

# G20 and Women Empowerment: A Detailed Analyses

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## ABSTRACT

G20 is a “Group of Twenty” countries i.e., nineteen countries and one European Union (union of countries) come together in the year 1999 after Asian financial crisis, for international economic cooperation and mutual understanding. It is an intergovernmental forum of the world’s 20 major developed and developing countries. It is a historic and proud moment for India to chair G20 from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022 till 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023. “Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam” emphasize the importance of family and women plays a fundamental role in family. It’s written in various writings that women carry responsibility of two families on her shoulder. And we come across injustice, inequality, discrimination of women itself in all societies in some way or another. This platform gives us opportunity to analyze how long we have travelled and landmarks covered towards women empowerment. Many reasons to celebrate yet many important markers need to work upon. This research paper tried to analyze status of women on different parameters in India and compared it with other countries within G20. Also, various schemes initiated in last decade are analyzed. 75 years of independence and trajectory of women empowerment need attention to have holistic understanding of women empowerment. Findings of this paper show that women don’t come from homogenous group, they are from heterogenous group with stratification. Economics aspect, education, family background etc. play very crucial role in success of a women not just as working outside in formal sector but also inside home as house maker. SDG’s Goal 5 is Gender Equality. And to accomplish these all 17 goals which are interconnected need equivalent efforts.

**KEY WORDS:** Women empowerment, employment, SDG, family, triple burden

## INTRODUCTION

G20 founded in 1999 after the Asian Financial crisis for discussing global economic issues among Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors. Twenty members covering two-third of world population, eighty-five percent of global GDP, seventy-five percent of global trade. In 2008 G20 was upgraded to the level of State/Government and in 2009 it was designated as the “Premier forum for international economic cooperation”. The members of G20 are: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America, European Union.

International platforms can be best used to address issues connecting different nations simultaneously though with different intensity. Within this world there are many international forums. Sets within universal set trying to solve issues affecting members of group. And economic issue is one such big issue having long term impact on other spheres of state. This group is a combination of developed and

developing countries, following different types of economy like capitalistic, socialist, mixed. Not just economy only percolates but cultural practices too, belief systems, faith, tourism, universal franchise. The 3 magical words given by French revolution – Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. All these things flow across borders, beyond cultures to every society. Since ancient time people were connected through trades, wars, etc. “VasudhaivKutumbkam” considering the world a family is the message of India to the world. And this is the need of hour too. Looking into the table given below few countries done well on several indicators whereas some are lagging far behind as compared to their fellow members. This time we need to join hands to fill gap and make this world a living heaven on earth.

## W20 AND INDIA: STATUS OF WOMEN

**W20** (Women20) is one of the Engagement groups of the G20 established during Turkish presidency in 2015 focusing on position and status of women in G20 commitments and to foster gender equality and women economic empowerment. Dr. Sandhya Purecha, Chairman, Sangeet Natak Academy appointed as chair of the W20 India. G20 under India’s presidency prioritize the importance of women led development with increasing participation of women in workforce.

Women constitute nearly fifty percent of population, yet fighting for their equal rights. Indicators shown in table 1.2 below included data relevant to women only. And international forums must address those needs and include representatives from required areas into discussion, “Let Local Voices come out and be listened”. We need to look women issues differently in contemporary scenario as more and more are entering workforce today. With increasing percentage of literacy level among women more opportunities are available today. Matter of immediate concern is not about quantity of educated women but quality demanded by market and skill acquired by women to meet these demands. Though its just not issue of women only, it is equally important issue for men too, but scope of this paper is limited to women study. So, our focus will remain on women in this paper. Addressing women issues shouldn’t be a top-down approach but a bottom-up approach. Women doesn’t form homogenous category but are heterogenous group with different women coming from different strata of society. As so are their problem too differentiated based on their position in society. And we need contextual planning for resolving women issues. There can’t be one size fits all approach in this regard.

