



# CASTE AND GENDER IN INDIA

**Kanishka Singh**

Research Scholar

Amity Institute of Liberal Arts, History Department

Amity University Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

## Abstract

Caste and gender have long been two major aspects of societal division in India, strongly ingrained in historical, social, and economic frameworks. This research paper investigates the historical context of caste and gender systems, tracking their development from earliest times to colonial control to modern India. The approach focuses on how racial prejudice and sexism have come together to influence the lived realities of marginalised people, notably Dalits and women. Politically driven initiatives, reforms to the law, globalisation, and growing access to education have all played a role in changing these rigid arrangements over time. Historical events such as the eradication of inequality, women movements for rights, and legal protections have all played important roles in shifting conventional values. Furthermore, government programs such as reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and other disadvantaged groups, and legislation towards caste and gender-based assault have helped to promote social fairness. Despite great progress, there are still hurdles to totally eliminating caste and gender inequities. This study emphasises the importance of ongoing policy modifications, outreach initiatives, and grassroots campaigns in creating a more accessible and equal society.

Keywords: Caste, gender, inequality, education, women, society.

## INTRODUCTION

Caste and gender represent two of among the most profoundly ingrained social institutions in India, having shaped people's lives, chances, and identities for millennia. These structures connect in complicated ways, resulting in distinct feelings of advantages and disadvantages for various groups in Indian culture. As an outcome, caste and gender have emerged as key lenses for comprehending India's socioeconomic and the dynamics of politics, serving as the core issues in studies of academia. The system of caste, a hierarchical societal structure, has traditionally segregated Indian society into strict divisions depending on birthplace, profession, and religious rank. Although bias based on caste was legally outlawed by the Indian Constitution, the effect of it persists to impact the availability of assets, schooling, job opportunities, as well as governmental authority. Around the same time, the gender roles in India are profoundly ingrained in traditions of patriarchy, which frequently limit women and gender minorities to subservient professions across households and the societal arena. Certain gender standards get entangled even more by caste, as women from marginalised castes experience additional prejudice because of their merging identities. The interaction of caste and gender results in a distinct structure of injustice. Dalit women, for example, face both societal prejudice and sexism, a phenomenon known as "double marginalisation." Similarly, upper-caste women might encounter rigid societal standards limiting their freedom, despite being caste-privileged. The above factors are also impacted by social strata, faith, geography, and urbanisation, creating the field of caste and gender research in India as a

multidimensional and ever-changing area. Societal revolts, legislative changes, and scholarly research collectively attempted to confront and overthrow these repressive systems in recent years. Additionally, there exists a persistent attempt to overcome the disparities that are maintained by social strata, from the anti-caste campaigns headed by individuals such as B.R. Ambedkar to the current feminist movements supporting equality between men and women. Major obstacles still exist, though, as seen by the shortage of minorities in areas of leadership, disparities between sexes in schooling and job opportunities, and especially ongoing caste-based atrocities.

For decades, the Untouchable groups remained the most downtrodden under the distinction between races. People were sentenced to reside beyond the hamlet or the city, restricted to 'polluting' vocations that entailed managing human and animal excrement, and forced to serve the highest social strata through all circumstances. Initiatives have been adopted to enable freshly recognised caste groups to get chances for schooling and government services. Nevertheless, progress in reaching parity continues to be gradual.

## Historical Background of Caste System in India

In ancient India during the Vedic era (c. 1500-1000 BCE), inhabitants were classed primarily on their Varna or castes instead of financial standing. The term 'Varna' refers to a newborn's ancestral origins and signifies the colour, kind, structure, or social strata of a person. Four major types have been established: Brahmins (religious leaders, masters, etc.), Kshatriyas (soldiers, royalty, administrators, etc.), Vaishyas (cultivators, merchants, etc., also known as Vysyas), and Shudras (workers). Every Varna establishes unique lifestyle values that will be followed; infants must adhere to the conventions, regulations, ethics, and faiths that are essential within that Varna. The structure of castes in ancient India was established and recognised around the Vedic era, which lasted between 1500 and 1000 BCE.

