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01

FEMINIST GAZE IN AKKAMAHADEVI'S VACHANA SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HER BIOGRAPHY *TARANGINI*

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Abstract:
Akkamahadevi, a 12th-century saint from Karnataka, represents spiritual dissent. Her Vachanas means short devotional poems challenge not only male dominance but also societal norms governing female behaviour. Rejecting marriage and clothing, she wandered naked, covered only by her long hair, symbolizing fearlessness. She addressed her beloved deity Shiva (Chenna Mallikarjuna) She is a strong woman of feminist approach who rebelled against the concept of female beauty, love and patriarchal bonding's of marriage, anger against the social system. she systematically dismantled the inflexible gender binaries that dominated her society. In her vachanas, she argues women's strong belief in spiritualism. She represents an early, radical form of feminism, often interpreted her deep devotion to Lord Shiva. Her journey of feminism and spiritualism is an assertion of female independence, intervention, and defiance against patriarchal oppression.

Keywords: *Gender Equality, Superiority Complex, Communicators, Feminism, Democracy, Empowerment, Women's Rights, Feminist Leadership, etc.*

Akkamahadevi a woman of feminist thinking with her spiritual attachment with Lord Shiva. In twelfth Century, a woman like her is an example of legendary which no one can imagine. In her early childhood she was totally different than other girls who focused on their beauty, attraction of marriage, love feeling and imagination of future partner etc. Akkamahadevi was gifted by tremendous beauty that everyone was shocked though her rational questions were unanswerable for her parents, society and gurus in Anubhavmantap also. She was daughter of Omkareshwar and mother Lingamma, a lord person in the city. She was initiated into bhakthi at the age of seven; by 16, she was almost a saint. King Koushik was attracted by her beauty and being crazy in one glimpse of her charming face. Shailja her friend who was widow noticed him and uttered to Mahadevi. She didn't like comments of Shailja and Kumuda.She replied in her angry tone, she said that, "King Doesn't mean God, a person for whom every girl of the kingdom become a sister. If he became lustrous about any women of his kingdom, I don't respect him. Protection of kingdom, Women and treasury is the prior duty of the King" Mahadevi was crying, praying to Channamallikarjuna.

King became restless, next day he sent to his Minister with the proposal of marriage who was already many queens in his life. He wanted to marry with Mahadevi in any cost. From that incident her life was like struggling pathway. But she decided to wed Shiva, more precisely, Chenna Mallikarjuna. She was forced to marry with him, her parents were imprisoned after her rejection, so undesirably she married with him on some conditions led by her. her terrific journey

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March 6th& 7th 2026

started from that incident but Mahadevi was strong women who never left her spiritual voyage. She answered to King Koushik in string way, when he said that a woman couldn't get salvation without the union with male body. She beautifully replied, "God male-female are physically differentiated but Soul has no gender and you are saying that, 'A woman is not liable for salvation' it's totally meaningless……no rule for redemption" (Kamal, 380-81). Her answers are amazing that a common man can't imagine. Every answer force to think and find out the reasons deeply rooted in it. King Koushik commented on menstruation period of women, he asked that, "Mensuration of woman is the fruit of Sin, isn't it?" (Kamal, 380). She calmly replied, "If menstruation is the Sin, then a person who will take birth from her womb is the child of Sin, may be a male or female baby giving birth is the pure soul and you are calling it sinful birth ashamed on you" (Kamal, 381).

Her answers in those days were really terrific, which was beyond time. She systematically describes and gives specific gender binaries by questioning why spiritual truth should be filtered through social roles.

Yashomati first wife of King Koushika was jealous to Mahadevi because king was madly following Mahadevi, so her made-servant Mrunalini was working as spy, she misguided to King Koushik that Chennamallikarjuna is Mahadevi's lover, he believed in it. All basava brothers came in palace, King insulted all and raised question about her chastity and hold her saree. Akkamahadevi couldn't tolerate it, being a strong protagonist and feminist, she rejected everything, including her clothes, and left the palace. The very next minute, long tresses covered her nakedness. It was shocking for all. In twelfth century, a woman like her was like a storm that no one could face. She answered to king in her vachana and left the palace nakedly.

विकाराचे चामडे, मलमुत्राचे मडके हाडाचा सापळा, घाणीचा कोथळा
(दुर्गंधी) अग्नीत जळणारा, घाणीत कुजणारा हा देह सोडून
चन्नमल्लिकार्जुनाला जाण मुर्खा.. (Kamal, 477)

The body, its beauty is temporary, mortal. Attracting towards it is foolish thing, know the soul which is permeant and love to God Channamallikarjuna. She rebelled the traditional roles of womanhood being a daughter, wife and mother. She rejected her human husband and instead devoting herself to Shiva (Chennamallikarjuna), her divine, eternal husband. This was the rebellious step taken by her which was challenge for patriarchal society. That was not too easy to lead on that way. Its direct attack on the institution of marriage as a property deal where a woman was merely transferred from one household to another. Her decision was against social norms which are made by society. No one can go against it but Mahadevi done it without any fear.

Her journey of spiritualism and feminism is not easy but her firmness gives her courage to step ahead. Her struggle to prove that every soul, nevertheless of gender, has a right to explore and reach the divine has placed her among the pioneers of women's liberation movements across the world. Her exemplary life of sacrifice at a very young age makes her different and unique from the other women of her times. Her poetry as Susie Taru and K Lalitha, says, "For women, her (Akka's) work embodies a radical illegitimacy as she struggles in her poetry to go beyond much of Virasaiva poetry to include the struggles of her body, struggles against the pettiness of roles she is forced into as a woman, struggles against a man who is also a prince and a Jain, and against the social expectations that restrain her."

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March 6th& 7th 2026

Mahadevi lived a world-shattering life, that created a different, unbreakable model change in the way women were perceived and accepted both in the literary and spiritual domain. Her vision and thoughts have a deep influence on the modern Indian woman's understanding of the idea of feminism. Reading Akka's poetry the world has come to know about a powerful crusader for the freedom of choice for women and therefore the pioneer to the feminist movement in India, even before the western world was introduced to feminist thought. In one of her vachana she explores her thought about her journey which was unbreakable in any condition. She says,

हातामध्ये कंकण बांधुनी दंडामध्ये विराि ेश धरुनी
पुरुषासारखी रणभेरी फुंकुनी स्त्रीसुद्धा (पुरुषासारखी) रणचंडी
होऊनी साधना करते मवल्लाकार्जुना
तुमची शपथ, देविची शपथविजयी होऊनी आले नाही तर मी
तुमची मुलगी नाही (Kamal, 496).

Her parents were weeping but after answering to them she went away. People were commenting, behaving bitterly, shamelessly gazing her but she never feels abasing because of her firm belief in her decision and God. In the way, at night one saffron clothed sadhu lanced badly and requested her to satisfy him and he will teach her his Yogasadhna. She said, "Your knowledge is useless, meaningless. Without Charity, Morality and Kindness is less Spiritual Virtue." (Kamal, 526).

Her life was a testimony to the power of courage and faith. Her choice of feminism is choosing a path of devotion and rejection is anticipated modern ideas of a woman's right to control her own body and life. Her vachanas often shows her refusal to be seen as a "helpless woman" rejecting the common notion of women to be fragile and submissive or as dependent beings. She writes:

I am no helpless woman
I utter no futile threats I am nothing daunted I shall dare hunger and pain
I shall steal out of withered leaves A wholesome meal
And on pointed sword Shall make my bed.
I am ready for your sake To dare the worst
To die this instant The readiness is all
Oh! my Channamallikarjuna

She walked more than five Hundred km and reached Kalyana,entered in Anubhav-Manatapa, a platform for open debate on various issues including philosophy and social reform where Mahadevi spoke courageously. Bomanna,a member of Anubhav- Mantapa deliberately tried to distract her mind by admiring her beauty,happiness in marriage and requested her to marry ,but a woman like Mahadevi answered him directly and make him silent. As Mukunda Rao in her book, Sky – Clad: The Extraordinary Life and Times of Akka Mahadevi says, "She stands for what can be achieved through the body. By rejecting female vulnerability, she treats the female form as a seat of divinity and not contamination. Many authors in the past have marvelled at this subversion of her own self and celebrating of sexuality."

She attained in the company of Basavanna, Chenna Basavanna, Prabhudeva and Madivalayya, in Anubhav-Mantapa and her devotion attained maturity. She accepted every challenge of Saint Allamprabhu's comples questions and answer directly without any hesitation and fear. Mahatma Baswanna respectfully called her, 'My mother' There was a dialogue between

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Allama Prabhu and Mahadevi on several religious issues and gods. "When Allama asked the wild-looking woman for her husband's identity, she replied she was married forever to Cennamallikarjuna. He asked her the noticeable questions: 'Why take off clothes as if you could peel off illusions by that gesture? And yet robe yourself in tresses of hair? If so free and pure in heart, why replace a sari with a covering of tresses?' She replied very boldly in a strait manner and become honest to answering him in Anubhavmanatapa. She answers,

> Till the fruit is ripe inside, the skin will not fall off.
> I felt it would hurt you
> if I displayed the body's seals of love.
> O brother, don't tease me needlessly. I'm given entire into the hands of
> my Lord white as jasmine.

She challenged the patriarchal fixities and helped to define their own truths to reform society, polity, relationships and religions. She broke societal rules and stereotypes that were deeply embedded in a society rooted in orthodoxy and male domination. She challenged the orthodoxical and patriarchal thoughts through her songs, poems and ways of life.

Her vachanas, poems allow us to trace the theme of female independence, empowerment, rebelliousness nature of poetry, an attack on patriarchy and religious dogmas—all of these aspects lead to finding the trace of feminism. Rebelliousness, one of the attributes of her poetry, has an irrefutable link with her personality. Akka Mahadevi had a close and deep association with Chennamallikarjuna since childhood, became a perfect devotee and would spend all her time with her beloved. She built a place for herself where social, religious, and gender norms were non-existent. It is only through her love that she could tide over cross traditional barriers and carve out a place of her in a patriarchal society. She was a complex figure; a combination of many things, she become a fearless, passionate, defiant, clear-eyed, spiritual rebel.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

02

AN ECOFEMINIST READING OF GENDER EXPLOITATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL DECAY IN ANITA DESAI'S *FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN*

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Abstract:
This paper deals with female trauma and ecological erosion in Anita Desai's novel, Fire on the Mountain. Desai utilizes interior realism to record the "unspoken sufferings" of three generations of women—Nanda Kaul, Ila Das, and Raka—against the stark, decaying landscape of Kasauli. Central to the analysis is the ecofeminist parallel between the systemic exploitation of women and the ruin of the Himalayan environment. Nanda Kaul is presented as the over-used woman of the upper-middle class whose identity was erased by decades of domestic performance and silent endurance of marital infidelity. Her retreat to the barrenness of the house, Carignano, represents a rejection of the fertile expectations of motherhood in favour of a non-demanding, stony solitude Ila Das is the victim of the most brutal form of patriarchal violence, where her social activism is met with rape and murder. This cycle of trauma is inherited by the great-granddaughter, Raka, whose "inner desolation" is a direct result of witnessing domestic abuse. The study concludes that the "Fire" is the ultimate act of destruction that shatters the structures of exploitation.

Keywords: *Ecofeminism, Exploitation, Trauma, Gender Violence, Decay, etc.*

Introduction:

Anita Desai's novel *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) deals with the psychological breakdown of its characters and exploration of unspoken traumas within female experience. It has been honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award for its uniqueness. The novel depicts interior realism and exploration of the unspoken sufferings of the female experience through the characters of Nanda Kaul, Raka and Ila Das. Desai connects the decay of the Himalayan environment with the systemic exploitation of women. The novelist thinks that both the mountain and the woman have been used until they are ruined.

Nanda Kaul represents the over-used woman of the upper-middle class who dedicated her entire playing the role as a hostess being the wife of a Vice-Chancellor without considering her personal identity. She endured betrayal of her husband silently to protect the family reputation. The rocks at Kasauli, unlike her family, demand nothing from her. She tries to find solace in the desolate house, Carignano. Nanda's childhood friend Ila Das provides a tragic contrast. She represents the most brutal form of gendered exploitation. As a social worker, her interference in a child marriage is viewed by village men as an attack on their property rights over women. Her subsequent rape and murder by Preet Singh serve as the ultimate act of silencing and a violent re-assertion of male dominance. The third generation, represented by Nanda's great-granddaughter Raka, illustrates the inheritance of this trauma. Raka is a product of a violent home where she witnessed her father's domestic abuse. This exposure causes her to reject human society and identify with the 'burnt' parts of the mountain, seeing them as more honest than the 'civilized'

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

world. Desai draws a sharp parallel between the treatment of the environment and the treatment of women. The 'Fire' on the mountain serves as the ultimate symbol of destruction. The title of the novel is typical and suggestive. Bande Usha rightly observes in her book *The Novels of Anita Desai* as:

> The fire on the mountain is the objective correlative of the fire that has been consuming Nanda Kaul's vitals all along... the final conflagration is the externalization of an internal state… (Bande, 117)

Plot of the Novel: *Fire on the Mountain*:

The plot of the novel, *Fire on the Mountain* is structured on atmospheric tension and the psychological collapse of her characters. The plot of the novel is divided in three parts that shifts from a cold, forced stillness to a violent and fiery end. The first section has ten chapters which deals with the solitude of Nanda Kaul, the protagonist of the novel, the second part of the novel has twenty-one chapters which presents the arrival of Raka at her grandmother, Nanda Kaul and the third part of the novel has thirteen chapters that portrays tragic climax of the story.

In the beginning novel portrayal of Carignano, a desolate, wind-sept house in the Himalayan town of Kasauli. Nanda Kaul, the representative of the first generation who is an elderly widow lives here in a state of self-imposed exile. Her husband was Vice-Chancellor and she was very much proud of her being life member of such an eminent person. She has spent decades as the wife of a Vice-Chancellor. She played her role as an active and tireless hostess. She is a dedicated and caring mother for her children. She remained a silent victim of her husband's infidelity and did not voice against anything. She starts preferring natural companions to humans. Now, she feels other humans as interruptions for peace she tries to find in the loneliness. She gets comfort in the barrenness of the mountains. She appreciates the rocks and the pine trees because they are silent companion for her. She wants to live like a charred tree trunk free from feeling and duty.

Nanda prefers to live secluded life at Kasauli in Himalayan region. Nanda's daughter Asha sends her granddaughter, Raka to stay with her great grandmother. Raka's arrival at Nanda proves to be interruption for her peaceful life. Raka is a ghost like child. She is the product of a traumatic household where she witnessed her father's domestic violence against her mother. Unlike most children, Raka does not think of Nanda's desire. She is like a natural hermit who wanders along the hills, she is obsessed with the burnt edges and the ravine. Her nature is contrary to the expectations of Nanda Kaul. She tries to engage Raka by discovering a mythological past. She tells Raka false stories about her own father's travels and her childhood filled with interesting animals and treasures. It is Nanda's attempt to attract Raka's attention and hide the exploitative reality of her life. Scholars frequently analyze Nanda Kaul as a victim of patriarchal fatigue. Usha Bande, in her seminal study, highlights how Nanda's withdrawal is an attempt to reclaim a self that was never allowed to exist.

> Nanda Kaul's withdrawal is not a 'search' for the self, but a 'flight' from the world that has exploited her. Her stillness is not the silence of a yogi, but the numbness of a victim. (Bande, 112)

Ila Das, a childhood friend of Nanda comes to see her. Ila's arrival at Carignano is like the arrival of real world. She is a social worker. She was born and brought up in a prosperous family. Her brother betrayed her so she had to face difficulty in life. There was a question of her survival.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Initially, Nanda helped her to get job at the office of her husband. However, Ila could not continue her job for a long time. She was fond of social work since her young age. However, she continued her social work at the cost of her life. She never hesitant to stand against the evils of the society. Now, she seems to be a poor and needy woman whose condition is pitiable. Though, she is physically weak, her sound is very loud and strong. Her discussion with Nanda makes her to remember their childhood days. The childhood they enjoyed was full of pleasure and freedom. On the other hand, the grand life that Nanda lived with her husband was actually a life of domestic slavery and disgrace. Critics often view Ila Das as the "sacrificial lamb" whose death exposes the futility of Nanda's isolation. According to R.S. Sharma, Ila is the catalyst that proves the "mountain" cannot protect one from the "fire" of human cruelty.

> Ila Das is the link between Nanda Kaul's private world of fantasy and the brutal world of social reality. Her death is the final blow that disintegrates Nanda's carefully built-up defences (Sharma, 127).