Problem with data compared are same that they represent a national average. But we are aware of the drawbacks of taking average as statistical tool. Because extreme readings in any category hides the poor readings. For example, if literacy rate of few places are 99 percent it hides places with literacy rate as low as 35 percent. And average gives us satisfying picture. That is the primary reason for me to emphasize on “Local Policy” in different areas. Because some areas are better at some markers whereas poor in others, by focusing on requirement of particular area we can have better workable solutions. Rural women and Urban women have different issues, similar is the case with tribal women. If we consider global categories, white women and black women have different issues. Working women issues are entirely different from home maker women. And so on. Still every women should be entitled to basic amenities related to common everyday life like- basic education, sanitation, clean drinking water, clean cooking fuel etc.

Women empowerment means a healthy woman in all spheres of life: political, economical, social, physical, mental, legal. Having access to resources, opportunities, education. A happy woman is the ultimate aim of all women empowerment practices. We need to be cautious here because happiness

means different to different individuals. This was the reason behind new index known as “Happiness Index” today given by Bhutan. Because Human Development Index was not able to look at the subjective understanding of societies of different countries. It was objective in its approach towards measuring development.

(Table 1.1)

S.No.	Country	Happiness Index Rank
1	Argentina	56 <sup>th</sup>
2	Australia	11 <sup>th</sup>
3	Brazil	34 <sup>th</sup>
4	Canada	14 <sup>th</sup>
5	China	82 <sup>nd</sup>
6	France	21 <sup>st</sup>
7	Germany	13 <sup>th</sup>
8	<b>India</b>	<b>136<sup>th</sup></b>
9	Indonesia	80 <sup>th</sup>
10	Italy	28 <sup>th</sup>
11	Japan	55 <sup>th</sup>
12	Mexico	35 <sup>th</sup>
13	Russia	74 <sup>th</sup>
14	Saudi Arabia	26 <sup>th</sup>
15	South Africa	101 <sup>st</sup>
16	South Korea	61 <sup>st</sup>
17	Turkey	102 <sup>nd</sup>
18	United Kingdom	17 <sup>th</sup>
19	United States of America	19 <sup>th</sup>
20	European Union	Collectively in top position

India needs to work on different fronts simultaneously. And in our country different value system altogether give more importance to birth of a male child over female child. And this discrimination percolates in almost every sphere of life. Though situation has far improved since independence but yet society and workplace need more practice towards accepting women as their equal counterparts at all levels. Neither inferior nor superior just equal as human being should be.

Comparing members of G20 on different parameters especially related to women:

(Table 1.2)