In accordance to the the Hindu scriptures, constant invasion on another' living obligations leads to a highly unsteady community. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras make up the community's four-fold environment, each of them having proper life obligations and a suitable temperament. Men from the initial 3 chronological divisions are said to as twice-born; first, by their biological parents, and then by their master after receiving the sacred thread which they ought to hang across their chests. The system of Varna appears to be in its early stages in the Vedas before being extended and corrected in both the Upanishads and Dharma Shastras.

- **Brahmins**

Brahmins were seen as the embodiment of wisdom themselves, gifted with commandments and teachings to be delivered to all groups of the community. People were valued not just due to their respective positions Brahmin origins, but additionally owing to abandonment of material existence and acquisition of heavenly attributes; thus were seen as those who were constantly immersed within the worship of the Supreme Being, therefore the name Brahmins. Religious leaders, teachers, sages, instructors, and academics made up the Brahmin group. Individuals perpetually carried out the Brahmacharya (celibacy) pledge that had been prescribed for them. Although wedded Brahmins were referred to as Brahmachari (celibate) because they engaged in intimacy solely for the purpose of reproduction while staying emotionally disconnected from their actions. Nevertheless, anybody belonging to other groups may transform into a Brahmin by considerable study and intellectual growth.

- **Kshatriyas**

Kshatriyas included warrior clans, monarchs, territorial rulers, administrators, and so on. It was critical for a Kshatriya to master arms, combat, confession, restrictions, management, ethical behaviour, fairness, and rules. Their primary responsibility had been to safeguard the land they owned, fight versus assaults. administer equity, administer ethically, and bring harmony and joy for every one among their people, while they needed advice from various Brahmin masters on problems of territorial supremacy and moral quandaries. They had

been free to tie the knot with a woman from any Varna with their agreement even though a Kshatriya bride or a Brahmin woman was the preferred option, Shudra women had not been prohibited from getting married to a Kshatriya man.

- **Vaishyas**

Vaishya is the third Varna, which includes landowners, merchants, financiers, and businesspeople. These are likewise twice-born and visit the Brahmins' monastery to study the norms of good behaviour also to avoid deliberate or unintentional misbehaviour. Cattle husbandry constituted one of the foremost prized activities of the Vaishyas, since the ownership and value of an entire kingdom's livestock, elephants, horses, and their proper care influenced the standard lifestyle and the related affluence of the population. They planned to collaborate closely alongside the kingdom's officials for discussions, set up, and consistently enhance the quality of life by giving advantageous commercial opportunities. Vaishya women were legally protected, and a second marriage was unquestionably customary, comparable to in the remaining three groups. In the event of their spouse's premature demise, a Vaishya woman possessed identical access to familial estates, and she was likewise accountable for the welfare of her kids development regardless of the spouse's assistance.

- **Shudras**

The final class symbolises the basis of a strong economy, and its inhabitants are admired for carrying out their daily tasks faithfully. Academic perspectives on the Shudras being the most diverse, as they appear to face more limits in how they act. Nevertheless, the Atharva Veda in particular enables them to listen and memorise the holy scriptures by heart, and the epic Mahabharata further endorses Shudra involvement in spiritual centres and subsequent Vedic education. Conducting as a priest in kingly ceremonies used to be, though, heavily regulated. They, on the other hand, complied with the commands of their masters, given that they knew how to acquire moksha through enlightenment. They would assist the Brahmins within their meditation centres, the Kshatriyas in their royal residences and princely shelters, and the Vaishyas in their business operations.

## **Historical Background of Gender Inequality in India**

Gender in India has a long history that stems from long-standing customs, faith-based beliefs, and socioeconomic values. Positions for women and ideologies have developed throughout generations, shaped by a variety of ancient, electoral, and cultural factors. The roles of women in earlier India were more equitable, but inequity increased during the mediaeval period. Colonial control influenced gender parity, but it also generated early feminist movements. Rights for women in India have improved significantly since freedom, yet several obstacles persist. Regulatory developments and decisions of the Supreme Court have been critical to establishing equality between the sexes. Gender inequities persist in modern India's economy, schooling, and social systems. Here is a breakdown of the roots regarding gender in India:

- **Ancient Period –**

In ancient India, women were frequently treated as equivalent to males. They had access to schooling and were allowed to take part in ceremonies of faith. Women played a crucial part in the community and were valued for their expertise and accomplishments. However, as time passed, those liberties dwindled, and sex stereotypes grew increasingly inflexible. Women in the Vedic era experienced marital and domestic life. They were offered the opportunity to have several spouses or leave the ones they had. Widows had the option to get married again. Marriage between youngsters had never been heard of. In society as a whole there exist traces of maternal dominance. Rigveda states that both spouses are equivalent in all aspects because they are made up of the same substance. As a consequence, both ought to contribute equal part in all different kinds of activities. It indicates that women should be supported. Children should have identical privileges to their father's belongings as sons, as they are responsible for administering the entire nation. The Rigveda supports gender parity in accessing and attaining information, even complete understanding. Women developed a significant proportion of the Vedas sages. Women of different generations, wedded and unmarried,

acknowledged spiritual leadership. Gargi, an interpreter who challenged the beginnings of existence, penned numerous Vedic hymns. Additional hymns from the Vedic texts include Vishwawara, Sikta, and others associated with the same. The Rigveda mentions many female sages, including Ghosha, a philosopher, and Maitreyi, a legendary figure who dedicated half of her spouse Yajnavalkya's fortune for religious awakening.

### • **Medieval Period –**

During the middle ages, the position of women underwent a deterioration. Women were frequently relegated to household roles as social conventions became harsher. Marriages between children and the purdah (covering up) gained more prevalent, further restricting female autonomy and rights. Rajput women were frequently praised for their courage and selflessness (e.g., jauhar), but their duties were primarily domestic. Women from the monarchy exercised substantial political power throughout the Mughal Empire, but this proved to be the rare instance compared to the rule. Texts such as the Manusmriti strengthened class structures by assigning strict tasks to women, notably obedience to spouses and involvement in family chores. Buddhism and Jainism: These faiths provided more equal venues for women, including chances for religious involvement. Women, on the other hand, were frequently assigned to lower duties in religious organisations. Women in mediaeval India faced the combination of repression and liberation. While sexist norms prevailed, women in diverse countries and tribes discovered methods to exercise their authority while adding to the community. This era's influence persists to influence modern views regarding gender in the country.

### • **Colonial Period –**

The period of colonial rule presented both problems and opportunities for gender parity in India. British authorities brought fresh legislation and systems of learning that had an inconsistent impact on female standing. Although some women obtained advancement in job opportunities and schooling, conventional female expectations remained strongly ingrained. The Panel on the Position of Women in India issued an analysis in 1974, which had a major effect on the resurgence of gender equality agitation. The British colonial authorities pushed Western ideals about sexual roles and morals, frequently perceiving Indian customs as preferable. Colonial occupants and preachers criticised customs like sati (widow burning), female infanticide, and marriage of children as attempts to "civilise" Indian society. The era of colonisation witnessed the establishment of educational institutions for females however it had been originally restricted to families of privilege. Reformists such as Jyotirao Phule (1827-1890) and Savitribai Phule, (1831-1897) founded institutions for girls, defying traditional traditions that limited female possibility of receiving schooling. The founding of women's educational institutions, like Bethune College in Kolkata (1849), represented a great advancement.

## **Impact of Caste System and Gender Inequality in India**

Social order in India is significantly influenced by its past, societal, and sacred customs. Caste and gender are a pair of the greatest important aspects in defining Indian society. These structures have had an impact on all aspects of life, including interpersonal relationships, financial possibilities, participation in politics, and social norms. However, modernisation and legislative changes, race, and sexism tend to occupy critical roles in determining societal hierarchy and personal interactions. The structure of caste has had an enormous effect on the country's community structure. The system has developed a tight classification, with upper castes having greater benefits and possibilities than the lower ones. The impact of caste system and gender inequality in India is discussed below:

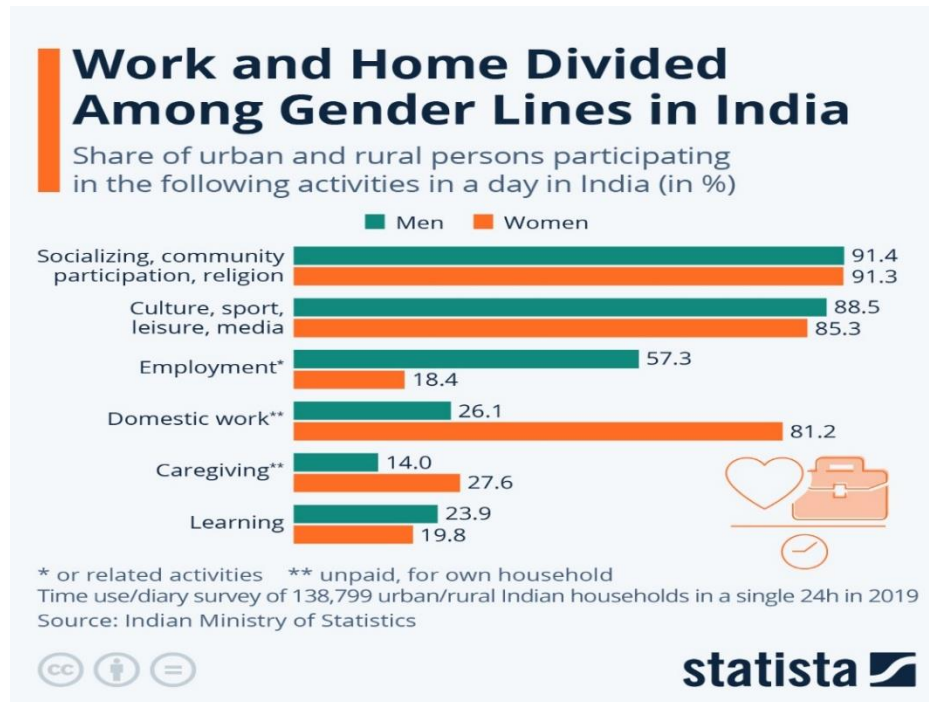
- The structure of caste has had an enormous effect on the country's community structure. The system has developed a tight classification, with upper castes having greater benefits and possibilities than the lower ones. Lower classes have faced oppression and marginalisation, including restricted access to schooling and job possibilities. The class structure has created a tight social structure, limiting advancement in society.
- Arranged weddings are common due to the structure of castes, which restricts individuals from marrying outside of their community. This resulted in limited marital options and strengthened the framework



of caste, thereby rendering it challenging for people to overcome socioeconomic restraints. The class structure discriminates against disadvantaged groups, preventing them from marrying and creating families.

- Class and one's gender occupy an important part in Indian politics. Retained positions for the SCs, STs, and women in the administration of local governments (Panchayati Raj entities) have boosted participation. Nevertheless, upper-caste men maintain rule over national politics, while women frequently confront modesty and sexist pushback.
- The structure of class has resulted in prejudice towards women, who frequently consider themselves insignificant to men and are given fewer possibilities. This has resulted in a dearth of schooling, jobs, and additional possibilities for women, particularly from lower social strata.
- The social hierarchy has resulted in the formation of separate ethnic groups for many classes, each featuring its own set of rituals, norms, and views. It has resulted in an absence of societal assimilation and reinforced the distinction between classes, proving it challenging for people to move away from the societal and financial restraints enforced by their social group.
- Lower-class people face limited financial possibilities, contributing to inequality and impoverishment. The framework of caste has resulted in prejudice in the workforce, preventing disadvantaged groups from receiving equal pay, raises, and possibilities for employment.
- Furthermore, the social hierarchy has resulted in inequality in obtaining commodities like accommodation, schooling, and medical care, increasing the financial difficulties that disadvantaged groups experience in cities. Lower social groups, who often have no opportunities for school and jobs, have limited connectivity to essential amenities, which include healthcare, public transit, and hygiene. The following has culminated in a shortage of availability of essential goods and the continuation of impoverishment in the country.
- Within the country, girls are often seen as insignificant to boys and face prejudice prior to when they are born. Female foeticide and infanticide stem from intricate socioeconomic and cultural structures. The practice of dowry assault results in sex disparities in the country, as numerous impoverished households struggle to acquire resources for adequate inheritance, creating an impression that females are a strain on their family. This limits her negotiating leverage inside the circle of relatives.
- In the country, women have an inferior educational attainment than men. Based on the 2022 census, men had a greater level of education than women. According to the survey, the female populace has an educational attainment of 70.30%, in contrast to 84.70% for the male demographic community. In many parts of India, schooling a girl kid continues to be seen as a possibility as opposed to a need. Because of an absence of education, women possess the knowledge and trust needed to make decisions and are advised to tie the knot young. The modest female literacy rate had a significant detrimental influence on contraception and community stabilisation initiatives in the country, as illiterate women are uninformed of nutritious options for their young ones.
- Males are seen as beneficial compared to daughters in the country. Children are responsible regarding their families' elderly care. These are a crucial element contributing to disparities between genders in the country.
- Women are not given enough opportunities to acquire possessions. Due to the Islamic code, women are prohibited from acquiring assets in the same way that men do. Women must rely on parental support throughout the union as well as their spouses and relatives to safeguard their tribute after the wedding due to gender imbalance in inheritance. Despite the fact that women possess the same privileges to possess and acquire assets within the law, they are denied them in reality. Based on the Hindu Succession Act of 2005, women possess identical entitlements to inherited and co-owned assets, although implementation is lax.
- In this country, females are often overlooked for advancement and discover them upon completion of their occupations. Men typically have greater responsibilities in employment compared to females.
- The legal framework of India encourages gender equality under the regulations. Nevertheless, institutional prejudice hindered progress towards achieving gender parity.

