

Enabling Provisions for Women in India: A Socio-Legal Study

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Abstract

There has been a constitutional commitment and a socio-legal barrier to women's emancipation in India. Child marriage, sati, dowry, and the restriction of property rights were some of the societal ills that gradually undermined the once-high standing of women in ancient societies. Gender equality in the Constitution was made possible by reformers like Savitribai Phule, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, who spearheaded change. Legislation such as the Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act, Dowry Prohibition Act, Domestic Violence Act, and Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act seeks to guarantee equality and dignity, as do Fundamental Rights (Articles 14, 15, 16, 21, 23), Directive Principles (Articles 39, 42, 45), and other similar statutes. Shah Bano (maintenance), Vishaka (workplace harassment), Shayara Bano (triple talaq), and Sabarimala (temple admission) are some of the seminal decisions that have enhanced women's rights through judicial activism.

Despite personal laws and patriarchal customs being hurdles, India is aligned with global human rights norms through its acceptance of CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration. In spite of advancements, women still confront discrimination, violence, and inequality in the job, which is exacerbated by factors like caste, class, and religion. While programs such as the National Council of Women (NCW), Panchayati Raj (33% reservation), Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), and the Ujjawala Scheme (UGS) aim to empower women, problems with ineffective enforcement and restricted reach continue. To achieve true gender justice, we must demolish patriarchy through cultural shifts, increased legal awareness, economic empowerment, and more stringent law enforcement. If India wants to realize its constitutional goal of justice for women as equal participants in democracy and development, it must achieve substantive equality first.

Keywords: Women's Rights in India, Constitutional Provisions, Gender Equality, Judicial Activism, Socio-Legal Challenges.

Introduction

From adoration in the Vedic era to servitude in subsequent epochs, and from defiance during colonial rule to progressive emancipation after independence, the position of women in Indian society has seen tremendous changes. Women such as Gargi and Maitreyi were active in the spiritual and intellectual life of early Vedic civilization. But mediaeval customs like sati, child marriage, dowry, and the prohibition of widow remarriage diminished their independence and worth. Leaders such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy opposed sati, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar backed widow remarriage, and Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule were pioneers in women's education during the colonial era, which prompted reform movements. Notable women who demonstrated leadership in national politics during the liberation struggle included Sarojini

Naidu and Kasturba Gandhi. These changes paved the way for constitutional protections of equality.

Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees women's equality before the law, Article 15 outlaws discrimination, Article 16 ensures equal job opportunities, and Article 17 gives the power to the state to make special arrangements for women. These amendments were drafted in an effort to right historical wrongs after independence. Equal pay and maternity leave were further established by Directive Principles. Formal equality was deemed inadequate in the absence of real safeguards, which these policies acknowledged.¹ However, obstacles including discrimination in the employment, social and cultural norms, and domestic abuse still prevent women from fully participating, even as laws are becoming more progressive. In order to prevent women from being exploited and to give them equal opportunity, enabling factors, such as legislation, court rulings, and institutional processes, are vital. In this light, it is critical to conduct a socio-legal analysis of enabling provisions in order to assess current state of affairs, pinpoint areas for improvement, and suggest changes that will bring about the gender justice and substantive equality envisioned by the constitution.²

1. Constitutional Framework for Women

The foundation of women's legal emancipation in India is the Constitution. As a whole, it does a good job of protecting women from prejudice and empowering them to take part in all aspects of society and the economy. As a whole, the constitutional framework represents the goal of a society that is equitable for women and girls by include their rights in the broader discussion of human rights. Article 14 – Equality Before Law Provides that everyone will be treated fairly and has the same access to legal protections. This clause guarantees that women have the right to contest discriminatory practices in all areas of law, including employment, education, and access to justice. Article 15 – Prohibition of Discrimination Discrimination based on sex is one of the prohibited grounds in Article 15(1). Article 15(3) grants the State the authority to establish specific measures to protect women and children. This provision provides legal support for welfare programs, reservation rules, and affirmative action initiatives that prioritize women. Article 16 – Equality of Opportunity in Public Employment Prohibits gender discrimination and ensures equal opportunity in government employment. For women to be able to work in the state's administrative services, military, and other fields, this article must be in place.³ Article 21 – Right to Life and Personal Liberty A dignified, healthy, and private life is encompassed under Article 21, according to the Supreme Court's comprehensive interpretation. In matters pertaining to reproductive rights, protection from violence, and sexual harassment, this has proven especially important for women. Article 23 – Prohibition of Traffic and Forced Labour Historical forms of child and female labor exploitation include trafficking, prostitution, and forced work; this clause safeguards women from these forms of exploitation. Despite their lack of legal standing, the DPSPs help shape state policy toward women's welfare and serve as a framework for effective governance. Article 39 mandating that all citizens have