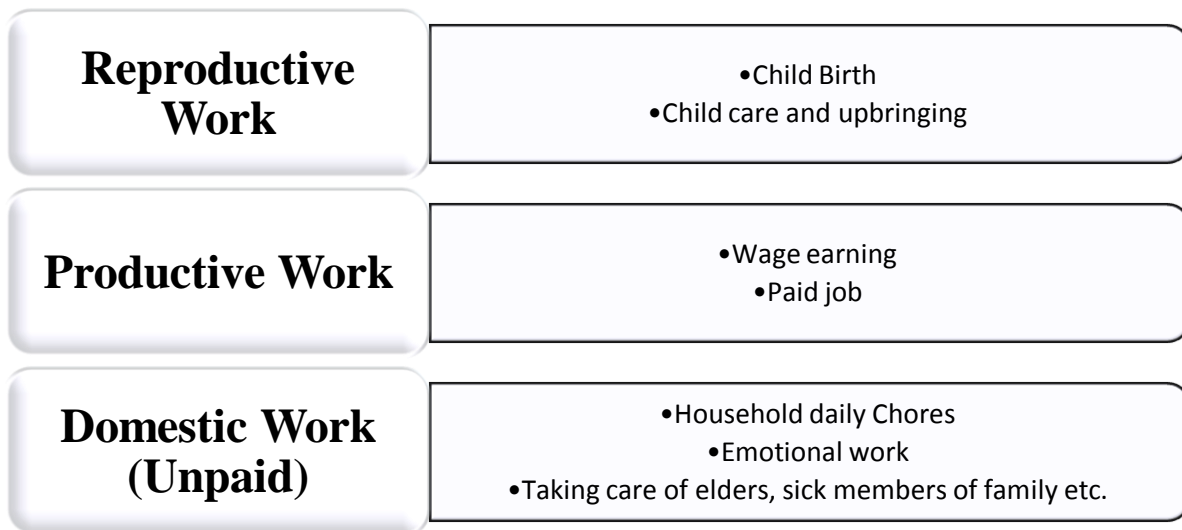
Gender Gap Index Rank	Country	Total Population (in millions)	Sex Ratio	Female Literacy %	Labor Force Female %	MMR Per 1000 live births	Political Representation Women %
33 <sup>rd</sup>	Argentina	46.3	95.304M/100F	99.71	50.01	39	21.04
43 <sup>rd</sup>	Australia	25.97	99.2M/100F	82.7	61.06	3.9	31.1
94 <sup>th</sup>	Brazil	213.91	96.52M/100F	99.43	49.11	60	15
25 <sup>th</sup>	Canada	38.74	98.58M/100F	99	60.8	7.5	30.5
102 <sup>nd</sup>	China	1412.5	104.7M/100F	99.85	61.61	16.1	24.94
15 <sup>th</sup>	France	65.63	93.78M/100F	99	51.9	7.6	37.3
10 <sup>th</sup>	Germany	83.3	97.88M/100F	99	56.84	3.2	34.9
<b>135<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>India</b>	<b>1406.6</b>	<b>108.18M/100F</b>	<b>70.3</b>	<b>19.23</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>14.44</b>
92 <sup>nd</sup>	Indonesia	274.86	101.39M/100F	99.78	53.7	177	21.04
63 <sup>rd</sup>	Italy	59.19	95.01M/100F	99.96	39.89	2.5	35.7
116 <sup>th</sup>	Japan	125.17	94.6M/100F	99	53.3	3.7	11
31 <sup>st</sup>	Mexico	130.12	95.77M/100F	99.17	43.81	34.2	50
	Russia	145.45	86.39M/100F	99.74	54.49	34.5	17.9
127 <sup>th</sup>	Saudi Arabia	36.17	137.13M/100F	99.45	30.94	17	19.87
20 <sup>th</sup>	South Africa	61.06	97.01/100F	92.17	46.21	119	46.7
99 <sup>th</sup>	South Korea	51.63	100.20M/100F	96.6	53.39	9.9	18.6
124 <sup>th</sup>	Turkey	85.62	97.51M/100F	99.71	31.84	13.1	17.1
22 <sup>nd</sup>	United Kingdom	67.6	96.67M/100F	99	58.04	6.5	34.4
27 <sup>th</sup>	United States of America	333.01	98M/100F	99.17	55.23	17.4	27.7
	European Union	447	93.2M/100F	99.76	68	6	41

Data available on different parameters related to women provide us very important insights towards women empowerment. On different markers India scored below as compared to other members of G20, but if we see the journey, we have covered so far in last two decades despite the fact of having second largest and diversely populated country with pressure on existing resources it's commendable. With numerous programs initiated from government of India from time to time, scenario has changed to great

extent. Every country has different set of belief system, values that too not homogenous within the borders. In country like India situation is far more complicated due to existing social structure with different values attached to class, caste, religion, sex etc. which play a vital role in everyday life of an individual unconsciously and on number of decisive occasions consciously and in well planned manner. Lot of importance given to ascribed status as compared to achieved status. In contemporary society attitude towards women is changing in terms of educational opportunities, employment, decision making etc. with decreasing size of family, increasing technology, number of home appliances today visible in home, home delivery system made that classic dividing line between male and female work blurred. Women issue collectively termed as Triple Burden especially for working women in paid employment. According to Powell “the triple burden of motherhood is a concept that was originally introduced by sociologist Ann Oakley”.

