

## Sustainable Development Goal 5: Legal Frameworks & Policies To Promote, Enforce & Monitor Gender Equality In India & Japan

Ms. Aishwarya Thakkar<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Kavita Sindhav<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Phd. Scholar - Faculty of Social Work, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor- Faculty of Social work, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda

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| <p><b>Keywords</b><br/>Women, Gender Equality, non-Discrimination, Sustainable development goals (SDG), Gender Gap, Economy, Gender Equality</p> | <p><b>Abstract</b><br/>India and Japan are two of the fastest-growing economies globally and are in a strong competition for the 4th position in the world's economic rankings. Currently, India ranks as the 5th largest economy, with a GDP of around \$3.7 trillion. By 2025, India is projected to overtake Japan and become the fourth-largest economy in the world. April 1952, being the mark of diplomatic relations as the beginning between Japan &amp; India, since then it's not a hidden fact that the relation between both the countries have matured in areas of cooperation in the field of politics, defence, security, economic, science &amp; technology, education, culture &amp; integration of people across borders. The Impact of the 6th century beginning with Buddhism in Japan &amp; filtered Indian culture from Buddhism has had a great impact in bringing closeness between India &amp; Japan. However, if we look at Japan, it is coined as a Developed Country whereas India is still in the category of developing country. Also, if we look at SDG rankings, India is ranked at 109th Position &amp; which is far behind the ranking of Japan which is at 18th Position amongst 166 nations. According to a recent survey amongst 146 countries on gender equality &amp; gender gap, reports say that both India &amp; Japan are struggling in this SDG goal &amp; needs to work a lot towards working towards the same &amp; providing equal opportunity &amp; rights irrespective of gender. Based on the report Japan stands at 118th position &amp; India Stands at 129th position if ranked for gender equality. Major North American, European &amp; some Asian countries are surpassing Japan &amp; India by accelerating their efforts towards reducing gender cap &amp; taking impactful actions in direction of gender world bank collection of development indicators report Japan has 51.41% women population &amp; India has 48.42% of Indian population. Overall, gender equality is not only a basic human right but also crucial for fostering peaceful societies, unlocking full human potential, and promoting sustainable development. Moreover, there are various studies &amp; reports showing that women empowerment spurs productivity &amp; economic growth. In conclusion, even if countries ensure more than 50% participation from the total women population a lot of difference &amp; impact can be made in gender equality &amp; inclusive countries leading to a lot of economic, social &amp; cultural advancements for the country's equality.</p> |
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### Introduction

India and Japan have rich histories shaped by unique cultural, social, and economic evolutions. India's history is defined by its rich ancient civilization, colonial rule, and the long struggle for independence, which culminated in 1947. Following independence, the country embarked on a path of rapid industrialization, particularly from the 1990s onwards, when significant economic reforms were introduced to liberalize the economy. India is known for its remarkable diversity, encompassing a wide range of cultures, languages, and religions, which contribute to its unique social fabric. Over the years, the nation has made substantial strides in various sectors, particularly in technology, information services, and manufacturing. However, despite these advancements, India continues to face deep-rooted social challenges, with gender inequality remaining a prominent issue. Women in India still encounter barriers in education, employment, and political representation, and traditional gender norms persist in many parts of the country, hindering efforts to achieve full gender equality. Despite the progress, these social issues remain significant hurdles in the nation's development.

There have been lot of studies on gender discrimination & women rights by lot of researchers & social activists, a study shares trends in the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) in India and the effectiveness of policies addressing gender imbalances. The study also talks about following as Key Takeaways:

**Sex Ratio Trends:** The SRB has improved from 919 in NFHS-4 to 929 in NFHS-5, but several states remain below the national standard. Pre-natal sex selection persists in specific regions.

**Cultural and Social Norms:** Deep-rooted cultural preferences for male children, combined with the misuse of sex determination technologies, have resulted in skewed sex ratios.

**Impact on Society:** Skewed sex ratios have led to social issues, including increased violence against women, human trafficking, and the importation of brides from other regions.