¹ Constitution of India. (1950). Articles 14, 15, 16, 21, 23, 39, 42, 45, 46. Government of India

² The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, No. 25, Acts of Parliament, 1955, §§ 5, 13.

³ The Hindu Succession Act, 1956, No. 30, Acts of Parliament, 1956, § 6, § 8 (2005 Amendment)

the right to a sufficient means of subsistence and fair compensation for equal labor. Article 42 directs the government to ensure fair working conditions and maternity leave. Article 45, initially prioritizing children's access to free education has, through increased educational options, empowered girls in an indirect way.⁴ Article 51A(e) urges people to stop doing things that lower women's dignity. The constitutional guarantee of women's dignity and the general public's acceptance of that guarantee are both reflected in this symbolic act. Indian courts have played an active role in interpreting constitutional provisions to strengthen women's rights: *Air India v. Nargesh Meerza* (1981): Air hostesses were required to retire upon marriage or pregnancy, but the Supreme Court overturned this discriminatory law, ruling that it violated Articles 14 and 16. *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan* (1997): Due to the lack of legislation, the Court established standards to combat sexual harassment in the workplace, which it deemed a breach of Articles 14, 15, 19, and 21. The legislation of 2013 was derived on these standards. *State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan* (1951): Although this case mostly dealt with caste reservations, it served to illustrate the relationship between equality and affirmative action, which in turn impacted affirmative action programs that targeted women. *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India* (1978): In an indirect expansion of women's right to dignity and autonomy, the Court broadened the interpretation of Article 21.⁵

There has been a marked improvement in the constitutional protections for women's equality as a result of legislative acts passed in India after independence. While the Constitution establishes the general parameters, specific enabling elements are provided by statutes to alleviate the cultural, social, and economic barriers that women encounter. Decades of laws have been passed by Parliament with the express purpose of eradicating gender-based discrimination, protecting women from exploitation, and advancing their rights. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, was a landmark in codifying Hindu personal law. It introduced monogamy as the norm, prohibited child marriage, and recognized conditions of valid marriage under Section 5. Importantly, it granted equal rights of divorce to both husband and wife, thereby enhancing women's autonomy. Cruelty, desertion, conversion, mental illness, and venereal disease are among the grounds a woman might use to obtain a divorce under the provisions of Section 13. The Act laid the groundwork for a more equitable society by protecting women's freedom to leave abusive marriages. In its early stages, the Hindu Succession Act granted women only limited rights to inherited property. Only male members, not daughters, were granted coparcenary rights. Inheritance of wealth became unequal between the sexes as a result of this. By granting equal coparcenary rights to daughters, married or unmarried, the 2005 amendment transformed this framework. Gender equality in property relations was advanced by this change, which supported women's economic independence and gave them more bargaining power inside families. One of the most pervasive social ills in India is dowry, even though it is illegal. The payment or acceptance of a dowry was made illegal under the Dowry Prohibition Act. A person might face jail time and a fine under Section 3 if they demand dowry.

⁴ Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, No. 28, Acts of Parliament, 1961, § 3.

⁵ Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, No. 43, Acts of Parliament, 2005, §§ 3–12.