Women work can be classified in 3 categories as shown in Figure 1 below:

(Figure 1)



Different members of G20 have resolved these issues differently depending upon other affecting factors. Less population, educated citizens, skill training, ample earning opportunities for women, other care services easily available and affordable for women, security etc. impact women of different strata differently. And adversely affected women from lower strata.

Pandemic and associated lockdown for nearly two consecutive years proven to be nightmare for women. As per data published more than 5 million jobs especially of women were lost, female children left schools, increased number of domestic violence cases recorded etc. Hence proved how hard we try to criticize economic determinism theory of Karl Marx; we owe to it for explanation of reasons behind many incidences. Financial status does play vital role and deciding factor in life of individuals. And first step towards strong women is to make her financially independent. Redefining work culture in both private and public sphere.

## **G20 AND INDIA: WOMEN**

G20 in 2023 in India focused on women empowerment pointing on 5 areas:

1. Women’s Entrepreneurship

2. Grassroot Women Leadership
3. Bridging the Gender Digital Divide
4. Education & Skill Development
5. Climate Change

Taking into account each of the point mentioned above numerous schemes, constitutional amendment of Panchayati raj system with one third seats reserved for women from all sections of society, programs, services provided by government from the very first day of Independence when women voting rights were accepted without any counter argument with full agreement of all members of assembly. For the same reason and political rights, we see a different history of women in west.

NITI Aayog has launched a Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) for providing and ecosystem for budding and existing women entrepreneurs across the country. SIDBI has partnered with NITI Aayog to assist in this. Loan schemes run by Government of India to support women entrepreneurs like, Shree Shakti Yojana, Dena Shakti Scheme (20 lakh with 0.25 percent concession on interest rate), Orient Mahila Vikas Yojana Scheme (10-25 lakh with concession of 2 percent on interest rate), Mudra loan for Women (1. Shishu loan – 50k, 2. Kishor Loan – 50k to 5lakh, 3. Tarun loan – 10lakh at the interest rate of 7.30 percent per annum), Annapurna Scheme etc.

Grassroot women leadership achieved with 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment act, 1992 reserved one third seats for women at three different levels of rural development and panchayat raj. Allowed women from rural areas to step out of their four wall boundaries of her house and actively participate in grassroot democracy and play vital role in decision making for the development of their own surroundings. Our father of Nation had a deep belief in the system. Since then, situation has improved and more and more educated women are taking interest in panchayat elections.

**Mahatma Gandhi** observed “As long as women of India do not take part in public life there can be no salvation for the country; the dream of decentralization could never be fulfilled. I would have no use for the kind of swaraj to which such women have not made their full contribution”.

According to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj “20 states have increased women reservation to 50 percent. Currently there are a total of 14,53,973 elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) which amount nearly 45 percent of total number of seats.” A big reason to celebrate on this ground. Yet representation of women in parliament of India is still very low amount to only 14 percent.

**B R Ambedkar** said “Political power is the key to all social progress”.

India needs to work upon on this front increasing percentage of women in Lower house and Upper house. 50 percent of population cannot be rightly represented by merely 14 percent representatives at national level. Women reservation bill seeks to reserve one-third of seats in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Legislative assemblies for Women appeared number of times before parliament but not succeeded finally till date. It has to be passed for addressing women issue at national level in much stronger way.

Digital divide is the gap between people with access to Information and Communication (ICT) technology and those who don't have access. When this is based on sex of a person it is termed as gender digital divide. This divide is different for different groups for example between developed and developing countries, between educated and uneducated individuals, between rich and poor person etc. Also, people who actively use digital tools for numerous purposes as compared to people not much



inclined towards use of ICT. NFHS-5 data revealed existing gender digital divide both in urban and rural areas in India. It is twice visible in rural areas as compared to urban areas. Access to mobile phones, internet connectivity, digital infrastructure and above all digital education to use digital tools in effective and useful way is very important. During lockdown we witnessed number of women on online platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter etc. engaged constructively in public life, making videos of skills they have and publishing those videos in public, running multiple channels in different categories with wide range of variety ranging from cooking, modelling, education to HealthCare, tourism etc. Also, earning money and setting examples in front of other people, internet made it possible for anyone sitting in any corner of society even geographically remote areas to become visible online and show their skill globally. Though nothing exists without dangers but we have to accept influence of digital revolution world is facing today. With affordable data packs and associated digital accessories with digital training women can make her voice listened globally.