Ila's character highlights the helplessness of the single woman in a greedy society where her voice is deliberately ignored by all. After leaving Nanda and Raka at Carignano, Ila Das walks on the road towards her small cottage situated adjoining to the mountains. It was the evening time; there was darkness all around. Ila was accosted by a villager Preet Singh who wanted to marry his seven years old daughter with an old man at the cost of two goats. Ila had tried to prevent him from marrying off his young daughter to an old man. Preet Singh feels that prevention of marriage is as an attack on his patriarchal rights. In an act of ultimate patriarchal violence, he rapes Ila Das and kills her. He leaves hir body in the dart. The police call Nanda Kaul to identify the body. The shock of Ila's brutal end, combined with the realization that her own life was built on a foundation of lies, causes Nanda to collapse. She dies in her chair, finally "barren" as she wished, but through tragedy rather than peace. As Nanda lies dying, Raka returns from the hills. Throughout the novel, Raka has been fascinated by fire. She taps on the window and announces: "Nani, look, I have set the mountain on fire." (Desai, 145) Raka has literally set the forest ablaze. The novel ends with this image of total destruction the fire acting as a primal response to the exploitation and faced by the women in the story.

Gender Exploitation in the Novel:

Fire on the Mountain portrays many incidents that crushes the spirit of women across different social classes and generations. There are two levels of exploitation in the novel such as the domestic responsibility that has been forced upon the upper-class woman, Nanda Kaul and the physical violence enacted upon the marginalized woman, Ila Das.

Nanda Kaul, the protagonist of the novel suffered in the male dominating fold of the society. Her exploitation is invisible but considerable. Her life as the wife of a Vice-Chancellor was a performance of domestic perfection. She spent decades catering to her husband, children, and guests. Her identity was entirely included by her role as a hostess and manager. She was like a maid servant of the family who has nothing to say about own emotions. Her husband was openly unfaithful to her but she maintained dignity of the household by keeping mum and enduring this betrayal silently to protect the family reputation. Her fascination with the barrenness of Kasauli is a direct reaction to being exploited by her family. Therefore, she prefers the mountains which do not demand her labour or care.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
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March 6th& 7th 2026

Another important character in the novel, Ila Das stands for the worst form of gender exploitation. As a social worker, Ila tries to stop a child marriage. Preet Singh, the father, wanted to marry his seven years old daughter with an elderly person at the cost of two goats. Preet Singh thinks Ila's interference as an attack on his property rights over woman. It is the price of activism where a woman's attempt to oppose patriarchal norms of the society results in brutal death. Ila's rape and murder by Preet Singh is the ultimate act of gender exploitation. It is a violent re-assertion of male dominance over a woman who dared to speak against the patriarchal status.

Raka is a representative of fourth generation in the family fold of Nanda Kaul. Her childhood situation denotes the exploitation of the previous generation which results into a psychological damage. Raka is a victim of her father's domestic abuse of her mother. This exploitation of the domestic space makes her hate entire human society. Raka's silence and her final act of setting the forest on fire are her ways of 'burning down' the structures that exploited the women. Scholars often interpret Raka as the 'externalized subconscious' of Nanda Kaul. While Nanda suppresses her rage, Raka acts upon it. According to Usha Bande, Raka represents the "primordial" element that cannot be tamed by social etiquette.

> Raka is a child of the 'shattered' world; her preference for the scorched hills and her final act of setting the forest on fire are symbolic of her inner desolation and her rejection of a society that offers no security (Bande, 114).

Exploitation of the Land and the Woman: Ecofeminist Parallel:

Anita Desai has given equal treatment to the environment and women characters in the novel. The house, Carignano has a history of colonial and patriarchal owners who shaped it to their will. The 'Fire' is the landscape's variety of a nervous breakdown. It represents the point where both the exploited earth and the exploited woman can no longer contain their suppressed anger. Desai uses the Kasauli landscape to mirror the exploitation of her female characters. Just as Nanda was expected to be a fertile, giving mother figure, the land is expected to be lush and providing. When the land becomes 'barren' or 'dry,' it is seen as useless.

Nanda is exhausted by duty, Ila is exhausted by poverty and struggle, and Raka is exhausted by the mere observation of these cycles. The "Fire" is the only thing that can break the cycle-not by fixing the exploitation, but by destroying the system that allows it to exist.

Environmental Decay in Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain*:

In *Fire on the Mountain,* Anita Desai utilizes the setting of Kasauli not as a scenic backdrop, but as a correlative to the psychological and social erosion of her characters. Environmental decay is the central motif that bridges the gap between the internal trauma of the women and the external reality of a dying landscape. Nanda Kaul's house, Carignano, is the epicentre of environmental decay. It is characterized by its lack of life, which Nanda finds comforting. Nanda prefers the garden to be dry and the hills to be stony. To her, lushness and fertility represent the messy "reproduction" and "growth" she spent her life managing.

The house is surrounded by "scrawny" pines and "shriveled" plants. This decay is a physical manifestation of Nanda's desire to be finished with the labor of living. She identifies with the "charred" and "pale" elements of nature because they, like her, have been stripped of their vitality by years of harsh exposure.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

A significant landmark in the novel is the Pasteur Institute, a place where vaccines are made and animals are experimented upon. Raka is fascinated by the institute's refuse-the 'bloody bandages' and 'charred remains.' This represents a literal environmental decay caused by human intervention and scientific 'progress.'The institute symbolizes how humans exploit the natural world for their own survival, paralleling how Nanda was exploited for her husband's career. The decay here is man-made, contrasting with the natural destruction of the mountains. The prevalent heat in the novel acts as an oppressive force that accelerates decay. The dry, yellow grass and the constant threat of fire create a sense of impending doom. The environment is so decayed and dried that it is on the verge of ignition.

Raka, coming from a household of domestic abuse, is drawn to the fissures in the rocks and the burnt-out houses. She sees the landscape as shattered, mirroring her own psychological state. For her, nature is not a place of beauty, but a place that reflects her inner ruins. The novel ends in a massive forest fire. In Desai's world, this is the ultimate stage of environmental decay. The fire is the point where decay turns into destruction. When Raka sets the mountain on fire, she is destroying a landscape that has become a graveyard of secrets and lies. The decay is so deep that it cannot be healed; it can only be burned away to start anew.

Conclusion:

Environmental Decay and Gender Exploitation are two sides of the same coin. The land is dry and dying because it has been neglected or misused. Nanda Kaul, Tara and Ila Das just are emotionally or physically destroyed by the patriarchal systems in which they have been inhabit. The "Fire" is the inevitable result of a world—both natural and social—that has been pushed past its breaking point.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

03

THE REPRESENTATION OF DISCIPLINE IN IDENTITY FORMATION IN THOMAS MANN'S *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

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Abstract:
The present research paper attempts to illustrate the importance of discipline in identity formation through the perspective of one of the renowned German writers, Thomas Mann. It strikes that without discipline, any work or work of art or identity formation is impossible. Thomas Mann illustrated discipline in one of his prominent novels, entitled Doctor Faustus. He wrote this novel when Germany was under Nazi rule. When he started to write this novel, he was deeply disturbed by the Nazi rule and World War II. Therefore, he became an outspoken critic of Nazism. He spoke about humanism, moral responsibility, and democracy through his writing. People were confused, alienated, and disturbed by the Nazi rule and World War II. There was conflict between humanity and intellect. There was a lack of love, discipline, and compassion among the people, and the art is separated from these. Hence, the researcher attempts to justify how Mann represents a discipline to form an identity in the novel. He explains that the protagonist of the novel, Adrian Leverkühn, maintains strict discipline in his life to form an identity.

Keywords: *Identity, Discipline, Rules And Regulations, Planning, etc.*

Introduction:

Thomas Mann was one of the important essayists and novelists of the twentieth century in the history of German literature. He was born on 6th June 1875 to a Hanseatic family in Lubeck, Northern Germany. He was the second son of Thomas Johann Heinrich Mann. He received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1929. He is famously known for his ironic epic novels and novellas. His famous novels are *Buddenbrooks* (1901), *The Magic Mountain* (1924), the tetralogy *Joseph and His Brothers* (1933–1943), *Doctor Faustus* (1947), and a novella *Death in Venice* (1912). As far as Thomas Mann's writing is concerned, it is obvious that his writing explores the difference between individual identity and social responsibility, discipline and passion, art and life, etc. His writing states philosophical inquiry and cultural criticism. His characters present artistic figures. They devote themselves to the arts, and due to this, they suffer alienation and inner struggle. Discipline is the habit of controlling, maintaining and ordering an individual's behaviour. Following the structured rules, principles, and objectives and giving the right direction to actions is the discipline. One can develop responsibility, consistency, and concentration due to discipline.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Discipline is essential in both personal and professional life. It keeps the balance between freedom and responsibility. It also plays an important role in art, education, and the professional field. It enables an individual to develop personality and identity. It is the control over human thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. It is the process of following both external and internal rules. It helps an individual to identify the difference between right and wrong and provides the right direction. It can be developed through training, education, and continued practice.

The Representation of Discipline in Identity Formation:

The discipline begins at the opening of the novel. The narrator Serenus Zeitblom begins his narration about the protagonist of the novel, Adrian Leverkühn. Adrian Leverkühn brought up in a disciplined manner during his school life. He belongs to a middle-class family. The family believes in traditional ethics. He left his town, called Kaisersaschern, at Easter in the year 1895 for his school education. He attended Boniface Gymnasium School and adjusted to the school environment. The school environment is new and strict for him. He attempts to adjust that environment. He learns new rules and regulations there. Here, the discipline of the protagonist begins. He follows the school timetable strictly. He behaves punctually with the school teachers. He controls himself by doing anything. He didn't miss school lectures. He takes an interest in learning. The researcher justifies that when a person leaves his home, he does not want to change suddenly. He does not adapt the new environment quickly. He takes a lot of time for that. But when Adrian leaves his home and joins the school, he adjusts new routine there. He follows all the rules and regulations of school. In short, he follows a strict discipline for identity formation.

Adrian takes a great interest in music. To learn musical theories, he meets his music teacher named Wendell Kretschmar. He attends all the musical lectures of Wendell Kretschmar. He follows the timetable of his teacher strictly. In short, he followed the discipline there. To follow the discipline, he avoids all the luxurious things, social contacts, meeting with others, personal enjoyment, etc. When he was in his final year of school, he decided to learn the Hebrew language, which was new for him. It was very difficult for him to do so, but for the sake of identity formation, he did this by following the strict discipline. After completing his school education, he went to the University of Halle to pursue his higher education. When he went there, the environment was new for him. But he adjusted to it. He followed all the rules and regulations there. He learned so many things there. He learned music, Hebrew, and English. He also read the works of many writers, including Blake and Keats. After learning all these things, he does not remain silent. He also wants to learn theology and philosophy. If a man learns all these things, it is clear that he follows the discipline strictly. Without discipline, nobody can do several things simultaneously. If a man does several things simultaneously, he has to make immense efforts for that. He has to set a strict schedule for that and has to do the other things. In short, to achieve something in life, one has to follow discipline.

Adrian wants to learn orchestration from his teacher, Wendell Kretschmar. While learning it, he thinks that he expresses his thoughts in the quote. The narrator narrates his experience of Adrian in the quote. He says;

> He once said to me that a composer who is sick of orchestral impressionism and therefore no longer learns instrumentation seemed to him like a dentist who no longer learns how to treat the roots of teeth and goes back to the barber technique because it has lately been discovered that dead teeth give people rheumatism of the joints. This comparison, extraordinarily far-fetched yet so

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

> characteristic of the intellectual atmosphere of the time, continued to be an oft-quoted allusion between us, and the "dead tooth" preserved by skilful embalming of the root became a symbol for certain very modern refinements of the orchestral palette, including his own symphonic fantasy Ocean Lights. This piece he wrote in Leipzig, still under Kretschmar's eye, after a holiday trip to the North Sea with Rüdiger Schildknapp (Mann, 217-218).

In this quote, the narrator talks about Adrian. According to Adrian, if a composer does not learn orchestral impressions, that composer will become like a traditional dentist. The traditional dentist does not want to learn any new things. He treats the teeth of the patient traditionally. Adrian expressed that the traditional technique is harmful for the patient. Therefore, he says that the composer should learn new techniques for his music. Otherwise, it will become like a traditional dentist. Here, the researcher attempts to state that discipline is essential for any perfection. Adrian follows the discipline in his life and becomes successful. He expresses that if one has to be perfect in life, he has to follow the rules and regulations that come with discipline. As far as Adrian is concerned, it is obvious that he does not waste a single minute in his life. He is always busy with his work. He behaves with discipline.

After completing his college education, he took an immense interest in music. He is ready to do anything for music because music has become a passion for him. He was learning several new things in music. Therefore, he interacts with others regarding music learning. While interacting with others he takes their appointments, and according to their schedule, he meets them. While taking their appointment, he changes his schedule. The narrator states that Adrian meets Richard Wagner, who is a German composer for music learning. Richard Wagner was famous for opera. So Adrian takes an inspiration from him and learned music. The narrator also talks about Adrian by stating that to bring the aliveness in music, he took inspiration from English poets like Paul Verlaine and William Blake for his music. As far as the poems of Paul Verlaine and William Blake are concerned, it is clear that they use emotions, rhythms, musical arts, etc., effectively in their poems. Therefore, Adrian decided to take inspiration from them to use emotions, rhythm, and musical arts in his music. On the other hand, Adrian took the inspiration from them because he was not so clear about the difference between music and words. So for the sake of understanding the relationship and difference between music and words, he took inspiration from them. He also took the inspiration from them because he wanted to know about language and music. He wanted to learn that music and language are the same.

The narrator says that Adrian is self-controlled and disciplined in his life. He also states that while studying philosophy and music, he takes the example of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who is a well-known German writer and poet, to understand the meaning of music. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe says that music is natural in humans. The narrator admits that Adrian spent his time in the library at Buchel studying the two famous works. First is a famous oratorio, Jephtha, by Italian Composer Giacomo Carissimi, and the second is the musical songs entitled *Psalms of David,* in Leipzig by German composer Heinrich Schütz. He spent time in the library to learn these two famous works. He learned from them to draw inspiration for his music. Here, the researcher states that Adrian sacrifices his luxurious life and adopts a disciplined approach.

The narrator explains that Adrian leaves Buchel and goes to Munich to learn how to compose an opera. He decides to compose an opera entitled Love's Labour's Lost. For this opera, he takes an immense effort and follows the discipline. He takes the title of his opera from the well-

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

known play entitled Love's Labour's Lost by the well-known English writer William Shakespeare. He chose the title of Shakespeare's play because he was inspired by Shakespeare. Here, Adrian follows the strict discipline because he has several things to do. To form his opera, he has to choose the theme for it. After choosing the theme, he has to study it. So, he has to study the play entitled Love's Labour Lost by William Shakespeare. After studying this play, he had to select the points for his opera. To do all these things, he needs strict discipline. Without this discipline, he could not do all these things. To follow the discipline, Adrian sacrifices several things, such as living with family, enjoying a luxurious life, interacting with people, living in isolation, following strict rules and regulations, avoiding emotional feelings, not paying attention to romantic love, etc. The narrator states that Adrian follows the strict discipline to form his identity.

Thus, Thomas Mann strongly presents Adrian's discipline not only for his particular point of view but also for his entire life and thoughts. Adrian consciously accepts isolation, rigor, and self-control as essential for his discipline to shape his identity.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

04

HOW WOMEN LEADERS USE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION TO ADVANCE THEIR CAREERS IN 2024

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Abstract:
This article examines the strategic communication frameworks employed by women leaders to navigate the "glass ceiling" and advance into executive roles in 2024. Despite women holding only 10% of Fortune 500 CEO positions, the research indicates that mastering specific communication competencies—such as balancing assertiveness with empathy and leveraging digital visibility—serves as a primary driver for career progression. The study explores the "assertiveness backlash" and the "likeability trap," providing evidence-based strategies to mitigate these barriers, including the use of "value phrases" and authentic storytelling. Furthermore, the article highlights the critical role of structured mentorship and leadership development programs (such as those at IMD and Harvard) in building executive presence. The findings suggest that when women leaders utilize inclusive communication and strategic digital branding on platforms like LinkedIn, they not only accelerate their own career trajectories but also significantly improve organizational profitability and culture.

Keywords: *Women in Leadership, Strategic Communication, Career Advancement, Executive Presence, Unconscious Bias, Gendered Communication, Assertiveness Backlash, Mentorship for Women, etc.*

Introduction:

Only 10% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women — a stark reminder that the glass ceiling still exists. Finding effective ways to empower women through strategic communication skills has become crucial in helping female professionals overcome this persistent leadership gap. Despite women making up just 28% of senior management roles globally, we can see tremendous potential for change.

Women leaders who master strategic communication are better positioned to navigate workplace challenges and advance their careers. This is especially important considering that companies with gender-diverse executive teams are 25% more likely to achieve above-average profitability. Therefore, investing in women leadership development isn't just about equality — it's also good business.