A cognizable and non-bailable offense, dowry-related harassment has been strengthened through the years by revisions to the Act. The Act established a legal framework to confront this exploitative activity, even if enforcement has been problematic.⁶

This Act ensures women's rights in the workplace by providing paid maternity leave and related benefits. Originally, the Act granted 12 weeks of leave; the 2017 amendment extended this to 26 weeks for women employees. It also introduced provisions for work-from-home options and mandatory crèche facilities in establishments with more than 50 employees. This legislation aligns with the constitutional mandate under Article 42, which directs the State to secure maternity relief, and supports women's participation in the workforce. The PWDVA was revolutionary because it widened the scope of violence to encompass not just physical abuse but also psychological, financial, and sexual forms of abuse. Quick remedy was made available through residence orders, protection orders, and financial aid.⁷ The right of women to live in shared households, regardless of ownership, is likewise recognized by the Act. Intimate partner abuse is pervasive but sometimes unrecognized; the PWDVA helps women by offering both preventative and restorative methods. The POSH Act, as it is most often called, developed out of the Vishaka guidelines (1997). It provides a wide definition of sexual harassment, including unwanted physical, verbal, or non-verbal behavior that is sexual in nature. An Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) is required by law to handle complaints in any workplace with more than ten employees. Notably, it extends protection to those in informal occupations like domestic work and agriculture since it applies to both organized and unorganized sectors. Following the Supreme Court's 1985 Shah Bano decision, which confirmed a Muslim woman's entitlement to maintenance under Criminal Procedure Code Section 125, the Act came into being.⁸ At its inception, the Act limited support for Muslim women who were divorced to the iddat period. Judgment from other cases, such as *Danial Latifi v. Union of India* (2001), confirmed, however, that a husband is still obligated to provide for his divorced wife in a just and reasonable way. Judgment efforts to protect women's rights are shown by the Act, which highlights the conflict between individual legislation and constitutional equality. Nationwide demonstrations and a re-examination of India's criminal law framework on sexual violence were prompted by the heinous Nirbhaya case, which involved a group rape in Delhi in December 2012. Changes that were substantial were made by the 2013 amendment:

- Expanded definition of rape under Section 375 of IPC
- Criminalized stalking, voyeurism, acid attacks, and sexual harassment
- Enhanced punishments for sexual assault, including death penalty in aggravated cases
- Established mechanisms for speedy trial and victim protection

This amendment reinforced the principle that women's bodily integrity and dignity are integral to their constitutional rights under Article 21. While these statutory provisions mark

⁶ Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, No. 14, Acts of Parliament, 2013, §§ 2–4, 10–12.

⁷ Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, No. 6, Acts of Parliament, 2006, §§ 2–4, 7.

⁸ Shah Bano Case, *Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum*, AIR 1985 SC 945, § 125 CrPC.

progressive steps toward gender justice, implementation gaps remain a serious concern.⁹ Many women, especially in rural and marginalized communities, are unaware of their rights or face social barriers in accessing justice. For example:

- Despite the Dowry Prohibition Act, dowry deaths and harassment remain widespread.
- Domestic violence cases are often underreported due to stigma and economic dependence.
- The POSH Act suffers from weak enforcement in small organizations and unorganized sectors.

2. Judicial Activism and Women's Rights

By judicially acting to cover legislative gaps and by broadly interpreting constitutional provisions, the Indian judiciary has been a game-changer in the fight for women's rights. Ensuring that women's equality is more than just a theoretical concept, the courts in India have played a dual role in protecting the Constitution and driving social change. When governments have failed to protect women's rights, the highest courts have stepped in via judicial activism to ensure that women's rights are respected and protected. The courts have gone above and beyond what is explicitly stated in the law to provide rights against sexual harassment, maintenance, inheritance, and religious activities. Promoting women's empowerment and striking a balance between personal laws and constitutional equality, they interpreted Articles 14, 15, 16, and 21 in a progressive manner. Regardless of the constraints imposed by personal law, the Supreme Court determined that a Muslim woman who had gone through a divorce could be entitled to maintenance under Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The supremacy of secular values and constitutional equality must be upheld, as this ruling made clear. Judicial protection of women's rights reached a watershed moment with this ruling, despite the political fallout that resulted in the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986.¹⁰ The Travancore Christian Succession Act was invalidated by the Court because it discriminated against Syrian Christian women in inheritance cases. The ruling broke with patriarchal norms and improved women's property rights by stating that Christian women have an equal right to inherit under the Indian Succession Act. The Supreme Court drew up the Vishaka Guidelines, which address both the prevention and correction of sexual harassment in the workplace, because no laws were in place to address this issue. Articles 14, 15, 19, and 21 are all infringed upon by sexual harassment, according to the Court. The POSH Act of 2013 was subsequently passed as a result of this case, which is a prime illustration of judicial legislation. The Supreme Court ruled that the practice of quick triple talaq, also known as talaq-e-biddat, violated the rights of women to equality and dignity, and hence was illegal. This ruling did double duty: it upheld the constitutionality of personal laws and demolished a retrogressive practice.¹¹

⁹ Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan, AIR 1997 SC 3011. Guidelines §§ 1–10

¹⁰ Shayara Bano v. Union of India (Triple Talaq Case), AIR 2017 SC 4609, §§ 2–6.