- Inequality between men and women has significant effects on mental health that should not be neglected. Women in the country are more prone to face psychological problems like anxiousness or depression, which are frequently caused by spousal assault, social stigma, and an abundance of freedom. The prejudice associated with psychological disorders worsens the issue, as women are far less inclined to enquire about assistance or obtain proper therapy.
- Inequality between males and females connects with sustainability concerns, especially in light of global warming. Females in the nation are more severely impacted by catastrophes attributed to climate, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and extreme temperatures. It's since women are frequently held accountable for providing nourishment and power for their families, which becomes harder when the surroundings deteriorate.



Source: Indian Ministry of Statistics

Fig.1

- Many of the greatest prominent indices of sex disparity within the nation are the low labour force participation rate (LFPR) for females. According to the World Bank, the country's female LFPR was approximately 20.3% in 2020, ranking among the least in the entire globe. The poor engagement percentage can be traced to several causes, notably social conventions that prohibit women from participating beyond their households, inadequate opportunities for schooling and training for skills, and insufficient daycare facilities.
- Amidst these limitations, the nation has seen strong local organisations supporting equality between the sexes. Organisations like the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and the Gulabi Gang served important roles in campaigning for gender equality and strengthening women on the local scale. They have exemplified the possibilities of grassroots methods to address disparities between sexes.
- Inequality based on gender within India is a complex topic that has far-reaching consequences for people, the community, and especially the country's finances. Despite great progress that may have been accomplished in certain domains, firmly established social conventions, financial inequities, and governmental hurdles persist to maintain disparities between sexes.

## Factors Responsible for Change in the Caste System and Gender Inequality in India

The class system and sexism in India are firmly established social systems that have grown over time. Such systems are inextricably linked with the nation's heritage, customs, spirituality, and financial aspects. Imperial control, modernisation, schooling, legislative changes, political campaigns, globalisation, and financial growth have all had a role in improvements to the social hierarchy and sex disparities. The following is an in-depth look at these parts and their effect on the socioeconomic structure and sex disparities in the country:

- The British established contemporary liberal education, which has significantly reduced the influence of class in Indian society. Modern schooling is built on social values that include equality, independence, and brotherhood. It is also based on technological concepts like logic and empirical evidence. Contemporary learning has weakened the faith of individuals in the spiritual foundation of class, destiny, and karmaphala. Contemporary learning focuses on reason, research, and fairness, all of which effectively undermine the social stratification technique's authoritarian and ceremonial roots. Knowledgeable people are more inclined to doubt the validity of racial prejudice. Learning has offered marginalised communities, primarily Scheduled Communities (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs), prospects for advancement. Accommodations in institutions of learning have also aided this procedure. Educational facilities connect alongside individuals from various class communities, encouraging interpersonal relationships and decreasing class-based stereotypes. Learning has enabled lower-caste people to defend their liberties and fight restrictive traditions. Leaders such as Dr. Ambedkar saw learning as an instrument for emancipation.