In this article, we'll explore practical communication strategies that help women in leadership positions overcome barriers, build influence, and drive organizational change. From addressing unconscious bias to leveraging mentorship opportunities, these approaches provide a roadmap for women leaders looking to strengthen their professional presence and advance their careers in 2024.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Research Methodology:
The insights and conclusions in this article are based on a comprehensive thematic analysis of contemporary business leadership data, psychological studies, and organizational case studies. The methodology includes:

- **Quantitative Data Integration:** Analysis of global leadership statistics from the Fortune 500, ASX200, and DDI reports to establish the current state of gender diversity in senior management.
- **Psychological Frameworks:** Application of communication theories, such as the "Genderlect" theory (socialization of communication styles) and the "Double Bind" of assertiveness in professional settings.
- **Comparative Platform Analysis:** A review of social media engagement metrics (specifically LinkedIn) comparing the reach and impact of female versus male CEOs to determine the ROI of digital authenticity.
- **Case Study Synthesis:** Evaluation of outcomes from established leadership programs (IMD, Speechworks, and The Women's Empowerment Council) to identify the specific communication tools—such as "headline-first" messaging and "value-framing"—that yield the highest promotion rates.
- **Qualitative Review of Inclusive Practices:** Examination of policy-driven communication shifts, including the implementation of gender-neutral language and feedback loops, to assess their impact on organizational culture.

Addressing Communication Barriers Faced by Women Leaders:
Communication norms profoundly shape workplace dynamics, often creating invisible barriers for women pursuing leadership roles. Research reveals that 43% of Americans believe women in leadership positions are held to a higher standard than men (https://www.forbes.com). Navigating these challenges requires understanding the underlying patterns and developing strategic approaches to overcome them.

Understanding Gendered Communication Norms in the Workplace:
Communication styles differ significantly between genders, not because of biological differences but due to social construction and cultural expectations (https://www.forbes.com). Women professionals frequently adopt more deferential and cautious language to prevent negative judgments, while men utilize assertive communication to demonstrate leadership competence (https://www.forbes.com). This discrepancy stems from established socialization processes that create distinct "genderlects" or gender dialects (https://www.forbes.com).

In professional settings, these patterns manifest through specific behaviors. Women often employ hedges such as "probably" and tag questions like "Nice day, isn't it?" which can inadvertently signal self-doubt (https://www.forbes.com). Conversely, men typically favor direct communication, focusing on getting straight to the point (https://speechworks.net). Furthermore, women tend to prioritize building rapport and consensus before addressing issues, whereas men concentrate on establishing status and exerting control (https://tcbmag.com).

According to multiple studies, these differences extend beyond simple language choices—they represent established social frameworks that maintain unequal power relations, suppressing women's visibility and restricting their career advancement (https://www.forbes.com).

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Impact of Unconscious Bias on Strategic Messaging:

Unconscious bias significantly affects how women's communication is perceived and evaluated. The phenomenon called "hepeating"—where a woman suggests an idea that is ignored, only for a man to receive credit for saying the same thing moments later—illustrates this problem (https://www.forbes.com). This persistent undervaluation forces women to navigate what author Alicia Menendez calls the "likeability trap" (https://www.forbes.com).

Second-generation gender bias, which is embedded in organizational structures yet frequently goes unrecognized, further complicates strategic messaging for women leaders (https://www.imd.org). Unlike first-generation bias, which was explicit, this subtle form impedes women's journeys to leadership by preventing them from being seen as legitimate authorities (https://www.imd.org).

Women's messages are additionally filtered through the lens of gender stereotypes formed early in life. Tests have shown that even self-proclaimed feminists unconsciously consider men more competent than women (https://www.ceeman.org), impacting how female leaders' communications are received regardless of content quality.

How Assertiveness is Perceived Differently by Gender:

The perception gap in assertive communication creates a no-win situation for women leaders. When men display assertive behavior, they are viewed as strong leaders, while women exhibiting identical behavior are often labeled aggressive or overbearing (https://www.forbes.com). This "assertiveness backlash" manifests clearly in performance reviews, where 75% of women receive negative personality criticism for behaviors that would be praised in men (https://www.wbcollaborative.org).

A 2008 study published in Psychological Science confirmed this disparity, showing that men received a boost in perceived status after expressing anger, whereas women expressing the same emotion were accorded lower status and viewed as less competent (https://www.wbcollaborative.org). Similarly, women perceived as talking "too much" in professional settings received lower competency ratings than male counterparts who spoke for exactly the same length of time (https://www.wbcolla borative.org).

To overcome these challenges, women leaders must walk a tightrope between being perceived as competent yet likable. Research indicates women can reduce the assertiveness backlash by up to 27% by prefacing direct statements with "value phrases" that provide context (https://www.wbcolla borative.org). Additionally, women who combine dominant communication with stereotypically feminine qualities like listening skills are 1.5 times more likely to be promoted (https://www.wbcolla borative.org).

Understanding these communication dynamics is essential for women seeking to advance their leadership careers while maintaining their authentic voice in professional settings.

Building Influence through Mentorship and Role Models:

Mentorship stands as a powerful catalyst for women seeking to advance their careers. With studies showing that 28% of women with mentors became senior leaders compared to only 19% without mentoring support (https://jpt.spe.org), developing strong mentorship connections emerges as a critical strategy for professional growth. The data consistently demonstrates that structured guidance can help women overcome workplace barriers and develop the communication skills necessary for leadership roles.

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Structured Mentorship Programs for Women in Leadership:

Formal mentorship programs provide a framework that maximizes career development opportunities. Organizations implementing structured mentoring initiatives report that 100% of mentees feel more confident to take on stretch leadership roles, with 96% confirming that mentorship accelerated their path to leadership positions (https://www.wingsforgrowth.org). Moreover, these programs often include specialized training components focused on communication skills, presentation techniques, and leadership approaches that directly address the unique challenges women face in workplace interactions.

Effective mentorship programs typically incorporate multiple components:

- One-to-one cross-industry mentoring relationships
- Inclusive leadership curriculum and workshops
- Group mentoring sessions for broader perspective sharing
- Regular feedback mechanisms to track progress

The South African public sector study demonstrates that mentorship serves as a valuable development strategy and an affirmative action tool supporting previously disadvantaged groups (https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov). Indeed, this approach helps organizations meet diversity objectives, with 84% of Fortune 500 companies now implementing mentoring programs specifically to promote diversity and inclusion (https://www.mentoringcomplete. com).

Peer-to-Peer Coaching for Communication Confidence:

Peer mentoring creates a collaborative environment where women at similar career stages can exchange knowledge and support each other through communication challenges. According to a 2023 survey, 89% of women participating in peer mentoring found it influential in their career development (https://www.mentoringcomplete. com). This approach proves particularly valuable for building communication confidence, as peers can practice leadership communication techniques together in a safe, supportive environment.

Peer coaching comes in several formats, including structured formal programs, casual informal relationships, and collective mentoring communities (https://www.mentoringcomplete. com). In particular, coaching has been shown to foster increased resilience, feelings of wellbeing, self-efficacy, and self-advocacy (https://peer.asee.org). These qualities directly contribute to more confident communication styles, helping women navigate the gender-specific communication barriers identified in previous research.

Learning from Women Empowerment Leaders in India:

India offers compelling examples of women leaders who effectively use communication to drive change and empower others. Their stories provide valuable lessons in strategic communication, inclusive decision-making, and community building. Former international cricket player Jhulan Goswami now mentors and sponsors cricket training for economically disadvantaged girls, encouraging young women "not to fear pressure and to seek their passion as if their lives depended on it" (https://www.fordfoundation.org).

The Forbes India W-Power List celebrates women who have shattered glass ceilings across sectors—from sports figures like PV Sindhu and Smriti Mandhana to business leaders like Vishakha Mulye and Savitha Balachandran (https://www.forbesindia.com). Consequently, these pioneering women serve as powerful role models, with research indicating that 43% of women believe they would be more successful if they had workplace role models, and 57% considering relatable role models crucial for career success (https://www.forbes.com).

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Organizations like The Women's Empowerment Council create platforms showcasing accomplished women, acknowledging that "women's progress seemed hindered by the glaring absence of sufficient role models whose journeys they could follow" (https://www.forbes.com). In essence, both structured mentorship programs and visible role models provide the guidance, resources, and confidence women need to develop their authentic leadership communication styles.

Using Leadership Development to Strengthen Communication:
Leadership development programs offer structured pathways for women to enhance their strategic communication abilities. Through specialized training, participants gain confidence in expressing ideas, conducting negotiations, and establishing executive presence that commands respect.

Workshops Focused on Strategic Messaging and Negotiation:
Specialized communication workshops address unique challenges faced by women executives. For instance, Speechworks' two-day Executive Speaker Workshop creates a safe forum where women explore how they're currently perceived by others (https://www.fordfoundation.org). This intensive program enables participants to communicate with greater confidence across various audiences, from team members to senior leadership.

Initially, many women report they would "rather go to the dentist than negotiate for themselves" (https://ecornell.cornell.edu). This reluctance stems from cultural conditioning that prioritizes relationship equity. Nonetheless, negotiation workshops help women overcome this discomfort by teaching strategies that balance assertiveness with empathy. Harvard's women's leadership programs highlight that women excel when negotiating for things they care deeply about, including flexible work arrangements (https://professional.dce.harvard.edu).

Executive Coaching for Public Speaking and Presence:
Executive coaching provides personalized guidance for developing authentic leadership presence. Programs like Speakeasy focus on sharpening communication strategies that break barriers while maintaining authenticity (https://www.speakeasyinc.com). Rather than forcing participants to adopt aggressive communication styles, these sessions help women identify and leverage their inherent strengths.

Ultimately, effective coaching transforms how women present themselves publicly. The Moxie Institute emphasizes that without focused executive coaching, rising leaders may struggle to gain visibility, build influence, and position themselves for higher roles (https://www.moxieinstitute.com). Through tailored strategies and trusted guidance, women feel empowered to lead confidently at the highest levels.

Case Study: IMD's Women Leadership Program Outcomes:
The IMD Women Leadership Program demonstrates measurable impacts on participants' communication effectiveness. Through a combination of extensive professional coaching and experiential activities, women develop deeper understanding of themselves as leaders while enhancing their executive presence (https://www.imd.org).

A graduate of the program remarked, "I gained quick and easy tips which I use on an ongoing basis and shared with more junior women in my group" (https://www.imd.org). Another participant described the program's impact as "empowerment," stating it gave her "the power to be a better leader in my current position, or to move on to the next stage" (https://www.imd.org).

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

In collaboration with MIM Business School, the program expanded to support Ukrainian women leaders, focusing on reconstruction efforts. By December 2025, 106 Ukrainian women had graduated from the program's second cohort (https://www.imd.org). The format combines academic modules with practical assignments, creating a powerful community of women ready to lead with vision and impact (https://www.ceeman.org).

Balancing Visibility and Authenticity in Leadership Communication:
Authenticity has emerged as a critical factor in women's leadership success, with research showing it leads to higher engagement, workplace satisfaction, and better performance. Yet for women leaders, finding the balance between visibility and authenticity presents unique challenges as they are often judged disproportionately on personality rather than work quality (https://medium.com).

Leveraging LinkedIn to Share Leadership Wins:
Women CEOs are markedly outperforming their male counterparts on professional platforms—they are six times more likely to be very active on LinkedIn compared to men in similar positions (https://womensagenda.com). This digital presence pays dividends: women leaders generate four times more engagement than "very active" male CEOs despite having fewer than half the average number of followers (https://womensagenda.com). In the case of Telstra CEO Vicki Brady, she created at least twice more engagement per post than any other CEO in the ASX200 (https://womensagenda.com).
For maximum impact, women leaders should:

- Frame accomplishments in terms of both team success and industry impact
- Own achievements publicly without downplaying contributions
- Create a memorable professional narrative that goes beyond job titles

Storytelling Techniques for Women in Leadership Roles:
Personal narratives serve as powerful tools for women leaders seeking to connect authentically with their audience. Neuroscience confirms that engaging stories release oxytocin in the brain, promoting empathy and altruistic behavior (https://www.hepi.ac.uk). Through storytelling, women can break down preconceptions about leadership while fostering an inclusive mindset.
Shannon Nash, CFO at Wing Corporation, uses storytelling to call out social inequities and empower others. "I tell stories because I think they empower other people. I interweave personal stories because when I was at my lowest, I got inspiration from hearing other people's stories" (https:// www.forbes.com).

Avoiding Overexposure While Maintaining Influence:
The key to effective leadership communication lies in strategic visibility—not constant exposure. Essentially, women should focus on quality over quantity in their communications, ensuring each interaction adds value. As Casey Foss, Chief Commercial Officer at West Monroe discovered, sharing authentic experiences made her "much more relatable, more human" (https:// www.forbes.com).

At the same time, authenticity shouldn't mean overexposure. Women leaders must remain intentional about what they share, focusing on purposeful communication that aligns with their values and leadership goals.

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Driving Organizational Change Through Inclusive Communication:
Inclusive communication serves as a powerful tool for women leaders driving organizational transformation. Research shows that 61% of women in managerial positions regularly take at least three allyship actions, including advocating for new opportunities for people of color and confronting discrimination (https://www.wbcollaborative.org).

Creating Feedback Loops with Diverse Teams:
Effective feedback mechanisms enable organizations to track progress on diversity initiatives and identify areas for improvement. Anonymous feedback encourages employees to speak openly about inclusion issues without fear of retaliation (https://surveyconnect.com). Studies indicate that open and honest communications increase inclusion for women more than for men (https://www.ajg.com). Furthermore, women who feel fully included are 11 times more likely to become promoters of their companies (https:// www.ajg.com).

Championing Gender-Inclusive Language in Company Policies:
Gender-inclusive language avoids bias toward particular sexes or social genders, making it less likely to convey stereotypes (https://asiapacific.unwomen.org). To implement inclusive language effectively:

- Replace gendered terms like "chairman" with neutral alternatives such as "chairperson"
- Avoid terms with harmful connotations or that perpetuate negative stereotypes
- Use language consistent with individuals' gender identity regardless of sex at birth

Companies that prioritize inclusive language see improved employee engagement and retention (https://www.upgrad-enterprise.com). As one expert notes, "When gender-neutral language is used, all team members feel equally valued" (https://tma.es/en).

How Women Leaders Shape Culture Through Communication:
Women leaders excel at fostering inclusive workspaces through resilience and compassion (https://blogs.xpheno.com). Senior-level women are twice as likely as their male counterparts to spend substantial time on inclusion work outside their formal responsibilities (https://www.wbcollaborative.org). Moreover, compared to male managers, women in leadership positions are 29% more likely to help employees navigate work-life challenges and 42% more likely to ensure manageable workloads (https://www.wbcollaborative.org).

By embedding empathy and transparency into communications, women leaders create environments where everyone feels valued. This approach ultimately enhances team collaboration, increases productivity, and builds stronger workplace cultures that promote growth and success (https://blogs.xpheno.com).

Conclusion:
Women leaders continue to make remarkable strides despite facing significant communication barriers in the workplace. Throughout this article, we explored how strategic communication serves as a critical tool for women to advance their careers in 2024 and beyond. Certainly, understanding gendered communication norms represents the first step toward overcoming unconscious bias that often undermines women's contributions.

Mentorship emerges as another powerful catalyst for professional growth. Women with strong mentors develop greater communication confidence and leadership presence, as evidenced

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

by structured programs and peer coaching initiatives. Additionally, role models provide inspiration and practical strategies, particularly when they share their authentic journeys.

Leadership development programs offer women the skills needed to navigate communication challenges effectively. Workshops focused on strategic messaging, executive coaching for public presence, and specialized women's leadership programs equip participants with practical tools to overcome gender-specific barriers.

Finding balance between visibility and authenticity remains essential for women leaders today. Social platforms like LinkedIn provide opportunities to showcase achievements without sacrificing genuine self-expression. Women who master this balance create memorable professional narratives that resonate with audiences across organizational levels.

Last but not least, inclusive communication drives meaningful organizational change. Women leaders who champion diverse feedback mechanisms, gender-inclusive language, and empathetic communication styles create environments where everyone feels valued and heard.

The path forward requires continued vigilance against communication barriers while embracing strategies that amplify women's voices. Although progress has been made, significant work remains to close the leadership gender gap. Women who strategically communicate their value will not only advance their own careers but also help reshape organizational cultures for greater inclusion. The future of leadership depends on these voices being heard.

Key Takeaways:

Women leaders who master strategic communication can overcome workplace barriers and advance their careers despite persistent gender gaps in leadership roles.

- Address communication bias proactively - Women face different standards for assertiveness; use "value phrases" to provide context and reduce backlash by 27%.
- Leverage mentorship for career acceleration - Women with mentors are 28% more likely to reach senior leadership positions compared to those without guidance.
- Balance visibility with authenticity on digital platforms - Women CEOs generate 4x more LinkedIn engagement than male counterparts by sharing genuine leadership stories.
- Champion inclusive communication practices - Use gender-neutral language and create diverse feedback loops to drive organizational change and improve team engagement.
- Invest in structured leadership development - Specialized workshops and executive coaching help women build negotiation skills and executive presence essential for advancement.