**Policy and Legal Frameworks:** Despite various policies and legal measures, challenges in implementation and enforcement remain significant. The authors in the study have also tried to highlight & deep dive into following schemes launched to promote gender diversity & women empowerment in various spans & dimensions, there are numerous key policies and programs in India, following are some of them,

| Schemes                                                          | Details                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP)                                  | Launched in 2015 to combat declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR), promote the value of the girl child, and ensure education.              |
| Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) | Guarantees employment with emphasis on women's participation.                                                                       |
| Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)                      | Provides financial support to pregnant and lactating women for health and nutrition improvement.                                    |
| Sukanya Samridhi Yojana                                          | Encourages savings for education and marriage of girl children.                                                                     |
| Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission)                      | Improves sanitation and promotes women's dignity and safety.                                                                        |
| National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)                    | Focuses on skill development and vocational training for women.                                                                     |
| Legal Measures                                                   | Includes Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act and Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act.                            |
| Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs)                                  | Provides financial assistance, training, and support for income-generating activities.                                              |
| Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA)  | Provides life skills, nutrition, and health services to adolescent girls.                                                           |
| Educational Initiatives                                          | Programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All Movement) and National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education. |
| Women in Politics                                                | Reserved seats in local government bodies to increase women's participation in decision-making.                                     |

Challenging Social Norms and Strengthening Gender Parity: The Ambition of Inclusive India. Overall to say Achieving gender parity in India requires a sustained, collective effort with a multi-faceted approach to address deep-rooted norms and systems of inequality. Innovative community-level strategies and a focus on changing human behaviour are crucial. This journey is ongoing and demands persistence and comprehensive reform. (Dabla,V, Kashyap,S & Sharma, S. 2024)

Japan's history is profoundly influenced by its imperial past, followed by a long period of self- imposed isolation, and a rapid phase of modernization during the Meiji Restoration in the late 19th century. This era marked a dramatic shift for the country, as Japan opened itself up to the world and embraced industrialization, leading to significant economic and societal transformations. In reference to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, it is about achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. In Japan, significant progress has been made in areas such as women's participation in education and workforce, but challenges remain, especially in the workplace and political leadership.

However Japan's promotion of the SDGs, particularly No Poverty, Zero Hunger, and Gender Equality, reveals a gap between official endorsements and actual outcomes. It argues that the SDGs are used to obscure underlying issues and achieve global legitimacy without driving significant social or structural change.

#### Summary of Japan's Implementation and Dissemination of the SDGs Tracking and Achievements:

- The progress of Japan on the SDGs is tracked through an interactive Sustainable Development Report Dashboard, which uses color-coding to indicate achievement levels. Japan has successfully met Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), but faces significant challenges with Goals 13 (Climate Action), 14 (Life Below Water), and 15 (Life on Land). Additionally, Goals 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), and 5 (Gender Equality) continue to experience ongoing issues.

**Promotion and Public Engagement:**

- **Government and Corporate Promotion:** SDGs are widely promoted through various media, including educational content, board games, and advertisements on public transport. The Japan Whaling Association and construction sites display SDG-related signage, though the effectiveness of these efforts varies.
- **Public Awareness:** Despite extensive promotion, a 2019 Nikkei survey found that only 6.7% of Japanese respondents had a strong understanding of the SDGs. This limited awareness could be due to uneven implementation efforts and a stronger focus on domestic concerns rather than the global dimensions of the SDGs.

**Challenges and Governance:**

- **Implementation Issues:** Japan's governance structures are strong in setting objectives and strategies but face challenges in implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responsible for SDG policy, may contribute to this issue due to its focus on international rather than domestic impacts.
- **Domestic Focus:** Some argue that Japan has used SDGs to advance domestic interests, integrating them into national policies and practices, sometimes at the expense of addressing global or human-centered concerns like poverty and gender equality.

**Observations:**

- **Prioritisation Discrepancy:** There is a notable discrepancy between the focus on human-centred SDGs and industry-oriented goals. SDGs related to poverty, hunger, and gender equality receive less attention compared to goals promoting industry and infrastructure, reflecting a tendency to prioritize growth over social issues.