¹¹ Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala (Sabarimala Case), AIR 2018 SC 2861, 50–100

The Court ruled that the practice breached Articles 14, 15, 19, and 25, and thereby overturned the ban on women of menstrual age (10-50 years) entering the Sabarimala shrine. Despite ongoing disputes over implementation, the verdict has important implications for combating gender-based exclusion in religious settings. Because it violated Articles 14, 15, and 21, the Court struck down Section 497 of the IPC, decriminalizing adultery. The law viewed women as property of their husbands. A new attitude toward women's independence and equality in marriage was evident in this ruling. Judicial interventions have had a wide-ranging impact on women's socio-legal status in India:

- **Expansion of Fundamental Rights:** By interpreting Article 21 broadly, the courts have included the right to dignity, privacy, and reproductive choice.
- **Balancing Personal Laws with Equality:** Cases like Shah Bano and Triple Talaq show how courts have intervened when personal laws conflicted with constitutional guarantees.
- **Catalyst for Legislation:** Decisions such as Vishaka and Nirbhaya-related cases spurred legislative reforms like the POSH Act (2013) and Criminal Law Amendment (2013).
- **Challenging Social Norms:** Judgments like Sabarimala and Joseph Shine directly confronted entrenched patriarchal practices.

While judicial activism has been vital, it also faces limitations. Some judgments, like Shah Bano and Sabarimala, encountered strong societal resistance, highlighting the gap between legal progress and social acceptance. Moreover, frequent reliance on the judiciary to secure women's rights sometimes reflects legislative inaction. Nevertheless, the judiciary has consistently acted as a progressive force, aligning Indian law with constitutional values and international human rights principles. Human rights advances on a global scale have a profound impact on the women's rights movement in India. The domestic policies and regulations of India with respect to women are influenced by numerous international conventions that the country has ratified or associated with due to its membership in the UN.¹² As part of its normative framework for gender equality, India is obligated to implement policies that empower women according to these international commitments. Claiming to be the "Bill of Rights for Women," CEDAW mandates that nations do away with gender discrimination in all spheres of society, including politics, economics, culture, and the home. With certain reservations, especially over personal laws, India adopted CEDAW in 1993. Notwithstanding this, CEDAW has produced notable results in the field of Indian law. The Supreme Court's decision in *Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan* (1997), which established that domestic law is not necessary to guide constitutional interpretation, relied on CEDAW to create standards against sexual harassment in the workplace. The Beijing Declaration emphasized 12 critical areas of concern, including education, health, violence against women, and political participation. India endorsed this declaration, which has since shaped many national policies such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, measures for maternal health, and schemes to improve women's workforce

¹² National Commission for Women Act, 1990, No. 20, Acts of Parliament, 1990, §§ 10–15.

participation. India has consistently participated in UN debates and initiatives aimed at gender equality. It has supported resolutions on ending violence against women, promoting reproductive rights, and improving maternal health. India's active engagement reflects its recognition that women's rights are integral to human rights and sustainable development. One of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that India has signed up to is SDG 5, which seeks to ensure that all girls and women are empowered and live in an environment free from discrimination.