The key to success lies in understanding that strategic communication isn't about changing who you are—it's about amplifying your authentic voice while navigating workplace dynamics that still favor traditional leadership styles. Women who combine genuine storytelling with purposeful visibility create lasting impact both for their careers and organizational culture.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

05

SHEELA TOMY'S *VALLI*: AN ALARM AGAINST THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMBALANCE

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Abstract:
Environment has posed a great treat to the human existence in the last few decades. The excess use of natural resources and human encroachment in the nature created imbalance under the sun. Excess cutting down of the dense jungles, removal of mountains, haunting of beasts in jungle has directly made an impact of creation of imbalance on the earth. The environmentalists declared it as an emergency and urged to take various steps to save the mother earth. Peeping into the history of Indian English literature, we find that many authors have tried to focus the negative effects of the imbalance in nature on human being. Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and other authors mostly adhere to environmental issues in their writings. Sheela Tomy in her eco-fictional narrative Valli focuses the environmental issues. She presents the environmental injustice in the form of degradation and the land encroachments that resulted the displacement and migration of the natives. The present paper is an attempt to focus the destruction of the Waynad forest and the crisis of the marginalized.

Keywords: *Indigenous, Environmental Injustice, Encroachment, Laws, etc.*

Sheela Tomy's *Valli,* a Malyalam novel narrates the history of Kulluvayal, a portrayal of change from a deep dense forest to a concrete jungle with dry and marginal devastation greenery. Environment in English literature has always been a part of parcel of Indian society and its culture from Vedic civilization to the present. Nature is regarded as the incarnation of the god. Even the environment in various religions is considered as the next phenomenon after the god. It is revered, respected and worshiped by the people. As far as the Velli is concerned, it introduces readers to the dream land of Waynad with its scenic beauty, meadows, and dense forest which now-a-days has turned into the concrete jungle with the encroachment on adivasi community causing destruction of various natural belongings within it. The present fictional work is a record of atrocities that human being has loaded towards the nature to show his supremacy. Sheela Tomy points out that the injustice of environments in the form of stories of Valli. The stories in Valli touch the various aspects like abuse, repression, resistance and depression etc.

Sheela Tomy's *Valli* fathoms with the story of Waynad landscape in Kerla in which four generations have lived on this land. The story of the fiction is narrated through the diary of Susan. Tomy spent her childhood in the lap of the nature which was significant in terms of joys. The novelist narrates the story by saying that many adivasi people had settled their communities in dense jungle since many decades. The dense jungle for adivasi community stood as the lifetime mean of bread and butter but this so called land of the adivasi people disposed their parental lands due to various policies and practices. The land owners along with Jenmis exploited the poor people inhumanly. They brought continuous changes in acts. However, the adivasi community has

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

been continuously suffered from their fundamental rights and salary. The novel further highlights financial struggle of Waynad natives against the land owners who illegally attempt to cut down the trees from the forest that further made encroachment on the land. The novelist here makes an attempt in showing the intricate relationship between Waynad natives and the natural world, the land of paddy, the land of dense forest with the adivasi community residing in Waynad, in the hamlet of Kullyvayal of the Western Ghat. The novelist with many evidences shows that the adivasi community has been relying upon the jungle in such a way that they received food, medicine, material for shelter from the forest resources. Even their cultural rituals, tradition and community gathering were centered upon the forest. They found their identity in jungle. For them, they have the close vicinity around the jungle: for them jungle was their god. To quote: "They never poisoned the waterways to catch fish… they only took enough honey and left the rest for the bees, just enough fruit and jungle roots to service" (Tommy, *VALLI*, 08).

The lines show the deep bond of adivsi community existing in the nature. The belief of adivasi community upon nature seems to be deeper than they say becomes clear when we find their worship in the phenomenon in nature. They worship vanadurga and jaldurga as the preservers of their community. The vandurga and jaldurga have a symbolic meaning. These two goddesses represent the significant deities in the folklore and mythology of adivasi community. Side- by-side. Malemragaru also stands as the goddess of mountains. These adivasi people on the auspicious occasions of various festivals perform their rituals and traditions with nature. That is why they neither wan to harm the nature nor do they want to attempt any natural imbalance. In this way the nature stands as a symbol of resilience and identify between human and the environment. The thought expressed in the present narrative widens our thoughts regarding the importance of the nature for human beings. Someone may say that the knowledge of adivasi community and their awareness about the environment is much more than the educated people.

The novelist elaborates various cultural progrmmes held at schools where Padmanabham addresses students about the need of nature in the life of human being. He, in his speech discusses how human being, animals, forest and the environments is interrelated to each other. Thus, the novelist with the sketch of Padmanabham envisions about the keen urgency of the protection of the environment. Through the speech of Padmanabham, the novelist sends a message to the readers that the human being is responsible for the climate change, pollution and deforestation on the earth. Human beings under the label of urbanization, its development is continuously cutting down the dense jungles. He further says that the so called temptation of human being is causing environmental imbalance, drought and pollution. The jungles which were revered by the ancient people have been brought the verge of plain lands, ferine places hardscrabble. The dense jungles which were regarded as the abode of the god have been now used for the financial purpose of man. To quote Padmanabhan: "The forest, the sacred place of rejuvenation. The abode of countless creatures… sagas would come into the heart of the forest the Kananam to the experience" (Tommy, *VALLI*, 146).

The novelist, here recaps the philosophy of adivasi community and their tradition. For adivasi community, the forest holds profound significance. They opine that the forests are seemed as living entities, giving wisdom to human being. Padmanabham, in the present novel takes an opportunity to note down the philosophy of adivasi community towards the role of environment in our life. Padmanabham, in this novel is portrayed as a character having the affinity to and awareness about the nature. He, apart from many speeches on environmental awareness had organized camps and cultural programmes. His job of perfdorming street plays becomes as ideal

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

model about the environmental awareness concerns among natives. Thus, Padmanabhan in the present narrative stands as a lighthouse to the whole community in respect to environmental awareness. He opines that we should revere the nature because we are deeply indebted to her. The holistic approach of Padmanabham encourages us and lets us to emphasize on the cautious use of the sustainable resources present in the nation in the form of a gift. For him degradation of the environment is noting but the detrimental to the human being and it wellness. The novel moreover highlights on the adivasi community's use of traditional medicine in healing the pangs of humankind. Instead of preferring to be hospitalized, they prefer sustainable natural resources for the permanent treatment without any cause of side effects.

Exploitation of minors is also another crisis shown by the novelist in the present novel. The exploitation of mafia stands as the most turbulent aspect which seems to be responsible for the displacement of adivasi and obstacle for their routine life. Since adivasi community has been adhering upon the and believing upon the use of traditional herbal medicine present in the nature, the mafia without making any sense and without studying about it wanted to connect with adivasi community for the herbal medicine to fulfill their financial desire. It tempts mafia to connect with tourist industry in gaining the traditional medicine for everyday practices. It impelled Kalluvayal natives to go on the hunger strike to protect their original knowledge. They not only protested against the inhuman act of mafia but also they demanded the change in the laws that could protect their traditional medicine through patents because the y has already learnt about the lust of mafia and their financial need. The adivasi natives had the fear that the mafias along with the tourist resorts might have cut down the jungle for their lust. Adivasi community had also a threat that if they have not changed the existing laws, they might not get the benefit of their traditional medicine and their community will be asked to vacate their families from the jungle. They even have had experienced that the mafia once had illegally exploited their communities in their family displacement. The mafia not only stepped there, they continued to cut down jungles for their personal financial benefits. The cutting of jungle later on created many problems like famine land, pollution, soil erosion, etc. The policy of mafia leaded towards marginalization of indigenous community whose lives were deeply intertwined with nature. Since the forests were cleaned by mafia for their commercial purposes- logging, mining, etc. The people who have been living in harmony in jungle were forced to vacate their huts to abandon their lands for the purpose of the benefit of a handful mafia. But the adivasi natives never gave up. They were firm in their decision because they assured that the loss of the forest would mean the killing of their gods, killing of their belief, loss of their sustainable resources, loss of cultural practices, loss of sacred sites and loss of food resources. But everything was in vain. The anguish of mafia becomes clear in the words of Padmanabham as: "These forest dwelling communities faced many challenges; and encountered the complexities of modernization in the name of development. The arrival of traders and their timber merchants identified as greedy – two legged creatures wielding axes… they robbed environmental rights. They cut-down the forest and sent it to the timber mills in the cover of darkness… the ones who are dangeraous" (Tommy, *VALLI*, 30).

The novel not only highlights the exploitation of adivasi natives by mafia but also their cruelty. The novelist has raised many questions regarding their injustice and existence. She asked were they human as that created gods who murdered and burned down forests in order to justify their cruelty or was human cruelty mistake that gods made (Tommy, *VALLI*, 154). in this way, the novelist makes an attempt of a cry of adivasi natives against the environmental degradation and fading-step towards saving environment.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

At the end of the novel, the novelist recaps with the belief of adivasi people upon the nature. They had deified nature; they revered nature as it was their god. To sum up, we can find the revolt of the nature against the encroachment of human being. The novelist at the end of the novel suggests us that we should not challenge the nature nor we should make encroachment upon her. The encroachment made by mafia in the novel results flood that wreaks havoc on the land and destroys the babel tower of human greed. The image of nature responding to human deeds suggest that nature once perceived as passive or subdued has reached a breaking point and now is pushing back against humanity's exploitation. The novelist conveys the message that the natural calamities quite arrive on the earth but most of the times they are penalties of the deeds of human beings. To quote the novelist:

It was through nature, in Valli that was being rendered helpless, had dug in her heels and turned back to face us wrathful (Tommy, *VALLI*, 400).

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March 6th& 7th 2026

06

ALIENATION AS PROMINENT FEATURE OF MODERNISM AND POST MODERNISM AS VIEWED THROUGH WOMEN CHARACTERS IN ANITA DESAI'S NOVELS

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Abstract:
This paper examines alienation as a defining characteristic of modernism and postmodernism within Indian English fiction, specifically through the female protagonists of Anita Desai. Desai, a prominent post-independence writer, shifts the literary focus from external social realities to the intricate interior landscapes of the female mind. By exploring the "creative release of feminine sensibility," her work highlights the psychic reverberations and existential enigmas faced by educated, hypersensitive women. Analysis of novels such as Cry, the Peacock and Voices in the City reveals how marital discord, communication gaps, and philosophical detachment lead to profound isolation. Characters like Maya and Monisha embody the struggle for self-emancipation against traditional social complexities and domestic imprisonment. Ultimately, Desai portrays alienation as a "modern evil" that drives individuals toward self-analysis, nostalgia, and occasionally, eccentric or tragic ends. Her discourse effectively probes the disturbed psyche of the Indian woman, emphasizing her search for identity and justice in a changing society.

Keywords: *Alienation, Modernism, Anita Desai, Feminine Sensibility, Existential Enigma, etc.*

"The term modernism is widely used to identify new and distinctive features in the subjects, forms, concepts and styles of literatures and others arts especially after 1st world war" (M.H.Abrams).

Specific features of modernism vary with user. In general, modernism is a radical break with some of traditional western art and culture. Modernism can be viewed through the questions to the traditional modes of social organization, religion and morality. It is said that modernist innovation is signalized by James Joyce, T.S.Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Ezra Pound etc. Some other European and American novelists like Andre Guide, William Faulkner, and Marcel Proust, Franza Kafka is supposed as representatives of Modernism. K.Chellappan, "Talking in India, it is true under a fresh western impact between the 20's and 50's of 20th century, we developed a degree of modernity."

Indian women novelists particularly kamala Markayandeya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Bharati Mukherjee, Shoba De may be supposed as the novelists who maintained this flow of modernism in Indian English fiction. "Their fiction reflects the image, status plight, struggle and existential enigma of Indian women of all classes and creeds in modern one" – Amita Myles.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Post independent Indian English literature is supposed to be representative literature of modernism. Striking feature of this literature is rise of female novelists. Anita Desai acquires prominent place among them. Most strike feature of Modernism is the phenomena called the avant- garde (a military metaphor – "Advanced guard") It means that, It is a small, self conscious group of artists and authors who deliberately tried to make is new by violating the accepted conventions. They engaged themselves in creating new artistic forms and styles. They tried to introduce neglected and forbidden subject matter. Thus, these avant- garde artists became alienated from the Established order. It can be seen through the novels of Anita Desai.

Alienation and its real presentation became prominent feature of modernism. Main aim of these artists is to shock the sensibilities of conventional reader and to challenge the norms of dominant Anita culture. This paper aims to provide a guideline about how some of Desai's characters forward concept of 'Alienation as main feature of modernism. Alienation entered in literature as 'Alienation effect in 1920's and later in the epic theatre, German dramatist Berol Brecht called it as 'estrangement effect or distancing effect. It can be interpreted as strange social reality.

Anita Desai is one of the most powerful post independent Indian writers in English. Glancing through Anita Desai's some female characters, this paper points out the phase of conflict and self realization in Indian women. This evolution is presented by the 'creative release of the feminine sensibility.' It is presented by selecting educated women from upper middle or middle class in India. They are presented as hyper sensitive women who are trapped in traditional, cultural and social complexities. They try to discard such female figures and presented their identity crisis. Social and psychoanalytical presentation of this crisis is the main aim behind all this. In Anita Desai, we find a specific feminist ideology. The novels of Anita Desai are female oriented. She probes into their problems. She expresses the exploration of disturbed psyche of Indian woman by emphasizing alienation. Her discourse is about the issues of gender justice, the changing role of women in Indian society. Presentation of alienation through a female figure is important to her. She is more interested in the interior landscape of the mind than in political or social realities. She has enriched the tradition of Indian novel in English. Her novels reveal inner realities and psychic reverberations of her female characters. Probably, the most recurrent theme in her novels is the hazards and complexities of man- woman relationship, the founding and nurturing of individuality and establishing of individualism of

Her female characters.She presented various conflicting fronts of women like- financial independence, adjustment, assertion of individuality, identity crisis, resistance to established norms, man versus woman, woman versus family, woman versus society etc. Through all this, she presented desperate attempts of self emancipation. 20thcent. Has been rightly called 'The Age of Alienation,' The modern man is doomed to suffer the corrosive impact of alienation which manifests in the form of generation gap, the compartmentalization of life absence of a sense of meaningfulness in life. The pervasive sense of alienation has corroded human life from various quarters. The modern man has shrunk in spirit languishing in confusion, frustration, disintegration disillusionment and alienation.

Anita Desai's 1st novel *Cry, the Peacock* (1963) is one of the most evocative Indian novels in English, the tale of blunted human relationship being told by the chief protagonist herself. The novel presents the story of a young sensitive girl obsessed by a childhood prophecy of disaster whose extreme sensitivity is rendered in terms of immeasurable loneliness. The very beginning of the novel highlights the husband - wife alienation theme by unfolding the relationship of Maya

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

and Gautama. It presents destructive love. Here, mistrust, misunderstanding and uncompromising attitude lead to marital discord. Maya, favorite daughter of a wealthy artistic father is married to an older man, a detached. Their married life is punctuated all along by matrimonial silences and Gautama's hardness, his coldness and incessant take of cups of tea and philosophy. What pains Maya most is her utter loneliness in this house. An ever-widening gap in communication between the husband and wife is felt throughout the novel. There was no bond, no love, hardly any love. Restlessness always boils within her. The alienation of Maya is rooted essentially in Gautama's philosophical detachment and his gross unconcern over the 'basis in life. Maya's alienation leads her on to utter desolation. She declares that all order is gone out of her life… no peace, nothing to keep her within the pattern of familiar everyday living. Strangeness surrounded her. In her loneliness, Maya tries to find out meaning of life. She is overpowered by sense of betrayal. Many times she indulged in self retrospection to find out where the fault lies. She fails to get proper answers to her queries. She tries to discover the truth that she does not know herself .This is the typical condition of an unfortunate person who is alienated. It shows that 'Cry, the Peacock' is a pioneering effort towards delineating the psychological problems of an alienated person. It is exploration of young Maya's married loneliness in terms of her complex psychic experience. Maya's moods, obsessions, dilemmas and abnormalities are conveyed very effectively in it. Here, she (Maya) presents the personal problems of a helplessly sensitive character, caught in the crisis of isolation and insecurity.