Overall, Japan's efforts to achieve the SDGs are mixed, with significant achievements in some areas but challenges in others. The promotion of SDGs is visible, yet public understanding and effective implementation remain areas needing improvement. (Crabtree, P. C. C. S. C., and McClean, C. T. 2020).

In the aftermath of World War II, Japan underwent a remarkable economic recovery, often referred to as an economic miracle. By the mid-20th century, it had emerged as a global economic powerhouse, known for its technological advancements, innovation, and high standard of living. Japan's manufacturing and export-driven economy positioned it as one of the world's leading economies, particularly in industries such as electronics and automotive production. However, despite these impressive economic achievements, Japan continues to face significant challenges. One of the most pressing issues is its aging population, with a declining birth rate and an increasing number of elderly citizens. This demographic shift poses serious challenges to the workforce and social security systems. Additionally, gender inequality remains a persistent problem, particularly in the workplace. Women continue to face barriers to leadership roles and equal pay, and societal expectations often limit their participation in the workforce, hindering the country's progress toward achieving full gender equality.

Both countries have committed to international standards of gender equality, particularly through the frameworks established by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This research paper explores the legal frameworks and policies in India and Japan designed to promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality.

**The objectives of this study are:**

- a) Understand & evaluate existing Legal Frameworks and Policies in Promoting Gender Equality of Indian & Japan
- b) Comparative Analysis between the Approaches of India and Japan in Gender Equality

This study is based entirely on secondary sources of data. A detailed analysis of available data was done to draw appropriate finding & conclusions. The secondary sources include newspapers, reports, textbooks, E-books, publications, search engines, websites, government data and published research papers & articles.

**Policies & Legal Frameworks in India****Historical background of India**

India, a country with a complex and diverse society, has made notable strides in promoting gender equality since gaining independence in 1947. The Indian Constitution ensures equal rights for women, and several laws and policies have been implemented to empower women. However, despite these efforts, India continues to rank poorly in the Global Gender Gap Index (GGI), which assesses gender disparities in four key areas:

economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Deeply ingrained patriarchal norms and socio-economic inequalities continue to sustain gender-based disparities. For example:

**Social and cultural norms:** In India, societal norms frequently place greater value on men's roles and responsibilities, restricting women's access to education, employment, and positions of decision-making power.

**Economic disparities:** Women in India face significant economic challenges, including limited access to credit, property rights, and employment opportunities, exacerbating the gender pay gap.

**Caste and intersectionality:** India's caste system intersects with gender, leading to further marginalization of women from lower castes, who face multiple forms of oppression.

Here are some statistics and facts about women in Indian history and context:

| Era                                       | Aspect                  | Details                                                                                        | Source                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ancient India (3000 BCE - 500 CE)         | Participation           | Women held high-ranking positions in politics, education, and spirituality.                    | "The Position of Women in Ancient India" by A.S. Altekar                 |
|                                           | Female Literacy Rate    | Estimated around 10-20%.                                                                       | "Education in Ancient India" by S.K. Singh                               |
|                                           | Property Rights         | Women had rights to inherit and own land.                                                      | "Women's Rights in Ancient India" by K.P. Jayaswal                       |
| Medieval India (500 CE - 1500 CE)         | Status Decline          | Introduction of purdah and sati led to a decline in women's status.                            | "The Status of Women in Medieval India" by S.K. Singh                    |
|                                           | Female Infanticide      | Common practice, especially among the Rajput community.                                        | "Female Infanticide in India" by K.P. Jayaswal                           |
|                                           | Education               | Significant decline in women's education opportunities.                                        | "Education in Medieval India" by S.K. Singh                              |
| British Colonial Era (1500 CE - 1947 CE)  | Freedom Movement        | Women played a significant role in protests, demonstrations, and civil disobedience.           | "Women in the Indian Freedom Movement" by S.K. Singh                     |
|                                           | Female Literacy Rate    | Estimated around 2-3%.                                                                         | "Education in India during the British Period" by S.K. Singh             |
|                                           | Employment              | Limited opportunities, few women in formal sectors like education, healthcare, and government. | "Women's Employment in India during the British Period" by K.P. Jayaswal |
| Post-Independence Era (1947 CE - present) | Political Participation | Significant increase, with women holding high-ranking positions in government and politics.    | "Women in Indian Politics" by S.K. Singh                                 |
|                                           | Female Literacy Rate    | Increased to around 70%.                                                                       | "Education in India" by the Ministry of Human Resource Development       |
|                                           | Employment              | Expanded opportunities, with many women in formal sectors such as IT, finance, and healthcare. | "Women's Employment in India" by the Ministry of Labour and Employment   |
| Current Statistics                        | Female Population       | Estimated to be around 586 million (2019).                                                     | "Population of India" by the Ministry of Home Affairs                    |
|                                           | Female Literacy Rate    | Estimated to be around 70% (2019).                                                             | "Education in India" by the Ministry of Human Resource Development       |
|                                           | Employment Rate         | Estimated to be around 23% (2019).                                                             | "Women's Employment in India" by the Ministry of Labour and Employment   |
|                                           | Women in Parliament     | Estimated to be around 14% (2019).                                                             | "Women in Indian Politics" by the Inter-Parliamentary Union              |

## Key Laws, Acts & Schemes in India

### Constitutional Provisions

India's constitution, adopted in 1950, provides a robust foundation for gender equality. Notable provisions include:

- **Article 14:** Guarantees that all individuals are treated equally under the law.
- **Article 15:** Prevents discrimination based on factors such as religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.
- **Article 16:** Secures equal opportunities for all in public employment.
- **Article 39:** Ensures that both men and women have equal access to a reasonable means of livelihood.

### Key Legislation

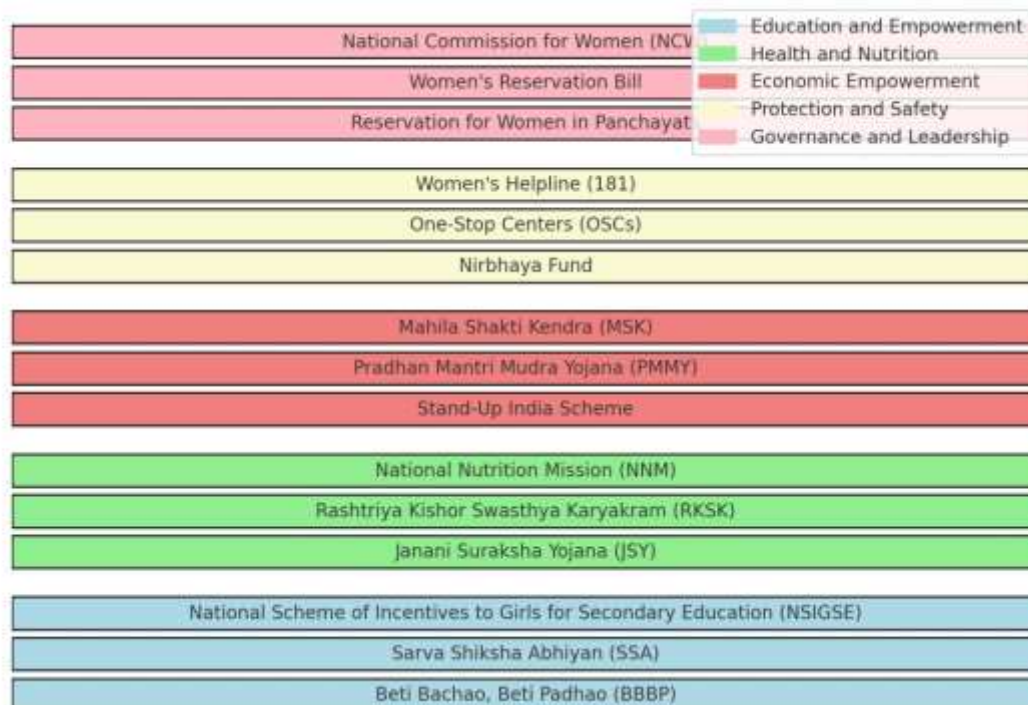
Several laws have been enacted to promote gender equality and protect women's rights:

- **The Hindu Succession Act (1956):** Revised in 2005 to grant daughters the same inheritance rights as sons.
- **The Equal Remuneration Act (1976):** Requires that men and women receive equal pay for equal work.
- **The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005):** Ensures protection for women against domestic violence.



- **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act (2013):** Establishes procedures for addressing sexual harassment in the workplace.

### Government of India Schemes for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment



#### Education and Empowerment

1. **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP):** Came into existence in 2015, this scheme aims to work towards betterment of the sex ratio at birth, enhance girls' education, and empower women.
2. **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA):** This program, launched in 2001, focuses on universalizing elementary education, with a special emphasis on girls' education.
3. **National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE):** Introduced in 2008, this scheme provides financial incentives to girls from disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue secondary education.

#### Health and Nutrition

1. **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY):** Launched in 2005, this scheme provides financial assistance to pregnant women for institutional deliveries, aiming to reduce maternal and infant mortality.
2. **Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK):** Introduced in 2014, this program focuses on adolescent health, including reproductive health, nutrition, and mental health.
3. **National Nutrition Mission (NNM):** Launched in 2018, this mission aims to improve nutrition outcomes, particularly for women and children.

#### Economic Empowerment

1. **Stand-Up India Scheme:** Launched in 2016, this scheme provides financial assistance to women entrepreneurs from Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) communities.
2. **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY):** Introduced in 2015, this scheme provides microfinance to small entrepreneurs, including women.
3. **Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK):** Launched in 2017, this scheme aims empowerment of rural women through training, capacity building, and entrepreneurship support.

#### Protection and Safety:

1. **Nirbhaya Fund:** Founded in 2013, this fund aims to support initiatives focused on improving women's safety and security, especially in public areas.
2. **One-Stop Centres (OSCs):** Launched in 2015, these centers provide integrated services to survivors of violence, including medical, legal, and counseling support.
3. **Women's Helpline (181):** Introduced in 2013, this helpline provides 24/7 support to women in distress.

## Governance and Leadership

- 1. Reservation for Women in Panchayats:** The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1992) reserves 33% of seats in local governments (Panchayats) for women.
- 2. Women's Reservation Bill:** Although not yet passed, this bill proposes to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies for women.
- 3. National Commission for Women (NCW):** Established in 1992, the NCW is a statutory body that advises the government on women's issues and reviews laws and policies affecting women.

## Implementation, Effectiveness, Challenges & impact

**The Hindu Succession Act (1956, Amended 2005):** *Implementation* is uneven, especially in rural areas, where patriarchal norms and lack of awareness persist. While there's been significant progress in urban areas, the *effectiveness* is moderate, with ongoing *challenges* such as social pressure and legal complexities. The *impact* has been notable in improving women's property rights, though enforcement remains inconsistent.

**The Equal Remuneration Act (1976):** *Implementation* is challenging, particularly in the informal sector, resulting in low to moderate *effectiveness*. The gender pay gap persists due to *challenges* like insufficient monitoring, societal norms, and weak enforcement mechanisms. Despite some progress, the *impact* on achieving wage parity is limited.

**The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005):** *Implementation* is hindered by cultural stigma, limited resources, and inadequate law enforcement training. While there's increased awareness and reporting, systemic *challenges* continue to impede full *effectiveness*. The *impact* has been positive in raising awareness, but significant barriers to enforcement remain.

**The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act (2013):** *Implementation* varies widely, with larger organizations often more compliant than smaller ones. The *effectiveness* is moderate, with *challenges* like lack of awareness and fear of retaliation in workplaces. The *impact* has been an increase in awareness and reporting, though uneven implementation calls for stronger enforcement and training.