- **Industrialisation** has had a significant impact on class structures. Economic expansion has created new job opportunities and allowed for more career advancement. Industries, factories, & workplaces are buzzing with activity. Individuals from different castes believe discussing their social group to be realistic. In an industrial facility, a Brahmin serves beside a Shudra. He can't escape his grip or presence. As a result of industrialisation, new settlements have appeared, attracting rural residents seeking improved job prospects. The presence of large restaurant chains, cinemas, bars, and institutions of learning has made it difficult to maintain collective restrictions in opposition to food-sharing. Kingsley Davis highlights the seclusion, overload, accessibility, scepticism, and adaptability associated with these settlements.

- Cities offer some confidentiality, allowing people to evade the strict social groups that prevail in the countryside. Towns encourage connections among individuals from various classes, faiths, and communities, thereby fostering socioeconomic cohesion. The transition from joint households to single households in city areas has diminished the authority of community seniors in maintaining customary standards. The growth of cities has contributed to the establishment of a more integrated society, wherein caste-based traditions are frequently regarded as old-fashioned.

- Srinivas describes '**Sanskritization**' to mean "the mechanism whereby a lowest Hindu class or indigenous or whatever similar category transforms its norms, ceremonies, philosophy, and manner of existence in the favour of a superior and typically 'twice-born' class." Inferior-class people adopt higher caste beliefs and conduct structures, abandoning their own customs. It involves no adjustments in structure because the cultural hierarchy is rigid. This requires a change in posture. It allows lower castes to rise significantly in the "Jatis" hierarchy under a specific varna.

- Srinivas came up with the word '**Westernisation**' to describe the alterations to Indian society throughout British control. Westernisation has helped undermine the order of castes by fostering learning, equality, rationality, humanity, and a sceptical viewpoint to societal issues. It has severely impacted customs such as marriage among children, innocence, contamination, commonality, and inaccessibility. Westernisation has led to intercaste, intercommunity, and inter-religious weddings, as well as professional shifts. In such a manner, westernisation has caused significant shifts in the society.

Western notions of autonomy, fairness, and freedom have impacted Indian society, resulting in a denial of caste-based structures. The spread of the occidental attire, dietary habits, and cultural norms has lessened the prominence of class marks. Globalisation, as an extension of Westernisation, has strengthened the integration of Indian society into the worldwide marketplace, rendering class irrelevant in some areas.

- **Inequality between males and females** in India has been addressed mostly through constitutional and policy-based initiatives. The Indian Constitution ensures parity for all residents, and multiple regulations have been passed that safeguard women's liberties and foster gender parity. Articles 14 to 16 assure the same treatment under the legislation and ban sexism. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 guaranteed women the same opportunities in obtaining assets, and important modifications in 2005 enhanced those privileges even more. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 criminalised the act of dowry, which was a significant driver of violence against women. The Indian government has established a number of initiatives and programs focused

on improving female rights and autonomy, including the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative. The necessity of equality between men and women is becoming more widely recognised, and society's views concerning women are changing. Growing coverage in the press and lobbying initiatives have expanded consciousness about sex disparity and its consequences. Fiscal growth and urbanisation brought about fresh possibilities for women, especially within cities, resulting in increased financial autonomy.

- The framework of caste and sex disparities in the country has changed dramatically as a result of historical, legal, monetary, and societal factors. Although improvement seems to have been generated, problems persist. Overcoming these difficulties needs regular investments in learning, changing the law, job creation, and civic engagement. By promoting a more equitable and welcoming community, the nation may go towards realising the principles of equity and fairness stated in its Declaration.