Anita Desai's 2nd Novel *Voices in the City* (1965) presents the same outlook of alienation in female characters. Here, Monisha's relationship with her husband is characterized only by loneliness and lack of communication. She is married against her will to a blind moralist, a spokesman of philosophy. She finds her life a virtual imprisonment. She is always haunted by her confused despair and a sense of a life dedicated to nothing. Her loneliness results into a different nature. There is no escape from it and she becomes a sleep walker, ghost, and some unknown and dread entity. She is always eager to get away and be alone. A self inflicted death is a befitting end to such a life. Monisha's tragedy represents the plight of many unfortunate young women who have nothing else to fall back upon. Monisha consoled herself that alone she was not a sufferer, this was the plight of all Bengali women. Many times, she thought to end her life to escape these problems. Her tragedy presents death knell of personal peace and integrity.Monisha presents loss of privacy, lack of intellectual freedom, burden of unbearable ethics etc. The younger daughter, Amla is like her brother and sister with an exceptionally sharp sensitivity unlike them, however, she decides to lead a gay life with the painter Dharma. But her primeval joy is short lived and she soon begins to realize the hollowness and fatality of her life.

In this powerful novel, Anita Desai has attempted to probe deeply into the inner recesses of her characters consciousness. Her symbols and images help her to bring out the essential loneliness of such characters. In general, it can be said that Anita Desai presented womens' inner world through existential predicament of a women as an individual. Also she presented dull marital relations and its ultimate result i.e. alienation – a deadly struggle to liberate herself from moral and social pressure. Alienation in her female figures leads them to self analyses and so they often grow nostalgic and at the very end, they determine to transform themselves by performing some eccentric acts. It happens only due to alienation and Anita Desai succeeded in pointing out this as the specific modern evil of the time. It shows that presentation of alienation as a prominent feature of modernism has become a trend in modern and post modern Indian English literature.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
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March 6th& 7th 2026

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March 6th& 7th 2026

07

POSTCOLONIAL FEMINISM AND THE POLITICS OF GENDERED INEQUALITY IN KIRAN DESAI'S *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

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Abstract:
Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss (2006) has received considerable critical attention for its exploration of migration, globalization, and postcolonial identity. Yet, its sustained interrogation of gendered inequality within postcolonial society remains comparatively under examined. This article rereads The Inheritance of Loss through a postcolonial feminist framework to investigate how women experience intersecting structures of oppression shaped by colonial legacy, patriarchy, class stratification, and nationalist politics. Drawing upon the theoretical insights of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, the study argues that Kiran Desai portrays women as "doubly colonized" subjects—marginalized not only by imperial histories but also by indigenous patriarchal systems. Through close textual analysis of characters such as Nimi, Sai, Lola, and Noni, the article demonstrates that gender inequality operates as a deeply embedded political inheritance within postcolonial social structures. The novel ultimately critiques both colonial modernity and postcolonial nationalism for their failure to secure gender justice. By foregrounding women's silenced struggles across domestic and public spheres, Kiran Desai positions them as the most enduring inheritors of historical, emotional, and structural loss.

Keywords: *Postcolonial Feminism; Gendered Inequality; Double Colonization; Patriarchy; Colonial Legacy; Nationalism; Intersectionality; Class Hierarchy; Subalternity and Women's Agency, etc.*

Introduction:

Postcolonial literary studies have traditionally focused on displacement, hybridity, nationalism, and the psychological aftermath of empire. Foundational texts such as *Orientalism* by Edward Said and *The Location of Culture* by Homi K. Bhabha reshaped the field by exposing the discursive and cultural mechanisms of colonial power. However, feminist critics argue that such frameworks frequently marginalize women's experiences, privileging male-centered narratives of nation and resistance. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Asserts that "the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow, underscoring how both colonial and nationalist discourses silence women." (Spivak, 287) Similarly, Chandra Talpade Mohanty insists that gender must be analysed in relation to class, race, and imperial histories, arguing that women's oppression cannot be understood outside these intersecting structures. Postcolonial

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

feminism thus foregrounds gender as a central dimension of postcolonial power relations and critiques the persistence of patriarchy within nationalist projects. (Mohanty, 17-42). Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* provides a vital context for such analysis which set during the Gorkhaland movement in Kalimpong and juxtaposed with diasporic struggles in the United States, the novel portrays the lingering effects of colonial hierarchy within post-independence India. Critics note that Kiran Desai exposes the "subtle violences" embedded in everyday life, particularly those experienced by women.

This article argues that *The Inheritance of Loss* presents gender inequality as a structural inheritance of colonialism and nationalism rather than a peripheral social issue. Through a postcolonial feminist lens, it examines how female characters are silenced, disciplined, and rendered politically invisible across domestic and public spheres. By revealing women as bearers of historical and ideological conflict, Kiran Desai highlights the incomplete nature of postcolonial emancipation and foregrounds the gendered dimensions of loss.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework:

This study adopts a qualitative method for textual analysis of *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai, grounded in postcolonial feminist theory. Through close reading of narrative structure, characterization, and thematic patterns, the research examines how gendered power relations operate within the intersecting forces of colonial legacy, patriarchy, class hierarchy, and nationalism. The theoretical framework draws primarily on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. Gayatri Spivak's assertion in *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, That "the subaltern cannot speak" provides a lens to analyse the silencing and marginalization of women within dominant socio-political discourses. Mohanty's critique in *Under Western Eyes* of the construction of a "singular 'Third World woman' enables a contextualized reading of gender oppression shaped by specific historical and cultural conditions.

The study also incorporates the concept of double colonization, articulated by Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford, who argue that women in postcolonial societies are "doubly colonized by imperial and patriarchal ideologies." Additionally, Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of 'intersectionality' informs the analysis by recognizing how gender, class, and colonial history intersect to produce layered forms of marginalization. Together, these theoretical perspectives facilitate an intersectional postcolonial feminist reading of the novel, highlighting how gender inequality functions as a structural and historical inheritance within postcolonial society.

Colonial Legacy and the Formation of Patriarchal Masculinity:

Kiran Desai in *The Inheritance of Loss* constructs the character of Jemubhai Patel as a powerful representation of the psychological residues of colonialism in shaping postcolonial masculinity. Educated in England during the late colonial period, Jemubhai internalizes British norms of civility, superiority, and racial hierarchy. His aspiration to approximate Englishness results not in empowerment but in deep self-alienation. As Homi K. Bhabha argues in *The Location of Culture*, "colonial mimicry produces a subject that is almost the same, but not quite, a fractured identity caught between imitation and exclusion" (Bhabha, 126). Jemubhai's experience in England embodies this ambivalence; he is never accepted as fully English, yet he grows estranged from his own cultural identity.

Critics have repeatedly noted that colonial humiliation often re-emerges in domestic spaces as compensatory aggression. In her influential essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that "colonial discourse not only silences colonized subjects but also

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

reshapes indigenous gender relations, rendering women doubly marginalized." (Spivak, 271) Jemubhai's marriage to Nimi becomes the arena in which his wounded colonial ego seeks restoration. His emotional withdrawal and physical violence toward her are less personal aberrations than symptoms of a masculinity destabilized by racial subordination.

Scholars of postcolonial gender studies have described this phenomenon as the "masculine crisis of empire." For instance, Elleke Boehmer observes in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* that "colonialism dislocated indigenous patriarchies even as it reinforced their authority within the private sphere."(Boehmer, 127) This paradox is vividly dramatized in Jemubhai's domestic conduct. Having been racially diminished in England, he asserts tyrannical control at home, policing Nimi's behaviour, appearance, and speech. His authority over his wife becomes a substitute for the authority denied to him under colonial rule.

Similarly, in *Feminism without Borders*, Chandra Talpade Mohanty emphasizes that postcolonial patriarchies often intensify in response to colonial disruption, reasserting control over women as bearers of cultural authenticity (Mohanty 59). Nimi's subjugation reflects this dynamic: she is reduced to a silent figure whose body absorbs the judge's unresolved resentment. Her suffering underscores what many feminist critics describe as the "domestication of colonial trauma." positioning Nimi as the collateral victim of imperial history. Likewise, a 2018 dissertation from the University of Hyderabad describes the judge as "a man alienated by mimicry, whose fractured selfhood seeks coherence through patriarchal domination." These scholarly interpretations affirm that Kiran Desai situates domestic abuse within broader historical structures rather than portraying it as individual pathology.

Kiran Desai's narrative technique strengthens this critique. The judge's obsessive hygiene rituals, disdain for Indian customs, and refusal to communicate with his wife signify what Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* identifies as "the colonized subject's desire to "escape his blackness" through assimilation. Fanon argues that such psychic splitting often produces hostility toward one's own community". (Fanon, 12) Jemubhai's cruelty toward Nimi thus becomes an internalized expression of colonial self-hatred. Through this portrayal, Desai reveals the intimate entanglement between colonial power and domestic patriarchy. The private sphere is not insulated from imperial history; rather, it becomes the stage upon which its psychological consequences are performed. Women like Nimi are transformed into sites where postcolonial men negotiate humiliation, mimicry, and fractured identity. In exposing this dynamic, Kiran Desai aligns with postcolonial feminist critics who assert that national and colonial histories are inscribed most painfully upon women's bodies.

Ultimately, Jemubhai Patel embodies what might be termed the inheritance of patriarchal masculinity shaped by racial subjugation and sustained through gendered domination. By tracing the continuity between colonial emasculation and domestic violence, Desai critiques not only imperial structures but also the postcolonial social order that perpetuates gendered injustice.

Nimi and the Subaltern Female Condition:

Kiran Desai in *The Inheritance of Loss*, crafts Nimi as one of the most poignant embodiments of gendered marginalization within postcolonial society. Married at a young age into an alien and hostile domestic environment, Nimi is denied education, mobility, and even emotional reciprocity. Her marital life with Jemubhai Patel unfolds within a regime of silence, fear, and humiliation. Nimi reveals her husband's nature through these lines "He would beat her and beat her until she was barely able to stand" (Desai, 170).She is unable to communicate with him—emotionally,

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

linguistically, or socially—and this communicative breakdown renders her invisible within both the household and the narrative structure itself Jemubhai is deeply prejudiced and self-loathing about Nimi, "he was ashamed of her, ashamed of her body, her face, her accent" (Desai, 169).

From a postcolonial feminist perspective, Nimi closely parallels the figure described by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her seminal essay *"Can the Subaltern Speak?"* Spivak famously asserts that "the subaltern cannot speak, not because she lacks voice, but because dominant power structures refuse to hear or record her speech". (Spivak, 308) Nimi's silence operates within this framework. She is not merely quiet; she is structurally muted. Her suffering remains unarticulated within familial, social, and historical discourses, demonstrating how patriarchy and colonial modernity converge to erase women's agency.

Critics have emphasized that subaltern female figures in postcolonial fiction often occupy spaces of narrative marginality. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues in *Under Western Eyes Revisited*, "third-world women are frequently constructed as "a homogeneous powerless group," deprived of individuality and complexity by dominant ideologies."(Mohanty, 338) Nimi's characterization reflects this homogenization that is known primarily as the judge's wife, deprived of personal identity, intellectual growth, or public presence. Her existence is confined to domestic labour and silent endurance. Furthermore, feminist historian Kumkum Sangari observes in her work on colonial modernity that patriarchal structures in colonial and postcolonial India "reconstituted women as symbols of tradition while denying them autonomy."(Sangari 10) Nimi's position as a traditional wife obedient, veiled, submissive, illustrates this reconstitution. She becomes the symbolic bearer of cultural authenticity even as she is denied subjecthood. Her inability to resist Jemubhai's emotional and physical cruelty is not the result of weakness but the outcome of deeply entrenched structural inequalities.

Kiran Desai intentionally situates Nimi at the margins to critique systems that normalize women's suffering. Importantly, Desai resists sentimentalizing Nimi's plight. There is no melodramatic protest or heroic rebellion. Instead, the narrative exposes the structural conditions that make resistance nearly impossible. Nimi's silence is thus political rather than personal. As Gayatri Spivak's cautious, attempts to "give voice" to the subaltern risk appropriating her position; Desai avoids this by allowing the weight of silence itself to indict the social order. Even Nimi's death passes with minimal recognition, underscoring the disposability of subaltern women within patriarchal historiography. Her erasure reflects what feminist critic Susie Tharu calls "the ordinary invisibility of women's pain in nationalist narratives."(Tharu and K, 35) By rendering her life and death almost unremarkable within the household, Desai exposes how patriarchal systems absorb and normalize female suffering. Through Nimi, Desai articulates a profound critique of both colonial legacy and indigenous patriarchy. Nimi embodies the subaltern female condition—muted, marginalized, and memorialized only through absence. Her silence is not emptiness but testimony: a stark reminder that the most enduring inheritance in postcolonial societies is often the unrecorded loss borne by women.

Lola and Noni: Gendered Vulnerability and Class Privilege:

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai presents Lola and Noni as representatives of the Anglicized, upper-middle-class elite in Kalimpong. Their cultivated gardens, preference for English literature, and nostalgic attachment to colonial etiquette signify what Homi K. Bhabha terms the lingering "colonial desire" embedded in postcolonial subjectivity. For Lola and Noni, Englishness functions as cultural capital—a symbolic shield that appears to distance them from

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

local unrest and socio-political volatility. "The wealth that seemed to protect them like a blanket was the very thing that left them exposed" (Desai, 151).However, this illusion of insulation collapses during the Gorkhaland insurgency. The seizure of their property by male insurgents exposes the fragility of class-based security in moments of nationalist upheaval. As political instability intensifies, their education, refinement, and economic status fail to protect them. Their vulnerability underscores what feminist scholars describe as the gendered nature of political violence. Homes—traditionally coded as feminine spaces—become battlegrounds for masculine assertions of territorial and ideological control.

Postcolonial feminist theorists have repeatedly emphasized that nationalist conflicts often reinscribe patriarchal authority. Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues that "women's bodies and domestic spaces frequently become symbolic markers of community honor and sovereignty."(Mohanty, 59) In Lola and Noni's case, the invasion of their home is not merely economic dispossession; it is a symbolic stripping of dignity and autonomy. Their carefully maintained colonial lifestyle, once a marker of distinction, becomes irrelevant in the face of militarized masculinity. Scholars of gender and nationalism further contend that political movements frequently marginalize women even when they invoke collective liberation. Nira Yuval-Davis observes in *Gender and Nation* that "women are often positioned as biological and cultural reproducers of the nation," yet excluded from real political agency (Yuval-Davis, 26-29). Lola and Noni exemplify this contradiction. Although they are part of the socio-economic elite, they remain peripheral to the male-dominated political struggle shaping their fate.

These critical readings affirm that their displacement is not incidental but structurally significant. Importantly, Desai avoids caricaturing the insurgents or romanticizing the sisters' colonial nostalgia. Instead, she highlights the irony that those who once aligned themselves culturally with imperial authority now find themselves dispossessed within postcolonial nationalist conflict. Their vulnerability reveals what feminist critic Deniz Kandiyoti calls the "patriarchal bargain"—the conditional security women negotiate within existing power systems. When those systems collapse, so too does the illusion of protection.

Through Lola and Noni, Desai critiques the assumption that class privilege guarantees female security in politically volatile contexts. Their experience demonstrates that in moments of insurgency and nationalist assertion, women's homes and bodies become sites where political authority is contested and re-established. Class may structure access to resources, but it does not neutralize gendered vulnerability. Ultimately, Lola and Noni's dispossession reinforces the novel's broader argument: in postcolonial conflict, women—regardless of education or social standing—remain exposed to the intersecting forces of patriarchy and political violence. Their fragile privilege becomes yet another inheritance of loss, revealing the unstable foundations upon which colonial modernity once promised safety and superiority.

Nationalism and the Exclusion of Women:

Kiran Desai portrays nationalism as predominantly masculinist in her famous novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, During the Gorkhaland movement, political authority, militant organization, and ideological articulation are controlled by men, while women remain excluded from decision-making processes. Their role is largely symbolic—guardians of home, culture, and ethnic continuity—rather than participatory. The public sphere of protest and insurgency is male-dominated, whereas women inhabit the vulnerable domestic sphere affected by these political upheavals.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Partha Chatterjee argues that "anticolonial nationalism created a division between the "outer" material sphere of politics and the "inner" spiritual sphere of the home, assigning women to the latter in order to preserve cultural authenticity."(Chatterjee, 120). This ideological separation reinforces gender hierarchy even within movements that claim liberation. Kiran Desai's narrative reflects this pattern: while men engage in nationalist assertion, women remain confined to homes that become targets of political violence. Similarly, Nira Yuval-Davis observes that women are often constructed as "symbolic bearers of the collectivity's identity and honor," (Yuval-Davis, 45).yet excluded from real power structures. In the novel, women experience the consequences of insurgency—fear, dispossession, instability—without participating in shaping its direction.

Thus, Kiran Desai exposes a critical paradox: nationalist resistance challenges colonial dominance but simultaneously reproduces male-centered hierarchies. Gender marginalization persists across regimes, suggesting that political sovereignty without gender justice remains structurally incomplete.