**Amitabh Behar**, CEO of Oxfam India said, “The digital technologies were supposed to make public services and schemes more accessible. But the ‘India Inequality Report 2022: Digital Divide’ shows this isn’t happening. The report highlights how digital technologies are accessible to the rich and privileged. The report shows that a person with a post-graduate or a PhD is 60 percent more likely to have a phone than a person with no education. This is worrying because this digital divide can further deepen the existing socio-economic inequalities in the country. We urge the state and Union governments to immediately take necessary steps to universalize internet connectivity and treat digital technologies as public utility not a privilege”.

Education act as bridge between different development indicators. It is the first step towards progress of individual. Census 2011 gave us positive picture of increasing literacy rate among females. But considering the position of G20 members we need to work more. Today only education in terms of theory, reading and writing, appearing in exams is not sufficient. Along with it skill development should be given priority. NEP 2020 focused on this aspect. And many programs focusing this objective are run by Government of India. Apart from basic minimum homogenous education for all we need to address different need of women. Women perform three different roles- reproductive, productive and community role. With decrease in family size India can use this huge population in workforce provided appropriate and useful training programs are given to women at all levels and as per their interest. Also, women should know some skills ahead of men as used by them in day-to-day life like- knitting, sewing, cooking, hygiene maintenance, and other associated household chores. This was rightly suggested by Mahatma Gandhi Ji on several occasions. Also, it’s very important to not to consider home maker’s work inferior to that of paid employment outside home. Women in rural areas forming SHGs (Self Help Groups) collectively doing profitable business from their locality itself. Women require training of various aspects of business - marketing, finance, distribution, transportation etc. Time has arrived to look women as carriers of human development and given equal treatment in all dimensions of life in society, family, workplace. Still women representation is poor in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics). We need to bring more and more girl children in these areas and remove misconception about women phobia or less IQ in these areas.

**Ecofeminism** tries to draw connection between exploitation of nature and oppression of women. This term was coined by French writer **Francois d’Eaubonne** in her book *Le Feminisme ou la Mort*

(1974). Climate change is widely discussed topic in any meeting at any level. According to Climate research organization Project Drawdown “Girls’ education and family planning would reduce carbon by 85 gigatons by 2050”. Patricia Biermayr – Jenzano, a gender and agriculture specialist, Georgetown University said to Earth Day network, “We cannot comprehend how we are going to bypass climate issues without a gender lens”. In India Ecofeminist Vandana Shiva worked in the field of ecofeminism. Patriarchal value system prevalent in our Indian society suppress and exploit both women and nature. The success of Chipko Movement marks the importance of women towards sustainable development. If women can decide her marriage age, number of children she want to have, use of birth control techniques, skill she want to learn, subjects of her choice in educational years we will see a new world already existing but invisible so far. Age old religious practices related to worshipping different trees, plants on various occasion like – Banyan tree, Tulsi plant, Banana Plant, Mango Tree, China rose and many more by women most of the time due to fasting rituals endless in number in different parts of society, was already a great solution towards saving nature in Indian culture.