3. Challenges in Implementation

Despite international commitments, India faces several challenges in translating global norms into domestic reality: Personal Laws vs. International Norms: Reservations to CEDAW on matters of marriage and family law highlight the tension between constitutional equality and religious personal laws. Weak Enforcement: While laws exist, mechanisms for monitoring compliance with international standards remain inadequate. Socio-Cultural Barriers: Deep-rooted patriarchy often hinders implementation of international obligations, especially in rural areas. Periodic Reports: India is obligated to submit periodic reports to CEDAW committees, but gaps between reporting and actual progress are evident. Despite a robust constitutional framework, progressive statutes, and international commitments, women in India continue to face formidable socio-legal challenges that limit the full realization of their rights. These challenges are deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions, institutional weaknesses, and implementation gaps. A socio-legal analysis reveals that women's empowerment cannot be achieved by laws alone unless societal structures and attitudes also transform. The pervasiveness of gender stereotypes is a major obstacle to women's empowerment. Traditional gender roles place women in the house and caregiving, with males holding most positions of power in society and the economy. Patriarchal attitudes pervade families, workplaces, and even state institutions. For instance, women's career choices are often restricted, leadership positions remain male-dominated, and societal expectations burden women with dual responsibilities of domestic work and professional life. Such stereotypes undermine the spirit of constitutional equality and weaken the impact of enabling provisions. While India has enacted numerous laws to protect women, their implementation often falls short. The Dowry Prohibition Act (1961) exists, yet dowry deaths and harassment remain rampant.¹³ The POSH Act (2013) mandates Internal Committees at workplaces, but many organizations, especially in the unorganized sector, fail to comply. The Domestic Violence Act (2005) provides comprehensive remedies, but lack of awareness, inadequate infrastructure, and limited training of enforcement authorities hamper its effectiveness. Enforcement agencies, including police and lower judiciary, are sometimes influenced by patriarchal biases, leading to victim-blaming and underreporting of cases. Thus, the legal framework is strong on paper but weak in practice.

There are many obstacles to women's empowerment, but gender-based violence is still a major one. Data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) indicates that crimes such as honor

¹³ Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, Guidelines (2015), pp. 5–20.

killings, rape, acid assaults, trafficking, and domestic violence are common. Women are less likely to travel, attend school, and work because they are afraid of assault. Furthermore, victims of sexual abuse are stigmatized, which makes them reluctant to come forward and keeps them silent. The enormity of this difficulty is illustrated by the disparity between social reality and legislative regulations, such as the 2013 Criminal Law Amendment.¹⁴ Women face discrimination in recruitment, pay, promotions, and workplace conditions. Despite Article 39(d) and the Equal Remuneration Act, women often receive lower wages for similar work. Structural barriers such as lack of maternity benefits in informal sectors, inadequate crèche facilities, and absence of gender-sensitive policies contribute to women's underrepresentation in higher positions. Additionally, workplace harassment continues despite the POSH Act, highlighting the disconnect between legal mandates and organizational culture. Women's empowerment in India is also marked by sharp rural–urban disparities. Urban women, though still constrained, have better access to education, employment, and legal remedies. Rural women, on the other hand, face compounded disadvantages due to poverty, illiteracy, and limited access to institutions. Social practices such as child marriage and son preference are more prevalent in rural areas, where awareness of rights is minimal. This divide underscores the need for context-specific strategies in policy implementation. Inequality is not experienced by women in the same way. Gender is only one layer of oppression; others include caste, class, religion, and handicap. Dalit and tribal women, for instance, face both gender and caste-based discrimination, making them more vulnerable to violence and exploitation. The law often fails to address these intersecting oppressions adequately, leading to gaps in justice delivery. Judicial and legislative reforms are frequently met with social resistance. The Shah Bano case (1985) triggered a political and religious backlash, while the Sabarimala judgment (2018) faced protests from conservative groups. Such resistance reveals the clash between progressive legal norms and entrenched cultural practices, complicating the path of women's empowerment.¹⁵

4. Government Policies & Institutional Mechanisms

While constitutional and statutory provisions form the backbone of women's legal empowerment, government policies and institutional mechanisms provide the operational framework for translating these rights into lived realities. Over the years, India has introduced several policy initiatives and institutional bodies to address gender inequality, improve representation, and promote women's welfare. In its role as the supreme authority defending and advancing women's rights, the National Commission for Women (NCW) was established in 1992 by the National Commission for Women Act. Its duties include looking into complaints, analyzing constitutional and legal protections, and providing policy advice to the government. By mediating between victims and the justice system, the NCW has helped end instances of discrimination, sexual harassment, trafficking, and domestic abuse.¹⁶ Despite occasional criticism over its limited enforcement capabilities, the Commission continues to

¹⁴ Ujjawala Scheme, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, Operational Manual (2010), pp. 2–15

¹⁵ Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, AIR 1978 SC 597, 20–35.