Conclusion:

This research paper establishes that Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* is not merely a narrative of migration and postcolonial displacement but a sustained critique of gendered power structures. Through a postcolonial feminist framework informed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, the study demonstrates how women in the novel endure "double colonization," shaped by both imperial histories and entrenched patriarchy. Characters such as Nimi, Sai, Lola, and Noni reveal that gender inequality operates as a structural inheritance transmitted across generations. Whether through domestic silence, class-based vulnerability, or nationalist exclusion, women remain marginalized within both private and public spheres. Ultimately, the novel challenges triumphant narratives of postcolonial progress by foregrounding women's suffering as a political condition rather than a private misfortune. Kiran Desai suggests that true postcolonial emancipation is incomplete without dismantling gendered hierarchies, thereby positioning feminist critique at the centre of postcolonial discourse.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

08

SYSTEMIC SUBORDINATION AND FEMINIST RESISTANCE: AN ANALYSIS OF GENDER EQUALITY IN ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

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Abstract:
This research paper examines the portrayal of gender inequality in Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things. Drawing on feminist theories—including liberal, socialist, and radical feminism—and postcolonial trauma studies, this paper analyzes the structural oppression faced by the novel's female characters. It explores themes of marginalization regarding property and education, the normalization of domestic and state violence, and the intersectionality of caste and gender. Furthermore, it centering on the "Love Laws" that govern the social landscape of Ayemenem, Kerala, the study examines how Roy utilizes the tragedy of the Ipe family to critique the enduring virulence of the Indian caste system and patriarchal hegemony. By analyzing the dichotomy between the "Small Things" of personal desire and the "Big Things" of historical tradition. It also discusses how the "Love Laws" serve as a patriarchal instrument to police female sexuality and agency across three generations of women.

Keywords: *Gender Inequality, Patriarchal Hegemony, Feminist Resistance, Caste and Gender Intersectionality, Love Laws, Generational Trauma, etc.*

Introduction:

In Indian society, gender is often constructed as a relationship between biological sex and behavioral expectations, where men are traditionally depicted as rational and decisive, while women are viewed as emotional, nurturing, and submissive. This social construction creates a system of gender inequality where the male is the dominant subject and the female is the dominated object. Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things (1997) is a poignant critique of the socio-political structures that govern human intimacy in post-colonial India. Set against the decaying backdrop of Ayemenem, the narrative is driven by the "Love Laws," an ancient, unwritten code that dictates "who should be loved, and how, and how much". This novel serves as a profound critique of this "malist" experience, offering a distorted image of humanity where the female voice is denied equal force. Through the narrative of the Ipe family in Ayemenem, Kerala, Roy exposes the deep-rooted injustices embedded in Indian society, intertwining personal trauma with political history.

Marginalization and Subordination:

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

The Economic and Educational Divide A significant aspect of gender inequality in the novel is the economic and educational marginalization of women, which aligns with the critiques of liberal and socialist feminism. While the "Love Laws" dictate the emotional landscape of The God of Small Things, the systemic subordination of women and lower castes is solidified through rigid economic and educational structures. Roy portrays the Ipe household not merely as a family unit, but as a microcosm of a patriarchal economy where access to knowledge and property determines one's agency. This research paper analyzes how the denial of education and property rights functions as a primary mechanism of control, rendering women like Ammu and marginalized figures like Velutha vulnerable to the "Big Things" of History.

Educational Disparity:

The character of Ammu illustrates the subordination inherent in the patriarchal family structure. Ammu is denied this opportunity solely based on her gender.While her brother, Chacko, was permitted to become a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, to taste the fruits of this education, while Ammu was denied a college education. Her father, Pappachi, insisted that "a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl". This disparity highlights how women are often placed in powerless positions, denied the tools for social mobility, and expected to merely wait for marriage proposals. This uneven treatment creates a foundation of inequality, where men are granted privileges and women are relegated to domesticity. While Ammu returns as a "defective" daughter with no marketable skills or social standing.

Property Rights and Economic Dependence:

Socialist feminism critiques the marginalization of women in the capitalist-patriarchal structure, particularly regarding property and labor. In the novel, despite Ammu working as much as Chacko in the Paradise Pickles & Preserves factory, she has no legal claim to the property because she is a daughter. Chacko reinforces this economic violence with the statement, "What's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine". This marginalization extends to the broader workforce, where women's wages are significantly lower than men's for the same labor hours. Ammu's lack of a surname further symbolizes this lack of agency; she has no choice between her father's name and her husband's name, leaving her identity defined by men.

Violence as a Tool of Patriarchal Control:

Radical feminism posits that violence is a direct expression of imbalanced power between men and women, used to maintain patriarchal control. Roy depicts this violence as both domestic and institutional.

Domestic Abuse:

The novel presents a "high level of violence against women caused by patriarchy". Mammachi, Ammu's mother, is systematically abused by her husband, Pappachi. He beats her regularly with a brass flower vase, an act driven by professional jealousy after she receives recognition for her violin playing and he fails to receive credit for his entomological discovery. Mammachi accepts this abuse with the "ultimate elasticity" of a conventional Indian woman, conditioned to submit to male egoism. Ammu also suffers violence from her alcoholic husband, who physically assaults her, further trapping her in a cycle of abuse.

State Violence and the Policing of Sexuality:

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Violence against women extends beyond the home into state institutions. When Ammu seeks help from the police, she is met with misogyny rather than protection. Inspector Thomas Mathew sexually harasses her, tapping her breasts with his baton and labeling her a veshya (prostitute). This interaction underscores that in a patriarchal society, a woman who transgresses social norms—specifically a divorced woman engaging in an inter-caste relationship—forfeits her right to dignity and safety. Her body becomes a site where state power and patriarchal morality intersect to enforce control.

The "Love Laws" and Intersectional Oppression: The novel is centered around the "Love Laws," which dictate "who should be loved, and how. And how much". These laws operate at the intersection of caste and gender.

Caste and Gender: Ammu's relationship with Velutha, a Dalit carpenter, is a dual transgression: she violates class boundaries and gender expectations. While Chacko's sexual exploitations of female factory workers are dismissed as "Men's Needs," Ammu's consensual relationship is treated as a crime. This double standard reveals the hypocrisy of the "Touchables," who preach morality while practicing violence. Velutha's murder by the police is not just a result of caste hierarchy but also a punishment for crossing the forbidden lines of intimacy with an upper-caste woman.

Feminist Resistance:

Despite the oppression, Ammu's actions represent a form of feminist resistance. By reclaiming her sexuality and loving Velutha, she challenges the "suffocating constraints of patriarchal norms". Her refusal to neglect her bodily needs—asserting "She wanted her body back"—is a rejection of the role of the self-sacrificing mother and submissive daughter. "She developed a lofty secondary freedom. She had nothing to lose. She became the type of person who would do anything, anywhere, at any time" (Roy, 46).

This quote marks a pivotal psychological shift for Ammu. The writer explains the "living death" Ammu faces as a woman who has returned to her parents' home after a failed marriage. In the patriarchal landscape of Ayemenem, a woman's "value" is tied to her status as a virgin daughter or a faithful wife. By becoming a "divorced daughter," Ammu has already lost her social standing. Her primary freedom (the right to education and choice) was taken by her father. This "secondary" freedom is what remains when society has no more respect to take from her.Nothing to Lose because she is already ostracized, the threat of "shame" no longer functions as a tool of control over her.

Generational Trauma and Child Abuse: The gender inequality in the novel creates a legacy of trauma that affects three generations of women and their children. A Legacy of Suffering: First Generation: Mammachi and Baby Kochamma submit to patriarchal norms but internalize the oppression. Baby Kochamma, unable to fulfill her romantic desires, becomes bitter and enforces social codes rigidly, eventually orchestrating the tragedy that destroys the family. Second Generation: Ammu attempts to break the norms but pays with her life. She is ostracized as a "divorced daughter" and eventually dies alone in a lodge, a victim of social isolation. "As for Ammu, she had no 'position' in the large Ayemenem house. She was a daughter-in-law without a husband... a woman who had no right to any of the things she had been given." (Roy, 45).

This statement captures the central tragedy of Ammu's existence. It highlights the rigid, patriarchal structures of 1969 Kerala, where a woman's social worth was entirely tethered to her relationship with a man.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

In the world of the Ayemenem House, identity is a matter of "Love Laws"—the rules that dictate who should be loved, and how. And how much.

Third Generation:

Rahel inherits this trauma. Witnessing her mother's humiliation and suffering leads to her own emotional numbness and social isolation as an adult. "Mammachi had a grandmother's capacity for taking things in her stride. She had the ultimate elasticity of a conventional Indian woman" (Page, 47). The "elasticity" Roy mentions is specifically a reaction to Mammachi's husband beating her with a brass vase. It suggests that her resilience is not a virtue, but a survival mechanism that allows the patriarchy to continue unchallenged. "She died alone in a grimy room in the Bharat Lodge in Alleppey, where she had gone for a job interview. She was thirty-one. Not old, not young, but a viable die-able age" (Page, 161).

This quote is one of the most devastating moments in Arundhati Roy's narrative, serving as the final punctuation mark on Ammu's life. It is the cold, clinical result of the "Love Laws" we discussed—the moment where her lack of "position" becomes a literal, physical abandonment.

This examines the poignant demise of Ammu, a central figure in Arundhati Roy's narrative, focusing on her solitary death in a derelict lodge. Her passing at the age of thirty-one serves as a haunting connection to her daughter, symbolising a truncated life stripped of its potential. The source highlights the cruel societal indifference that deemed her existence expendable once she lost her status and family protection. Ammu's final moments and unceremonious cremation underscore her total exile from her high-caste origins. Ultimately, the text illustrates how a rigid social order treats a woman's struggle for independence as a logistical nuisance. This overview reflects on the tragic intersection of gender, class, and isolation in the character's final chapter.

The Impact on Children: The patriarchal environment leaves children vulnerable. Estha and Rahel are viewed as "Small Things" and "illegitimate" by the state and society. This vulnerability culminates in the sexual abuse of Estha by the "Orangedrink Lemondrink man," an event that symbolizes the loss of innocence and the failure of the adult world to protect its children. The trauma fractures Estha's identity, leading him to silence and withdrawal.

Conclusion:

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things provides a scathing critique of gender inequality in India. Through the lenses of liberal, socialist, and radical feminism, the text reveals how subordination, economic marginalization, and violence are used to subjugate women. The novel illustrates that these injustices are not isolated incidents but structural realities supported by family, caste systems, and the state. Ultimately, Roy demonstrates that the "Love Laws" and patriarchal dominance destroy not only women but the innocence of children, suggesting that true equality requires uprooting these deep-seated cultural and political roots.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

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March 6th& 7th 2026

09

ROLE OF WOMEN IN ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND GENDER EQUALITY: LITERARY INSIGHTS FROM SELECTED INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS

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Abstract:
This paper examines how selected Indian English novels represent women in relation to environmental awareness and gender equality. The study focuses on Butterfly Effect by Rajat Chaudhuri, Nectar in a Sieve by Kamala Markandaya, and The Ministry of Utmost Happiness by Arundhati Roy. These novels portray different social contexts—rural, urban, and contemporary ecological spaces—where women encounter environmental degradation and gender discrimination. The paper analyses how women characters respond to ecological imbalance, industrial change, displacement, and social marginalization. It highlights the connection between women and nature and explores how female characters demonstrate resilience, awareness, and resistance. Using an ecofeminist perspective, the study argues that literature reflects women not only as sufferers of environmental and patriarchal systems but also as active participants in social and ecological transformation. The research shows that Indian English fiction contributes meaningfully to discussions on gender equality and environmental responsibility.

Keywords: *Environmental Awareness; Gender Equality; Ecofeminism; Women's Agency; Rural Ecology; Urban Environmental Crisis; Indian English Fiction; Environmental Justice; Patriarchal Structures, etc.*

Introduction:

The relationship between women and the environment has become an important area of discussion in contemporary literary and cultural studies. Environmental crises such as industrialization, displacement, climate imbalance, and ecological destruction affect societies at multiple levels. At the same time, gender inequality continues to shape the experiences of women in both rural and urban contexts. Literature serves as a powerful medium to reflect and question these interconnected issues.

Indian English novels often present women as central figures who negotiate both environmental and social challenges. In Butterfly Effect, environmental responsibility and human action are closely examined. Nectar in a Sieve portrays rural hardship caused by industrial expansion and economic instability, emphasizing the deep bond between women and land. The Ministry of

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Utmost Happiness reflects political conflict, marginalization, and environmental injustice in an urban setting. Together, these texts reveal how women experience ecological and social oppression while also emerging as voices of strength and awareness.

This paper studies these novels through an ecofeminist lens to understand how gender and environmental concerns intersect in literary narratives. It attempts to show that women are not merely passive victims but active contributors to environmental consciousness and the pursuit of equality.

Authorial Background and Thematic Relevance:

Kamala Markandaya **(**1924–2004**)** was an Indian-born British novelist known for her sensitive portrayal of rural India and the socio-economic impact of modernization. Her major works include *Nectar* in *a Sieve* (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1955), and *A Silence of Desire* (1960). Markandaya's fiction often explores themes of poverty, industrialization, cultural transition, and women's endurance. In Nectar in a Sieve, she presents Rukmini as a rural woman whose life is deeply connected to the land. Through Rukmini's experiences of drought, displacement, and poverty, Markandaya highlights how environmental change directly affects women's lives and reinforces gender inequality. Her realistic portrayal strengthens the ecofeminist argument that the exploitation of nature and the marginalization of women are interconnected.

Rajat Chaudhuri (born 1965) is a contemporary Indian English writer whose works engage with urban life, environmental fragility, and cultural transformation. His writings reflect modern anxieties and ecological consciousness. In *Butterfly Effect*, Chaudhuri explores the idea that small human actions can create significant environmental consequences. The novel portrays women as ethically aware and emotionally responsive to ecological imbalance, suggesting their important role in cultivating environmental responsibility in contemporary society. His work contributes to discussions on environmental interconnectedness and human accountability.

Arundhati Roy (born 1961) is an internationally acclaimed Indian novelist and political activist. She won the Booker Prize in 1997 for *The God of Small Things* and is also known for her essays on environmental issues, displacement, and state violence. Her later novel, The *Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, reflects her continued engagement with political and ecological injustice. Roy's activism deeply influences her fiction, where environmental destruction is closely linked with social marginalization and gender oppression. Women in her novel emerge as figures of resistance who challenge patriarchal and political systems, thereby expanding ecofeminist discourse into urban and political contexts.

Together, these authors represent different literary periods and ideological perspectives—rural realism, contemporary ecological awareness, and political activism. Their works collectively demonstrate how Indian English literature foregrounds women as central figures in negotiating environmental crisis and gender inequality.

Women, Ecology, and Gendered Experience in Selected Indian English Novels:

Indian English fiction frequently situates women at the intersection of environmental change and social inequality. Through rural, urban, and contemporary settings, the selected novels reveal that women's lives are deeply embedded within ecological systems, making them particularly

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

vulnerable to environmental disruption while also positioning them as crucial voices of awareness and resistance.

In *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya, the agrarian landscape forms the foundation of Rukmani's identity and survival. Her assertion, *"For us the land is life,"* encapsulates the inseparability of womanhood and soil in rural existence. The land determines food security, family stability, and emotional continuity. When industrial expansion intrudes upon the village, ecological displacement becomes a lived trauma. Rukmani's reflection, *"The land had been taken from us,"* signifies not only economic loss but also the erosion of cultural belonging. Environmental instability thus becomes gendered, as women bear the responsibility of managing scarce resources, sustaining families during drought, and maintaining emotional resilience. The novel subtly demonstrates that ecological crisis first enters the domestic sphere, intensifying women's labour and vulnerability. Through Rukmani's endurance, the narrative affirms that environmental degradation disproportionately affects women, particularly within patriarchal agrarian societies.

The Interconnection between ecological destruction and gender inequality becomes more complex in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy. Here, environmental crisis is intertwined with political violence, displacement, and social marginalization. Roy's narrative world suggests that survival often requires *"making a home in a hostile city,"* emphasizing the fragility of both ecological and social spaces. Marginalized women confront layered oppression—economic precariat, social exclusion, and environmental neglect. Developmental politics, urban expansion, and state power contribute to displacement, disproportionately affecting those already positioned at the margins. In this context, ecological exploitation and patriarchal dominance operate simultaneously, reinforcing structural inequality. Roy's portrayal expands ecofeminism beyond rural suffering to urban and political terrains, where environmental justice becomes inseparable from gender justice.