## **Schemes Introduced by Government for Caste System and Gender Inequality in India**

The government has implemented a number of programs and attempts to tackle ancient and societal issues resulting from racial and sex disparities. Such initiatives seek to foster equitable treatment, monetary independence, and comparable possibilities for marginalised people, particularly reservation groups, reserved tribes, other disadvantaged groups, and women. The following is a brief overview of the main programs and their goals:

### **1. Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojna (PM-AJAY)**

- The primary goal of the project is to enhance the intended population's wage through a variety of revenue-generating programs, training of workers, and infrastructure growth. To minimise impoverishment in the intended community and lift individuals beyond their income line. Reserved castes who live beneath the minimum wage level are qualified for subsidies within several revenue-creating programs and training programs. In terms of building roads and bridges, communities with at least fifty percent SC inhabitants are entitled to funds within the program.
- To eliminate deprivation in SC groups by creating bigger job possibilities via education and training, income-generating programs, and various other activities. To enhance development-related statistics by providing suitable facilities and amenities in SC-dominated areas. In order to boost knowledge while promoting SC registration in both primary and colleges of higher education via offering sufficient housing at reputable entities, including private institutions within which necessary, particularly in ambitious districts/SC-dominated sections and throughout the country.
- The government has to upload its Annual Action Plan (AAP) electronically using the website. The passwords for statewide and region-level authorities have been emailed to the senior registrar of the provinces. Each stage has two identifiers: province and constituency. A single is for the building of projects, and the remainder is for acceptance. Distributed management will be utilised to create initiatives.
- In terms of defining impoverishment and choosing communities residing beneath the income threshold, the recommendations given by the former Organising Council, as well as the method established by the Department of Regional Development for opting for consumers via local government structures, could be followed.

### **2. Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana (PMVDY)**

- It is an initiative introduced by the Department of Tribes, Government of India, to improve the livelihoods of indigenous groups in India. The initiative focuses on creating the supply and demand chains for forest-based commodities and increasing indigenous groups' incomes through skill instruction and building capacity.
- The program aims to generate income for indigenous collectors and develop them as businesses. The concept is to establish indigenous, locally owned in largely wooded indigenous regions. A Kendra will consist



of 15 indigenous social housing groups, each with up to 20 indigenous NTFP consumers or craftsmen, totalling roughly three hundred participants per Van Dhan Kendra. entirely federally subsidised, with TRIFED contributing a total of 15 lakhs to every 300-participant Van Dhan Kendra.

- The main aim is to improve the financial situation of indigenous peoples by promoting environmentally friendly utilisation and worth creation of timber resources. Via Van Dhan Kendras, it hopes to encourage regional business ownership and create job possibilities for indigenous communities. Its major goal is to enhance indigenous populations' lifestyles and incomes by offering chances for training and expertise development in the NTFP sectors.
- It seeks to strengthen indigenous groups. It gives individuals viable income alternatives and lessens the dependence on conventional forest-based occupations. The structure encourages creating additional value and commerce within tribal harvesters. This results in higher income creation and improved market share for their items. It supports responsible forestry practices by encouraging research on the gathering, manufacturing, and distribution of NTFPs, assuring their long-term utilisation and preservation. The program focuses on equitable growth by emphasising the monetary and social improvement of indigenous people and encouraging them to get involved in the growth of the nation's economy.
- Among the obstacles is indigenous tribes' lack of details regarding the system and its advantages. It reduces their involvement and enthusiasm. Insufficient facilities, such as logistics, warehouses, and manufacturing amenities, impede the program's efficient execution, especially in distant tribal communities. Creating continuous and trustworthy commercial connections for indigenous goods continues to be a difficulty. This necessitates building strong collaborations and networks with a variety of participants. Developing tribal consumers' competence in fields like business ownership, value-added approaches, and advertising methods is critical to the scheme's accomplishment; however, it needs long-term money and time.