### **GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES**

Government of India initiated schemes empowering girl child, women, mother, old age women i.e., problems of women in every stage of life are addressed by government since independence. Schemes – Increased period of paid maternity leave to 240 days, Beti padhao Beti bachao (22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 2015 ensures survival, protection and education of girl child), Working women hostel (single, widowed, married, divorced, separated working women for safe accommodation and day care facilities for their children), Mahila E-Haat (opportunity for women entrepreneurs), Rajiv Gandhi national creche scheme, Swadhar Greh scheme, one stop center, National social assistance program, Poshanabhiyan etc. list is endless. And we do see its impact in increased number of institutional deliveries, increase sex ratio, more girl child enrollment in primary schools, more women in service sector in government services especially bank, education, medical etc., few marked their presence in bureaucracy, politics etc.

### **WORK CULTURE AND WOMEN (An Observation)**

Women and men are not antagonistic division between two genders. They are complementary to each other. Most of the women entering paid employment primary objective behind this financial sustainability. Even if they remain with surplus time and money mostly invested in family or personal luxury and improving material assets. Consequences of consumer culture as promoted by capitalist markets. Innovation towards work and in fields of research are very few in number. Difference observed between developed and developing countries in terms of female work, in developing country securing a job (mostly prefer government job) is the end in itself whereas in developed capitalist countries securing job is a means to some higher ends to satisfy their capabilities with right job which they keep improving because they are paid for what they actually perform. Performance based benefits. So, the point is to develop and inculcate working attitude in women and to increase other child care services, work place security, skill training to let women do what best they can do and it can be any work without judging it from economic dimension only but on performance. And should be paid accordingly, promoted unbiased, given important decision-making powers to have the fruits of development.

Government and society both have to come forward for empowering women by building their strengths in all **5 dimensions** – Social, Educational, Economic, Political and Psychological with equality starting inside the womb of women. Financially independent women proven to be successful mothers, wife



ensured Food security with nutritional value for her children, arranging vacations twice a year, good education for her children, healthy atmosphere at home, good clothes, increased consumption of fruits but there is other side too with decreased me time, over burden, increased pressure etc.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Gender inequality rooted in gender-based socialization and it is root starting of all discrimination. Looking towards global perspectives and especially working women in G20 member countries we should create environment for women to work or join profession by choice not just for finances. Women should stop over burdening themselves instead they invest time in specific skill development which will ultimately pay them good amount too. Work should satisfy their creativity and skill. Young girl should look for work with interest not the sickness of work.

Security both inside and outside home is very important for children. In the very early process of socialization, it is very important to teach and train individuals to respect women and give them safe and positive environment. Today in news we come to see number of first women in some field which was earlier never marked their presence. But now its high time for women too to take a step ahead in their profession towards excellence and give back to society. This profitable situation is not of every woman as they are themselves categorized into strata, but with increasing middle class women in services more performance is demanded without considering gender.

“Biology is not Destiny”. G20 is a global platform, best place to start gender neutral performances. Man is not dominating but this is our society which puts a lot of values on masculine character. Motherhood should be celebrated and given utmost importance. With years to come more and more women will join workforce but before that we need to fix the loop holes of environment surrounding us with equal responsibility of women to for paying back to the society not just kids and family. “**Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam**” gives message of considering world a family and so should be the responsibility of redistributing the fruits of development among underprivileged. Try not to be hold profitable position all the time, but effort should be towards making the position valuable. Elite members of any international group take the responsibility to guide and cooperate other members for fulfilling the goal of women empowerment in a true sense.

Finally, I would like to conclude this paper with a concept introduced in sociology by Robert K. Merton that is Self-fulfilling Prophecy in his book Social Theory and Social Structure in 1957 and allied to

**William Isaac Thomas** famous theorem that ‘When people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences’. It may be used in both positive as well as negative sense.

**Robert K. Merton**, “The self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true. The specious validity of the self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates a reign of error. For the prophet will cite the actual course of events as proof that he was right from the very beginning.” Our beliefs about ourselves influence our actions towards others and impact others’ beliefs about us causes others’ action towards us and finally reinforcing our beliefs about ourselves.

For women empowerment, we need to believe in ability of women to work in any field of their choice with equal talent same as their counterparts' males. Need is to work upon the surrounding environment both socially and at individual level.

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