While the first two novels foreground suffering and structural oppression, *Butterfly Effect* by Rajat Chaudhuri emphasizes ethical awareness and interconnectedness. The narrative reflects the idea that "*every action leaves its trace,"* underscoring the cumulative impact of human intervention on ecological balance. Women characters are often depicted as perceptive observers who recognize environmental shifts before they escalate into crisis. Their reflections challenge complacency and expose the consequences of unchecked consumption and development. Rather than remaining silent sufferers, these women articulate responsibility and moral concern. The metaphor of the butterfly effect itself suggests that small, conscious actions can initiate transformation. In this framework, women emerge not only as victims of environmental neglect but also as agents capable of questioning destructive systems and fostering sustainable awareness.
Taken together, these novels construct a layered understanding of women's relationship with nature. In rural settings, women function as custodians of land and memory; in urban contexts, they navigate displacement and resist systemic injustice; and in contemporary ecological narratives, they embody ethical consciousness and responsibility. The texts collectively demonstrate that environmental degradation intensifies gender inequality, yet they also affirm women's capacity for resilience, insight, and transformative action. Through these literary representations, Indian English fiction underscores the inseparability of ecological balance and gender justice, reinforcing the argument that environmental awareness must include a recognition of women's central role in sustaining and challenging socio-ecological systems.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Rural and Urban Environmental Contexts: A Comparative Perspective:

The selected novels reveal that environmental crisis manifests differently in rural and urban spaces, yet women remain central to both suffering and resistance. In *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya, the rural landscape is directly tied to survival. The primary ecological concerns are land loss, drought, and the disruption of agrarian life due to industrial expansion. When Rukmini reflects, *"For us the land is life,"* the statement encapsulates the dependence of rural existence on natural cycles. Drought and the establishment of the tannery symbolize the intrusion of modernization into a fragile ecological system. The crisis here is visible in barren fields, failed harvests, and hunger, and it enters the domestic sphere immediately. Women must stretch limited resources, endure food scarcity, and sustain emotional stability within the family. Thus, in the rural context, environmental degradation is experienced as a crisis of livelihood and survival.

In contrast, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy presents an urban ecological landscape shaped by pollution, displacement, militarization, and political unrest. Here, environmental crisis is not limited to agricultural loss but extends to contaminated spaces, demolished neighbourhoods, and forced migration. The narrative suggests that survival requires *"finding refuge in a fractured city,"* indicating that urban ecological damage is intertwined with social instability. Unlike the predictable rhythms of rural drought, urban crisis emerges through systemic violence, state power, and infrastructural collapse. Women in this setting negotiate not only environmental neglect but also political and social marginalization. Their resistance is expressed through solidarity, community-building, and survival strategies within unstable spaces.

The contrast between the two novels demonstrates that while rural environmental crisis is rooted in land and agricultural collapse, urban crisis is embedded in displacement and socio-political conflict. However, in both contexts, women remain central figures who experience ecological disruption most intensely and respond with resilience. Whether managing drought-stricken farms or navigating polluted and militarized cities, women become mediators between environment and survival. This comparative reading strengthens the argument that environmental injustice takes different forms across geographical settings, yet its gendered impact remains constant. Literature thus reveals that ecological crisis is not merely spatial but deeply connected to structures of gender and power.

Ecofeminist Perspective:

The ecofeminist framework provides a significant theoretical lens for understanding the interconnection between gender and environmental discourse in Indian English fiction. Ecofeminism argues that the domination of women and the exploitation of nature stem from the same patriarchal structures. Scholars such as Vandana Shiva emphasize that women's indigenous knowledge systems, agricultural practices, and community-centered ethics contribute substantially to ecological sustainability and biodiversity conservation. Her theoretical interventions highlight how modern development often marginalizes both women and nature under capitalist-patriarchal models of progress.

Indian English novels subtly embody this ecofeminist consciousness through narrative structure, characterization, and symbolic representation. In *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya, the protagonist Rukmini reflects an organic relationship with the soil. Her emotional and existential bond with the land illustrates ecofeminist thought even before the term gained academic prominence. When industrialization disrupts village life, her lament resonates deeply: "The land is our life; without it we are nothing."

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

This articulation foregrounds the ecofeminist premise that land is not merely property but sustenance, identity, and continuity. The destruction of agrarian space is simultaneously the erosion of female agency and stability. Similarly, in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy, ecological and political conflicts intertwine with gendered marginalization. The fragmented narrative exposes how state violence, environmental degradation, and social exclusion disproportionately affect vulnerable communities, particularly women. Roy's narrative suggests, "Another world was not only possible; she was on her way."
This line symbolizes resistance and hope, aligning with ecofeminist assertions that women are not passive sufferers but active participants in ecological and social transformation.

In Butterfly Effect by Rajat Chaudhuri, environmental imbalance is portrayed as a chain reaction triggered by human greed and technological arrogance. Women characters demonstrate ethical awareness and moral responsibility toward ecological preservation. Through reflective dialogues and subtle narrative cues, the novel underscores that environmental harm ultimately destabilizes familial and social structures—domains traditionally sustained by women. These texts collectively affirm that literature mirrors ecofeminist philosophy by presenting women as:

- ✓ Custodians of natural resources
- ✓ Bearers of traditional ecological knowledge
- ✓ Ethical critics of exploitative development
- ✓ Agents of resistance and sustainability

Thus, ecofeminism in Indian English novels transcends symbolic association and becomes a political and ethical statement. Women emerge not merely as metaphors for nature but as conscious subjects who challenge environmental injustice and patriarchal domination simultaneously.

Women's Resilience and Survival:
Across *Nectar in a Sieve, The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, and Butterfly Effect,* women are portrayed not merely as sufferers of ecological and socio-political crises, but as embodiments of resilience and transformative endurance. Their strength is not loud or dramatic; rather, it is expressed through everyday survival, emotional labour, and moral steadiness.
In Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve,* Rukmani's resilience becomes evident as she confronts poverty, famine, industrial intrusion, and personal loss. Despite repeated displacement and grief, she sustains her family through patience and quiet determination. Her voice reflects stoic endurance, "We must go on, for it is the only way." This statement encapsulates survival as an ethical necessity. Rukmani symbolizes endurance rooted in hope, suggesting that resilience is not denial of suffering but the courage to continue despite it.

Similarly, in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* women navigate political violence, displacement, and environmental devastation. The novel constructs alternative communities—spaces where marginalized individuals find belonging beyond rigid societal norms. These women create emotional and social support systems that resist both patriarchal authority and ecological destruction. Roy's evocative line, "Another world was not only possible, she was on her way," Signals transformation through collective resilience. Survival here becomes an act of subtle resistance.

In Rajat Chaudhuri's *Butterfly Effect,* women characters respond to ecological imbalance with awareness and ethical sensitivity. Their resilience lies in their ability to question destructive

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

systems while maintaining relational harmony. Rather than surrendering to environmental chaos, they demonstrate adaptability and responsibility, suggesting that transformation begins with consciousness. Women's resilience in these novels can be understood through three interconnected dimensions:

Emotional Strength: Women absorb and process collective trauma, offering stability within fractured social structures.

Sustenance of Family and Community: They maintain continuity during environmental and economic crises.

Creation of Alternative Spaces: Through solidarity and compassion, they construct informal networks of care and resistance.

Symbolically, women in these narratives represent:

Endurance — the ability to withstand ecological and social instability.

Awareness — a heightened sensitivity to environmental imbalance and injustice.

Transformation — the potential to reshape oppressive systems through ethical action.

Thus, resilience in these texts is not passive suffering but active survival. Women emerge as dynamic agents whose strength sustains both human relationships and ecological consciousness, reinforcing the broader ecofeminist argument that environmental survival and gender justice are intrinsically interconnected.

Intersection of Environment, Power, and Identity:

Environmental discourse in contemporary Indian English fiction extends beyond the representation of nature as landscape or ecological crisis. It becomes a site where class hierarchy, gender politics, state power, and marginal identities intersect. The environment is not neutral; it is shaped by political authority, economic structures, and social exclusion. Thus, ecological destruction often mirrors systems of inequality and domination.

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy, environmental spaces—graveyards, conflict zones, forests, and urban margins—are inseparable from questions of identity. The novel situates marginalized bodies within contested landscapes, particularly in Kashmir and Old Delhi, where ecological devastation parallels political violence. The narrative suggests that displacement from land is also displacement from identity. Roy writes:"When you live on the edge of everything, you cannot afford to take anything for granted."

This line reflects how marginalized communities experience environment as precarious space—shaped by surveillance, militarization, and exclusion. Here, ecological destruction is not accidental; it is deeply political.

The novel demonstrates that:

Class determines access to safe and sustainable environments. The poor inhabit polluted, vulnerable spaces.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Gender shapes how environmental crisis is experienced—women carry the burden of caregiving during conflict and displacement.

Politics controls land, resources, and territory, often displacing the powerless.

Marginalization intensifies ecological vulnerability, particularly for minorities and gender-nonconforming identities.

In this context, environment becomes a metaphor for belonging and alienation. The loss of land, home, or ecological stability symbolizes fractured identity. Conversely, reclaiming space—however marginal—becomes an act of resistance.

Even in *Nectar in a Sieve,* agrarian displacement caused by industrial expansion reflects class-based power dynamics. The tannery's arrival disrupts traditional farming life, privileging profit over subsistence. Similarly, in *Butterfly Effect,* environmental imbalance emerges from technological arrogance and capitalist ambition, revealing how systems of power exploit both land and vulnerable populations.

Thus, environmental crisis in these novels is not simply ecological—it is deeply structural and political. Identity is shaped by one's relationship to land and access to resources. Women and marginalized communities stand at the crossroads of environmental degradation and systemic oppression. The intersection of environment, power, and identity reveals that ecological justice cannot be separated from social justice. Literature foregrounds this interconnectedness, urging readers to recognize that the struggle for sustainable environments is simultaneously a struggle for equality, dignity, and human rights.

Literature as Social Commentary:

Indian English novels function not merely as artistic expressions but as powerful instruments of social critique. Through narrative strategies, characterization, and symbolic landscapes, writers interrogate the consequences of unchecked industrialization, patriarchal dominance, and ecological neglect. Literature becomes a reflective mirror of society, exposing structural inequalities while simultaneously envisioning ethical alternatives.

In *Nectar in a Sieve,* Kamala Markandaya critiques industrial expansion through the arrival of the tannery, which disrupts agrarian harmony and intensifies poverty. The novel implicitly questions development that prioritizes profit over human survival. The rural landscape transforms from a space of sustenance into one of alienation, signaling the moral cost of modernization. "The tannery had come to stay; it had already changed our lives."

Through this transformation, the novel critiques exploitative economic systems and reveals how women bear the brunt of such transitions.

Similarly, in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness,* Arundhati Roy interrogates state violence, environmental destruction, and patriarchal norms. Roy's fragmented narrative style itself becomes a form of resistance, challenging dominant power structures. The novel suggests that environmental devastation is inseparable from political oppression and social marginalization. "The trouble is that once you see it, you can't unsee it."

This line reflects literature's capacity to awaken awareness—once injustice is recognized, indifference becomes impossible.

In *Butterfly Effect,* Rajat Chaudhuri links ecological imbalance to human irresponsibility and technological excess. The narrative questions anthropocentric arrogance and highlights ethical

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

accountability. The metaphor of the *"butterfly effect"* itself suggests that minor human actions generate large-scale environmental consequences, thereby promoting ecological consciousness.
These novels collectively demonstrate that literature:

- ✓ Criticizes industrialization by exposing its human and ecological costs.
- ✓ Questions patriarchy by portraying women as thinkers, resistors, and moral centers.
- ✓ Promotes ecological ethics through narratives that emphasize sustainability and responsibility.
- ✓ Encourages social awareness by making readers emotionally engage with environmental injustice.

Thus, literature becomes a pedagogical and political space. It does not merely depict reality; it shapes perception and consciousness. By foregrounding women's experiences and environmental crises, Indian English novels contribute to the formation of ecological sensitivity and gender awareness.

Postcolonial / Development Debate:
The postcolonial condition in India presents a complex paradox: political independence did not automatically dismantle structures of economic and ecological exploitation. Colonial governance had already transformed forests, rivers, and agricultural land into instruments of commercial profit. In the post-independence era, the discourse of modernization and industrial development frequently continued similar extractive logics under national frameworks. Indian English novels critically engage with this continuity, revealing how "development" often marginalizes rural communities, intensifies class divisions, and destabilizes ecological balance.
In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Kamala Markandaya portrays modernization not as empowerment but as rupture. The introduction of industrial enterprise into the village alters economic relationships, social cohesion, and environmental stability. Rukmani reflects upon the transformation of her once self-sustaining world, "We had been happy on the land; it was enough."

This simple assertion foregrounds the sufficiency of traditional agrarian life before industrial disruption. Development here becomes synonymous with dispossession. The erosion of land security particularly affects women, whose identities and domestic economies are deeply embedded in agricultural rhythms.

In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Arundhati Roy situates environmental degradation within state power and global capitalism. Large-scale political operations, militarization, and infrastructural ambitions alter landscapes while simultaneously silencing dissenting voices. The narrative suggests that progress framed in nationalist rhetoric often excludes the marginalized. Roy poignantly remarks, "The idea of justice trembled in the shadow of power."
This line encapsulates how development projects, justified in the name of growth, frequently suppress ecological and human rights concerns.

In *Butterfly Effect*, Rajat Chaudhuri examines the fragility of ecological systems under technological expansion and urban ambition. The metaphor of interconnected consequences underscores that economic decisions reverberate beyond immediate gains. Environmental imbalance emerges not from isolated actions but from systemic priorities that privilege consumption over sustainability.

A deeper theoretical engagement with the postcolonial/development debate can be established through the ideas of Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Postcolonial theory

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

argues that colonial power did not merely control territories; it shaped knowledge systems, economic priorities, and representations of *"progress."* The colonial construction of the *"Third World"* as backward and underdeveloped legitimized intervention, extraction, and economic restructuring. After independence, many postcolonial nations internalized similar developmental paradigms, continuing the logic of modernization without adequately addressing ecological and social consequences.

Said's concept of cultural domination helps explain how development discourse often frames industrialization as inevitable and superior. Rural and indigenous modes of living are frequently portrayed as stagnant or primitive. In Nectar in a Sieve, Kamala Markandaya challenges this narrative by presenting agrarian life not as backwardness but as a coherent ecological system. Rukmani's reflection, "It is the soil that gives us life,"

Repositions land as sustenance and identity rather than mere property. The disruption of this bond reveals how imported models of industrial progress destabilize traditional ecological knowledge.

Spivak's famous question—whether the subaltern can speak? —becomes particularly relevant when examining women in postcolonial development contexts. In many instances, marginalized women bear the consequences of land acquisition, displacement, and environmental decline without having a voice in policy decisions. In *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Arundhati Roy foregrounds precisely such silenced identities. The narrative resists centralized authority and allows fractured voices to emerge from contested landscapes. Roy writes, "Power began to resemble a wound that would not heal."

Here, power is not abstract; it manifests in damaged bodies and scarred geographies. Similarly, in Butterfly Effect, Rajat Chaudhuri critiques technological optimism and urban consumerism as extensions of global capitalist ideology. The interconnected chain reactions symbolized by the *"butterfly effect"* suggest that development policies ignore ecological interdependence. The novel implicitly questions whether progress measured in economic terms can justify environmental fragility and ethical erosion.

From a theoretical standpoint, this section may argue that:

- ✓ Postcolonial nations often replicate colonial models of extraction under new nationalist frameworks.
- ✓ Development discourse marginalizes subaltern and female voices, aligning with Spivak's critique.
- ✓ Environmental degradation reflects not accidental failure but structural power imbalance.
- ✓ True decolonization requires ecological justice and participatory inclusion.

Thus, Indian English novels become sites of resistance against dominant development narratives. By centering women, rural communities, and marginalized identities, these texts destabilize the hegemonic language of modernization. They invite readers to reconsider whether progress without sustainability and equity can truly be called development.

Conclusion:

The selected Indian English novels—Nectar in a Sieve, The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, and Butterfly Effect—collectively demonstrate that environmental crisis is never merely ecological; it is deeply embedded in structures of gender, class, power, and identity. Through diverse narrative

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

strategies and socio-political contexts, these works reveal how the degradation of land parallels the marginalization of women and vulnerable communities.

Drawing upon ecofeminist insights, particularly those articulated by Vandana Shiva, this study establishes that women in these texts are not passive symbols of nature but active custodians of ecological balance. Their lived experiences reflect an intimate relationship with land, water, and sustenance systems. In agrarian settings, as seen in Nectar in a Sieve, the disruption of soil and farming economies destabilizes not only livelihood but also identity and dignity. Women's emotional endurance and moral resilience become central to sustaining fractured communities.

Simultaneously, a postcolonial reading informed by Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reveals that environmental exploitation in post-independence India often reproduces colonial patterns of extraction. Development, framed as modernization, frequently privileges industrial expansion over ecological sustainability. In The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, environmental and political violence converge, demonstrating how state power and capitalist ambition marginalize subaltern identities. The environment becomes a contested site where questions of belonging, displacement, and resistance unfold.

Moreover, Butterfly Effect extends this discourse into urban and technological contexts, highlighting the interconnected consequences of human actions. The metaphor of ecological interdependence challenges anthropocentric confidence in progress and underscores ethical responsibility. Together, these novels critique the ideology of development that prioritizes economic growth while neglecting environmental justice and gender equity.