### 3. Kishori Shakti Yojana

- It is an Indian governmental endeavour that aims to improve the well-being and general growth of teenage girls between eleven and eighteen. It was created as part of the initiative, which seeks to uplift young girls through schooling, interpersonal abilities, and nourishment.
- In order to enhance the eating habits, well-being, and personal growth of females aged 11 to 18. To offer adolescent girls the necessary connectivity to schooling, life expertise, reading, and mathematical understanding via informal learning; to instill an eagerness for increased interaction with others and information; and to assist them in improving their capacity for making choices. In order to educate and enable adolescent girls to improve/upgrade their life capabilities.
- Support adolescent girls to participate in a variety of endeavours so that children might grow into productive and valuable contributors to the community. Running instructions have been offered to 30,783 young girls.
- Offers additional dietary habits, medical evaluations, and recommendations. Organises educational workshops on sexual wellness, dietary habits, and rights under the law. Provides job training in many professions to encourage independent contractors. Promotes adolescent girls' self-assurance and skills in making choices. Girls approximately 11 to 18, particularly from poor backgrounds. Young girls who do not attend educational institutions are given consideration. Assists to establish thoughtful choices about wellness, schooling, and employment.

### 4. Swadhar Greh Scheme

- The Department of Women and Child Development is executing the Swadhar Greh Program, which focuses on women who have been survivors of severe situations and require institutional help for restoration

so that women can live their lives with integrity. The program aims to provide these women with a place to live, food, clothes, and medical services, in addition to social and financial security.

- Through the program, a Swadhar Greh will be established in each region with an intake of 30 women with a number of goals: To provide basic necessities such as housing, food, clothes, healthcare, and attention to women in crisis who lack financial and social assistance.
- This plan uses various tactics to seek to accomplish its goals: Development of short-term living accommodation, including food, necessities, and healthcare. Occupational and academic improvement courses for women's socioeconomic regeneration. Awareness-raising, guidance, and psychological instruction. Assistance and legal representation. Therapy by phone. Women who have experienced abuse at home may reside here for a maximum of a year. Additional kinds of women can reside for an aggregate of three consecutive years. Females over their golden age of fifty-five can stay here for a period of five years before moving to an elderly care. Kids escorting ladies of every group can use these amenities.
- Every Greh ought to possess sufficient healthcare resources, particularly healthcare equipment. The Greh should also commemorate several religious festivals, such as Republic Day and Independence Day, with active participation from locals. This agency that implements the program might be accountable for providing job-related education to locals via the Job Creation Program of the Department of Jobs and Labour.

## CONCLUSION

Caste and gender inequality constitute two of the nation's most ubiquitous and profoundly ingrained issues, influencing the lifestyles of lakhs of individuals over generations. The caste hierarchy, which is a system of social power, has traditionally marginalised reserved castes (SCs), reserved tribes (STs), and other economically disadvantaged groups by depriving individuals of possession of assets, possibilities, and honour. In a comparable manner, sexist norms have systemically harmed women and gender minorities, restricting their access to schooling, jobs, and opportunities for leadership. The Indian Constitution, with its concentration on fairness and equity, along with solidarity, established the basis for tackling racial and ethnic inequalities. The interaction of gender and social class creates distinct issues that necessitate particular remedies. Dalit women, for example, experience threefold oppression caused by ethnicity, sex, and class, leaving them more susceptible to assault and abuse. Though various federal efforts are trying to alleviate such interrelated drawbacks, an additional and broad strategy is required. Although the nation achieved tremendous progress in eliminating racial and sexual disparities, a lot more needs to be accomplished. Establishing genuine equitable conditions necessitates not merely modifications to legislation but also an essential change in community behaviours and principles. That includes confronting established structures, encouraging diversity, and cultivating an environment of dignity and fairness. Schooling, financial independence, & constitutional safeguards are all essential instruments in this effort; however, success is dependent on solid execution & involvement from society. Finally, the struggle regarding racial and sexual injustice is a shared obligation that necessitates the vocal backing among all—authorities, nonprofit organisations, and people.

## REFERENCES

1. Uma Chakravarti. Gendering Caste through a feminist lens. Sage Publication.
2. Bhavika Mehta. Gender Inequality in India: Ancient and Modern Analysis. Army Institute of Law, Mohali, 2021.
3. Anjali Jaipal. Caste System and its Impact on Indian Society. International Journal of Advanced Research in Commerce, Management & Social Science, 2018, 1(2).
4. Nikul Joshi. Caste System in Ancient India. 2017.
5. National Portal of India, Bajajfinserv, Cleartax, Testbook. Government Schemes for Caste System and Gender Inequality in India, 2024.
6. The Times of India, InsightIAS. Factors Affecting the Changes in Caste System, 2024.