## Policies & Legal Frameworks in Japan

### Constitutional Provisions

Japan's constitution, effective from 1947, includes provisions to ensure gender equality:

- **Article 14:** Guarantees equality before the law and prohibits discrimination.
- **Article 24:** Stipulates gender equality in family life, ensuring that marriage and family are based on mutual consent.

### Key Legislation

Japan has implemented several laws to enhance gender equality:

→ **The Equal Employment Opportunity Law (1985):** Prohibits gender discrimination in recruitment, promotion, and training.

→ **The Act on the Promotion of Female Participation and Career Advancement in the Workplace (2015):** Encourages companies to set targets and take measures to increase female workforce participation.

→ **The Basic Act for Gender-Equal Society (1999):** Aims to create a society where both men and women can participate equally in all aspects of life.

There are various schemes and initiatives in Japan related to gender equality. The schemes in Japan aim to promote gender equality by enhancing work-life balance, increasing female participation in leadership roles, and encouraging men's involvement in family responsibilities. These initiatives focus on creating a more inclusive workplace, supporting women's career advancement, and fostering a gender-equal society.

- 1. Work-Life Balance Charter (2007)**
- 2. Ikumen Project (2010)**
- 3. Female Leader Development Programs**
- 4. Nadeshiko Brand Initiative (2012)**
- 5. Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)**

## 6. Angel Plan (1994) & New Angel Plan (1999)

## 7. Target for Women in Leadership Positions

### Effectiveness

Japan faces challenges in translating these laws into practice. Cultural expectations, long working hours, and limited childcare support hinder women's career progression. While the government promotes women's participation in the workforce, achieving substantial progress remains a gradual process.

### Comparative Analysis

A comparative analysis of gender equality frameworks in India and Japan reveals both similarities and differences in approach and effectiveness. The following table summarizes

| Aspect                           | India                                                                                       | Japan                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Constitutional Provisions</b> | Articles 14, 15, 16, and 42                                                                 | Article 14                                                                                   |
| <b>Key Legislation</b>           | Equal Remuneration Act, Domestic Violence Act, Sexual Harassment Act, Maternity Benefit Act | Equal Opportunity Employment Act, Basic Act for Gender Equal Society, Promotion of Women Act |
| <b>Workforce Participation</b>   | 22.7% female labor force participation                                                      | 44.5% female labor force participation                                                       |
| <b>Maternity Leave</b>           | 26 weeks (Maternity Benefit Act)                                                            | 14 weeks (Childcare and Family Care Leave Law)                                               |
| <b>Gender Pay Gap</b>            | High (significant disparities across sectors)                                               | Moderate (persistent but narrower gap)                                                       |
| <b>Cultural Barriers</b>         | Strong socio-cultural norms limiting female participation                                   | Traditional gender roles, expectations of women in caregiving                                |
| <b>SDG 5 Ranking (2023)</b>      | Moderate progress, ranked lower compared to Japan                                           | Higher ranking with better gender equality outcomes                                          |

Both India and Japan highlight the complex intersection of legal reforms and societal change in advancing gender equality. While India has made substantial legal strides post- independence, including policies aimed at improving women's participation in political and economic life, it still faces significant challenges related to deep-rooted cultural norms and weak enforcement mechanisms. On the other hand, Japan's legal framework, despite its commitment to gender equality, suffers from a lack of coherence and weak enforcement, slowing the effective implementation of gender equality measures in key sectors. Both countries' experiences underscore the necessity of strong, enforceable legal frameworks for achieving meaningful gender equality, as well as the importance of addressing social attitudes and cultural norms in driving lasting change.

### Findings

#### Post-Independence Legal Reforms in India:

Following its independence in 1947, India set out on a transformative journey to reshape its political, social, and economic landscapes. One of the central areas of focus in this transformation was addressing the deep-seated issue of gender inequality. The Indian government recognized that improving women's status was vital for the nation's progress, and thus prioritized legal reforms that aimed to enhance women's participation in politics, formal employment, and education. While these efforts have led to some progress, they have had mixed results, and the challenges women face in attaining full gender equality persist.