¹⁶ Air India v. Nargesh Meerza, AIR 1981 SC 1829, 10–25

play an important role as an advocacy and watchdog organization. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution (1992) were a turning point in women's political emancipation. In both rural and urban Panchayati Raj Institutions (local bodies), they imposed a 33% reservation for women. Millions of women, especially those from underrepresented groups, were able to join in on governance and decision-making because of this provision. Policy priorities, particularly in the areas of sanitation, education, and health, have been impacted by women legislators, according to studies. The model's success has reignited discussions on the long-pending Women's reserve Bill, which aims to expand reserve to state legislatures and Parliament. This flagship program, which began in 2015, aims to increase the number of girls in school and ensure their survival in light of the falling child sex ratio. Campaigns to raise awareness against female feticide, educational incentives for girls, and expanded access to social assistance are the main tenets of the plan.¹⁷ The campaign was successful in drawing public attention to the issue of gender imbalance, despite implementation facing challenges such as misappropriation of funds. Ministry of Women and Child Development's Ujjawala Scheme fights commercial sexual exploitation of children and women. All aspects of assistance, from prevention to rescue to rehabilitation and reintegration, are covered by it. Through the program's emphasis on shelter homes, counseling, and vocational training, survivors are given the tools they need to reconstruct their lives with pride. Introduced in 2017, MSKs aim to empower rural women by providing community-level support services. They act as centers for skill development, digital literacy, health awareness, and legal counseling. By mobilizing women into self-help groups and community networks, MSKs attempt to create a bottom-up approach to empowerment.¹⁸

5. Future Prospects & Suggestions

Despite significant progress in constitutional, statutory, and policy measures, India's journey toward gender equality remains unfinished. The future of women's empowerment requires not only strengthening existing frameworks but also addressing emerging challenges in a rapidly changing society. A forward-looking approach must be multidimensional, combining legal reforms, institutional support, and socio-cultural change. **Need for a Gender-Sensitive Judiciary:** Despite progress, gender bias in courts persists through insensitive handling of cases and delays. Training judges, prosecutors, and police in gender sensitivity and expanding fast-track courts is essential for justice.¹⁹ **Uniform Civil Code Debate:** A UCC could remove gender inequalities in personal laws on marriage, divorce, and inheritance, but must balance equality with religious freedom and be implemented through consensus. **Stronger Enforcement and Awareness:** Progressive laws often fail due to poor awareness and weak enforcement. Legal literacy campaigns, stricter monitoring of laws like POSH and Domestic Violence Act, and economic empowerment through microfinance and skill programs are vital. **Socio-Legal Reforms for True Equality:** Reforms must address deeper inequalities by ensuring universal

¹⁷ Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, No. 13, Acts of Parliament, 2013, §§ 375–376, 354A–354D

¹⁸ The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, No. 25, Acts of Parliament, 1976, §§ 4–6

¹⁹ Planning Commission. (2011). Evaluation study of MGNREGA. New Delhi: Government of India, pp. 45–60.

education (including digital literacy), gender-inclusive workplaces with equal pay and leave policies, women's political representation through the Reservation Bill, and use of technology for safety with privacy safeguards.²⁰

6. Conclusion

The socio-legal framework for women in India reflects both achievements and challenges. Constitutional guarantees, progressive laws, judicial activism, and welfare policies have created an enabling environment where women now enjoy rights to education, property, workplace protection, and political participation. Yet, persistent barriers such as violence, patriarchy, discrimination, and rural–urban divides reveal that empowerment is still incomplete. Landmark cases like *Shah Bano*, *Vishaka*, and *Sabarimala* show that even progressive reforms often face resistance when they confront entrenched social norms. True gender justice requires not only laws but also effective enforcement, institutional support, and a transformation in mindsets. As India advances, enabling provisions must adapt to new challenges while aligning with global standards. The ultimate goal is not just legal equality but substantive equality—ensuring women the freedom, dignity, and opportunities to thrive. Only then will the constitutional vision of justice—social, economic, and political—be fully realized.

²⁰ Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2017). *Mission Shakti: Empowering women through community support*. Government of India, pp. 12–25.