND GENDER EQUALITY

Several significant Articles of the Indian Constitution address the principle of gender equality as outlined below.

- **ARTICLE 14: RIGHT TO EQUALITY**

Right to Equality ensures equality before law and equal protection of the law.

- **ARTICLE 15: PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION**

It forbidden discrimination based on gender.

- **ARTICLE 16: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN EMPLOYMENT**

It ensures equal opportunities in the matter relating to appointment in public sector jobs and it also prohibits discrimination based on gender in employment. The government also makes reservations for disadvantaged groups like SC/ST and OBC.

- **ARTICLE 39: EQUAL PAY:**

It ensures that there should be no discrimination between the wages provided to men or women for equal work.

CASE STUDY

- **Shayara Bano v/s Union of India and Ors. (2017)**

The court observed that Triple Talaq is unconstitutional. It violates Article 14 i.e. right to equality, as the husband breaks the marriage tie instantly without the consideration of the wife.

- **Vishaka and Ors. v/s State of Rajasthan (1997)**

It is a landmark judgement which dealing with the sexual harassment against women at Workplace. The court has issued various guidelines for preventing and addressing such harassment. In result new Act i.e. The Sexual Harassment of women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 is enacted.

CONCLUSION

Gender Equality is essential for a peaceful and prosperous world. When every person has equal rights, duties, and opportunities the gender equality should be achieved. The Harnessing Innovations for gender equality is essential for promoting women's empowerment. Innovations in the field of technology, education, economic empowerment and women's safety can reduce the gender gap between men and women. It helps us to address the complex challenges that women can face.

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