#### Key Legal Reforms and Their Impact:

In the post-independence period, India made significant changes to its legal framework with a particular emphasis on empowering women. A fundamental part of these reforms was the adoption of the Indian Constitution in 1950, which laid a strong foundation for women's legal rights. Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution guaranteed women equality before the law and prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex. Additionally, the Directive Principles of State Policy, such as Articles 39(a) and 39(d), focused on ensuring equal pay for equal work and protecting women from economic exploitation.

The legal reforms introduced in the years following independence were not confined to the Constitution alone,

but extended to various pieces of legislation that directly impacted women's lives. A prominent example is the Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), which sought to tackle the widespread and harmful practice of dowry, a major social issue that often led to violence and discrimination against women. Another important reform was the Equal Remuneration Act (1976), aimed at ensuring that men and women received equal pay for equal work, an essential step toward narrowing the gender pay gap.

Women's involvement in both formal employment and politics also saw significant changes. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1993 introduced reservations in local governance bodies, allocating one-third of seats in Panchayats (local governing bodies) and urban local bodies to women. This reform had a significant impact on political representation at the grassroots level, empowering women to hold elected positions. However, the real extent of power enjoyed by these women leaders is still a subject of debate, with many facing challenges in asserting their authority due to patriarchal structures.

### ***Challenges and Ongoing Gaps:***

Despite these legal advances, India still faces substantial challenges. Women's participation in the formal workforce, though improved, remains far below its potential. India has one of the lowest female labor force participation rates globally, with social and cultural norms playing a major role in limiting women's engagement in the workforce. Traditional gender roles often confine women to domestic duties, particularly in rural areas, despite increasing female literacy rates. While educational attainment among women has risen, societal expectations regarding gender roles continue to restrict women's economic freedom.

Another area where progress has been slow is in the representation of women in high-level decision-making roles. Although there has been an increase in women's political representation in local governance, their presence in higher levels of political power, such as in national parliaments and state legislatures, remains disproportionately low. As of 2020, female members of the Indian Parliament accounted for less than 15%, a figure that has shown little improvement over the years despite efforts to encourage women's political participation.

Moreover, laws like the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2013) and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) mark significant progress in protecting women from violence and harassment. However, the enforcement of these laws remains weak, and victims often face social stigma and limited awareness of their legal rights, making it difficult for them to seek justice.

India's gender equality efforts are also uneven across different regions, especially in rural areas where traditional views on gender roles persist. Patriarchal structures continue to resist changes brought about by legal reforms, and women's participation in sectors like business, higher education, and political leadership is still limited.

### ***Summary:***

In conclusion, India's post-independence legal reforms have undoubtedly contributed to the advancement of women, particularly in terms of political participation and formal employment.

The legislative framework has created essential legal protections and affirmative actions that have improved women's access to education and public sector opportunities. However, the journey towards full gender equality remains a work in progress, hindered by persistent cultural norms, ineffective enforcement mechanisms, and social resistance to change.

### ***Japan's SDG Implementation and Legal Framework Challenges:***

Japan, one of the world's leading developed nations, has made considerable progress in aligning with global initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, which were adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015, aim to tackle a variety of global issues, including gender equality, poverty, and climate change. However, despite Japan's commitment to these global goals, significant obstacles remain within its legal frameworks, particularly concerning the implementation of gender equality initiatives.

### ***Japan's Legal Framework and the SDGs:***

Japan has made some strides in developing legal and policy frameworks to promote gender equality. The Basic Act for Gender Equal Society (1999) was one of the first national laws to establish a legal foundation for gender equality. It emphasized the elimination of gender-based discrimination and the creation of a society that allows both men and women to equally participate in all aspects of life.

In addition, Japan introduced the Work Style Reform Legislation (2018), which aimed to address long-standing issues such as the gender pay gap and the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Policies to encourage greater female participation in the workforce, including improved maternity leave provisions, efforts to combat discrimination against working mothers, and initiatives to promote work-life balance, have



been implemented. Yet, despite these advancements, substantial gaps remain.

### **Legal Gaps in Implementing SDGs:**

One of the primary challenges Japan faces in fully realizing the SDGs is the absence of a comprehensive legal framework to monitor and enforce the goals. While there are policies and laws in place, there is a noticeable gap between these laws and their practical application. This lack of robust legal tools to ensure the achievement of SDGs has hindered progress, particularly in terms of gender equality. Mechanisms to address gender-based violence, wage inequality, and discrimination remain underdeveloped and are not enforced consistently.

### **Gender Equality Challenges in Japan:**

Despite Japan's ratification of international agreements on gender equality, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the country continues to struggle with gender parity, particularly in employment and politics. Japan's female labor force participation rate remains lower than in many other developed nations, with many women working in precarious, part-time, or temporary jobs instead of in permanent, career-building positions. The gender pay gap is one of the largest among OECD countries, with women earning significantly less than men for the same work.

In corporate and political spheres, Japan's leadership remains dominated by men. Women hold only about 10% of board positions in major companies, and female representation in the National Diet, Japan's bicameral legislature, is similarly low, with women occupying only around 10% of seats. Though there are policy targets, such as striving for 30% female representation in leadership roles by 2020, this target remains unmet, and the pace of change has been slow.

### **Weak Enforcement of Gender Equality Laws:**

Another obstacle to progress is the lack of effective enforcement of gender equality laws. While laws like the Act on Securing Equal Opportunity and Treatment Between Men and Women in Employment (1985) exist, their implementation is inconsistent. Workplace harassment, gender discrimination, and unequal pay are frequently reported but often go unaddressed due to insufficient legal support systems and a societal reluctance to confront gender inequality. Additionally, victims of gender-based violence often encounter barriers when seeking legal redress, further exacerbating the problem.

In a nutshell, Japan has made some important strides in creating legal and policy frameworks that support gender equality and its commitment to the SDGs. However, the lack of a cohesive and well-enforced legal structure for implementing these policies, particularly in relation to gender equality, remains a significant barrier. Japan must strengthen its legal frameworks, improve enforcement mechanisms, and foster greater societal commitment to the SDGs, especially in terms of gender equality, if it is to make meaningful progress toward realizing these global goals.

These findings highlight the evolution of legal frameworks in India and the challenges in Japan's legal systems in fully supporting gender equality.

### **Conclusion**

Both India and Japan have made notable progress in creating legal frameworks and policies aimed at advancing gender equality. However, the success of these measures differs due to various cultural, social, and economic influences. While India has introduced extensive legal provisions to support women's rights, their implementation is often hindered by entrenched societal norms. On the other hand, Japan's policies are strong but face obstacles due to traditional gender roles, which restrict women's involvement in high-level leadership positions. To achieve SDG 5 (gender equality), both countries must go beyond strengthening legal structures. They also need to overcome cultural and societal challenges that continue to restrict women's full participation in the workforce and decision-making processes.

Recent SDG rankings show that India has made progress but still faces significant challenges in gender equality. India's overall SDG score stands at 71 out of 100, indicating that while there has been improvement, much more needs to be done to bridge gender gaps. Japan, however, performs better in gender equality indicators, which reflects more consistent policy implementation and cultural shifts toward greater equality. Japan excels in several economic and development indices, underscoring its advanced economy and high standard of living.

India, with its rapidly expanding economy, faces the complex challenge of maintaining its growth while addressing long-standing gender disparities. The country must work harder to eliminate cultural biases that hinder women's participation in both the economy and political sphere. Meanwhile, Japan's stronger performance in gender equality is largely attributed to its steady policy framework, but persistent traditional

gender expectations continue to limit women's leadership roles.

In conclusion, both nations are on the path to gender equality but require continued effort and cultural change. Strengthening legal frameworks and shifting societal norms are essential for both India and Japan to fully realize the goals of SDG 5 and achieve meaningful progress in gender equality.

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