A comparative analysis further reveals that environmental crisis manifests differently across rural and urban spaces—through drought and land loss in agrarian communities, and through pollution, displacement, and militarized conflict in urban or politically sensitive regions. Yet, across these diverse contexts, women remain central figures of resistance, awareness, and transformation. They sustain families during crisis, create alternative networks of care, and question destructive systems. Their resilience is not merely emotional but political; it embodies a subtle yet powerful form of dissent.

This study ultimately argues that Indian English literature functions as a critical site of social commentary. By exposing the intersections of ecology, patriarchy, and power, these novels cultivate environmental and gender consciousness among readers. Literature does not simply mirror reality; it shapes ethical imagination. It encourages a rethinking of development beyond material advancement toward sustainable and inclusive growth.

Therefore, the intersection of ecofeminism and postcolonial theory in these texts demonstrates that ecological justice and gender justice are inseparable. Sustainable futures require dismantling structures that exploit both women and nature. Through nuanced characterization and layered narratives, these novels advocate for a model of progress grounded in equity, environmental balance, and human dignity.

In conclusion, the selected works reaffirm that the struggle for environmental preservation is simultaneously a struggle for social transformation. By centering women's voices and marginalized identities, Indian English fiction redefines development not as domination of nature, but as harmonious coexistence—where survival, resistance, and hope become intertwined forces of change.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

10

MASCULINITY AND GENDERED POLITICS IN MAHESH DATTANI'S *DANCE LIKE A MAN*

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Abstract:
Mahesh Dattani's play, Dance Like a Man, a multi-layered play that explores the tension between individual artistic expression and rigid societal expectations in post-independence India. Through the lens of the Parekh family, the text investigates how masculinity is treated as a social performance rather than an inherent characteristic, enforced through financial control and domestic exile. This paper highlights the central motif of Bharatnatyam, which functions as a microcosm for power struggles: representing liberation for Jairaj, a tool for manipulation for Ratna, and a source of social shame for the patriarch, Amritlal. A significant focus is placed on the gender politics of the household, specifically the cynical deal between Amritlal and Ratna that transforms the daughter-in-law into an agent of the patriarchy. Ultimately, the analysis reveals how traditional masculine norms—defined by utility and authority violently dismantle the identity of the male artist, leading to a tragic cycle of resentment and unfulfilled ambition.

Keywords: *Masculinity, Patriarchy, Gender Politics, Bharatnatyam, Identity Construction, etc.*

Introduction:

The play *Dance Like a Man* was first performed at Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore on 22nd September 1989 as a part of the Deccan Herald Theatre Festival. Later on, it was staged at the NCPA Experimental Theatre, Mumbai on 14th February, 1990 under the directorship of Mahesh Dattani. It was also enacted by Prime Time in 1995 under the directorship of Dubey. The play has two acts which functions as a memory play where the past and present are constantly in dialogue. The first act begins with conversation between Lata and Viswas and ends with Jairaj's revolt against his father. Jairaj and Ratna leave the home of Amritlal Parekh in order to get rid of the rules and regulations imposed upon them. The second act begins with Amaritlal expressing his disapproval to the behaviour of Jairaj and Ratna. Jairaj and Ratna left home and they have come back with in two days. The Central Motif of the play is the dance, Bharatanatyam dance itself. It is not just a profession; it is the structural backbone of the conflict which represents freedom for Jairaj, manipulation for Ratna and shame for Amritlal. The play begins and ends with a focus on the house and the legacy of the dance. The ending provides a spiritual resolution rather than a literal one.

Existence of Masculinity in the Play:

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Masculinity is not a fixed identity but a social performance that the male characters struggle to master. The play *Dance Like a Man* suggests that certain rules of behaviour are fixed for the males long ago which are unchangeable. If someone try to deviate from it is met with domestic and social exile. Here is a breakdown of how Dattani deconstructs masculinity through the lens of Bharatnatyam and power. Amritlal Parekh presents the masculinity of post-independence India. He is very much clear about the status and responsibilities of man while living in the society. He is an exponent of patriarchal nature of society. He thinks that a man must be a provider. He does not like dance. According to him dancing is a craft of prostitutes. It does not hold any social or financial is liberal but has no heart for art. He is an advocate of conventions. He thinks that expenditure on social cause is better than expenditure on dance. He is the representative of utility for a man of status. He does not like his son's association with the dance and other dancers. Amritlal believes that business or politics are the areas for men to be associated with. By entering an aesthetic world of dance, Amritlal believes his son, Jairaj, is surrendering his authority and manhood. Amritlal tradition and tries to protect it. He wants his family to follow it. Therefore, he reflects:

> Amritlal: I have always allowed you to do what you have wanted to do. But there comes a time when you have to do what is expected of you. Why must you dance? It doesn't give you any income. Is it because of your wife? Is she forcing you to dance? (Dattani, 415)

Amritlal's expectations are different from Jairaj along with his growing age. When Jairaj was a child, he allowed him to dance as a hobby. Now, he expects that his son should do something that will give him income to meet his needs. Now, his son is fascinated towards dance because of his wife, Ratna. Amritlal is very much concerned about the company of his son. He thinks as a common father that his son should not meet those whom he does not like. Amritlal has no respect for the art and the people who are artists. He does not like an appearance of Jairaj's guru who has long hair. He also does not like his way of walking. He is afraid of his son's imitation of his guru. He wants to convey his message to Jairaj through Ratna: "Tell him that if he grows his hair even an inch longer, I will shave his head and throw him on the roads." (Dattani, 418) Further, he warns if his words are not considered seriously, he may not hesitate to expel him from his house.

Jairaj is the play's tragic figure. He attempts to redefine masculinity by incorporating grace, vulnerability and artistry. He grows his hair long to suit the requirements of a dancer. To his father, this is a visual castration of his son's masculinity. The forced cutting of his hair symbolizes the violent imposition of societal norms. Jairaj cannot successfully 'perform' the masculinity his father demands, he falls into alcoholism and resentment. He becomes a 'failed man' in his own eyes because he cannot provide the leadership or financial stability expected of him. The playwright shows that gender politics has no such value in the family.

The play also considers the younger generation through the character, Viswas, who is Lata's would be life partner. Viswas represents a more modern masculinity. He is supportive but has deep impact of patriarchal norms of the society. The tragedy of the play lies in Ratna's compromise with Amritlal for her advantage. She makes a deal with her father-in-law to make a man out of Jairaj by discouraging his dancing. Here one thing can be noticed that women can affect masculine standards to ensure her own survival or the success of her children.

Gender Politics in the Play:

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

In *Dance Like a Man*, Mahesh Dattani uses the traditional art form of Bharatnatyam as a microcosm for the power struggles inherent in Indian gender politics. The play suggests that gender is not just a biological reality, but a political tool used to exert control, negotiate status and enforce social hierarchies. The most striking example of gender politics is the secret deal between the patriarch, Amritlal and his daughter-in-law, Ratna. He allows Ratna to continue her dance career only if she helps him 'make a man' out of his son, Jairaj. This turns Ratna into an agent of the patriarchy. To secure her own artistic freedom, she suppresses her husband. This highlights a cynical reality in gender politics. Women are often forced to participate in the oppression of others to gain a power for themselves.

Mahesh Dattani shows how power shifts when a man fails to meet masculine expectations. When Jairaj fails to earn respectable living through his dancing career and lacks his father's authority, his wife Ratna becomes dominant. Wife becomes more dominant than her husband because her husband does not act according to the expectations of Amritlal, the head of the family. Ratna ambition for Lata's success is a political move to transfer her own unfulfilled ambitions. She treats Lata's career as a commodity and shows that a woman, too, can become controlling patriarchal figure. Ratna's husband Jairaj is frequently pushed to the background, not because he lacks talent, but because the audience's gaze is gendered; they want to see the feminine beauty of the dance. This fact leads to Jairaj's professional and personal decline showing how gender politics can systematically dismantle an individual's identity. Power in this play is controlled by the person who controls the narrative and the money. Amritlal holds the social power and Ratna controls the domestic power. Jairaj also has the artistic and emotional power but he is dominated by other two members of the family. Thus, the playwright explores how societal expectations and traditional masculinity can affect individual identity. Bharatnatyam, a dance form historically associated with the feminine.

Plot of the Play *Dance Like a Man*:

The play *Dance Like a Man* is a story of domestic conflict which revolves around the lives of Jairaj Parekh and his wife, Ratna Parekh, *Bharatnatyam* dancers. They have only one daughter Lata who is also emerging *Bharatnatyam* dancer. They are living in a big old-fashioned house. It is located in the heart of the city. Lata is in Love with a young man named Viswas. They have decided to marry. Jairaj and Ratna have no objection against this relationship. Entire action of the play takes place at the present living room of Jairaj Parekh. The play moves from present time to the past time. Play opens with the arrival of Viswas at Lata's parents, Jairaj Parekh and Ratna to demand Lata's hand in his marriage. Parents have gone out to see their musician, C.V. Srinivas who has tripped and broken his arm. The play begins with the romantic dialogues between Viswas and Lata. Viswas is only son of a sweet vendor who has fascination for Lata and not dance. His father is one of the richest persons of the town. He used to help his father in his business. The conversation between Lata and Viswas reveals that before marriage Jairaj and Ratna were good friend and lived in the same *area*. Lata enjoyed watching her parents practicing dance in the hall in her childhood. She expects the same from Viswas that after the marriage.

After a while, Ratna and Jairaj appear on the stage and suddenly, happy atmosphere is converted in to a sad one. They are worried about Lata's performance. Their concern is different from others. They are worried about a high-profile dance festival in which Lata has to perform. The matter of concern is health issue of her *mridangist* who is unfit to accompany her at the performance. They have gathered to discuss matrimonial matter but their concern about Lata's

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

performance at dance festival keeps aside the matrimonial conversation. They go on talking about dance performance. In the course of conversation, Jairaj and Ratna indulge into quarrel. Finally, Ratna feels headache. She remembers her father-in-law, Amritlal Parekh who did not approve his son's career as a dancer. The married life of Jairaj and Ratna has no much joy and satisfaction. Seeing this chaos in the house, Viswas tries to leave the house but Jairaj asks him to stay and speak about his marriage with Lata. Viswas informs Jairaj about his family and business. Jairaj also informs Vishwas about his father, Amritlal Parekh who is one of the richest persons of the town. He has money to help the poor and needy but has no money for the hobby of his son. Jairaj and Ratna agree to marry their daughter Lata with Viswas on the agreement that he would allow her after marriage to dance. Ratna is ambitious for fame. She hopes good performance of Lata.

Amritlal Parekh, a man of liberal ideology, did not like his son's obsession of dance and his association with other dancers. He also checked the movements of Ratna. There is a dispute between father and son. Amritlal was a social reformer but he did not approve Ratna's association with a *'Devadasi'* and learning an art of dance. According to Amritlal support to *devadasis* is an indirect support to the open prostitution. He has several allegations against *Devadasis.* Amritlal is of the opinion that man's real happiness lies in being a man. He does not want his son to be dressed as women therefore he tries to seek help from Ratna making her rather emotional. He asks her:

> Amritlal: How do you feel? How do you feel dancing with your husband? What do you think of him when you see him all dressed and … made up. (Dattani, 426)

Ratna tries to give credit of her marriage to Jairaj but Amritlal makes it clear that it was his decision being the head of the family and not her husband's. Further, he says:

> Amritlal: A woman in a man's world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in a women's world is pathetic. (Dattani, 427)

The dance is the profession of women and it is not befitting for man in the perception of Amritlal. He thinks that man cannot succeed in dance. Finally, he requests Ratna to help him to make his son an adult. It seems rather pathetic mentality of a father to retain his patriarchal system. He says: "Help me make him an adult. Help me to help him grow up." (Dattani, 427) Amritlal's definition of 'happiness' and 'manhood' was absolutely a personal concept making, Asha Kuthari remarks:

> The underlying fear is obviously that dance would make him 'womanly' - an effeminate man - the suggestion of homo-sexuality hovers near although never explicitly mentioned. (Chaudhari, 68)

Ratna is determined to learn the art of *abhinaya* from Chenniamma**.** Who is oldest living exponent of the *Mysore school*. She is of seventy-five and dying. Thus, the play also focuses on the plight of *'devdasis'*. Amitlal Parekh appears on the scene; with the shift of consciousness in the past. He has no importance for art. He forbids Jairaj to imitate his Guruji. He asks Jairaj not to invite his Guruji at their house because he strongly dislikes ways and manners of his Guruji. Being

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

restless of the restriction of Amritlal, Ratna and Jairaj leave the house of Amritlal and come back after two days defeated.

In this way, Jairaj and Ratna go away from their house. They leave the roof of Amritlal, throwing old restrictions to the wind. His passion for freedom compels him to leave the house. After facing the hard realities of life, the couple once again comes back to the shelter of Amritlal. It is the liberal mindedness of Amritlal that he allows them to enter the house. A change occurs in the mind of Amritlal Parekh. He does not make them feel ashamed of their defeat. He accepts them as such:

> Amritlal: All right. I Will allow it… No, I won't remind you of that. I am above it. … If you ask me for money, I shall not refuse but I will be disappointed. … Your guru may come here twice a week… (Dattani, 425)

However, he does not think dance a right place for investing money. Thus, overall conduct of Amritlal is of a liberal minded person. On the other hand, Amritlal has a different kind of expectation from his daughter-in-law. Seeing the pathetic condition of son and daughter-in-law change occurs in the mind of Amritlal Parekh. He does not make them feel ashamed. He allows his son to dance. But he does not consider dance a right place for investing money. He allocates his library hall to be used as a practice hall. The play also depicts that their excessive involvement in dance becomes an indirect cause of the death of the baby, Shankar. Jairaj and Ratna managed Sheshadri as a musician at the dance party. Ratna took every possible effort for the success of their daughter. Lata performed as per their expectation and won acclaim from one and all. She becomes the most famous dancer. She is described as the shining star. Ratna could not become a famous dancer under the patriarchal powers exercised by her father-in-law. In this regard Dr. Bipinkumar Parmar rightly observes:

> Dattani seems to assert that individual talent can never flourish under the domination of patriarchal family system. Ratna thwarts in her dream of being celebrity. After the death of Amritlal Parekh, her daughter Lata has become an excellent star of *Bharatnatyam* (Parmar, 65).

Amritlal is a product of social prejudice who tries to deprive other individuals from their choice. The play *Dance Like a Man* presents the life of a budding dancer, Jairaj and his becoming the victim of societal norms. *Bharatnatyam* is good as a hobby, but to be taken up as a profession by a man is something unacceptable. Amritlal Parekh cannot tolerate his son wearing female costumes, growing long hair and practicing dance all the time. He denies his sons dependence on him and makes him obey his dictates. He spoils his son's career and he makes his daughter-in-law to conspire against her own husband to stop him from dancing. In fact, it a single-handed struggle of Jairaj to gain self-identity or to bring is individual choice a reality. Mahesh Dattani admits:

> I wrote this play when I was learning *Bharatnatyam* in my mid-twenties… a play about a young man wanting to be a dancer, growing up in a world that believes dance is for woman (Ayyar, 45).

Mahesh Dattani was familiar with the fact that the dance is considered to be a feminine art. There was fear of social code in his mind. He thought that man's attempt to become a dancer

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

would be a tragedy for him. Finally, Jairaj and Ratna realized the futility and limitations as human beings. They also realize their past mistakes and limitations. They dance together with a remarkable change of heart and develop mutual understanding. There is an overwhelming passion and ambition for the dance in Jairaj and Ratna throughout the play. The final words in the play bring reconciliation of the conflict.

The Conflict of Masculinity:

Jairaj is extremely desirous to be acknowledged as a professional dancer. His father Amritlal thinks that dance is not a manly pursuit. He thinks that dance is not a befitting masculine activity. According to Amritlal dancing is not fit for a man. He considers masculinity through the lens of utility and public respect. Furthermore, he thinks that office or workplace is the right place for a man to find dignity and respect. He does not like appearance of a man on the stage wearing bells and makeup. Mahesh Dattani highlights the irony that while a dance form Bharatnatyam is originated as a spiritual and artistic pursuit. The same is disregarded when practiced by men. Amritlal does not like appearance of Jairaj with long hair with passion for Bharatnatyam. Amritlal thinks that Jairaj is demonstrating his unconformity to masculine norms through his woman like long hair. Cutting it becomes a symbolic act of forced conformity.

Further, the playwright projects that gender politics is not just about men versus women but about who holds the power of choice. Amritlal manipulates the situation to bring him expected result. He uses his financial and social standing to control both his son and his daughter-in-law, Ratna. He makes a secret deal with Ratna that he will allow her to dance if she helps him "make a man" out of Jairaj by discouraging his career as a dancer. Ratna is a complex character who navigates a patriarchal world by becoming a gatekeeper herself. To secure her own success and later her daughter's, she often undermines Jairaj's confidence, inadvertently adopting the very patriarchal tactics that oppressed her. The kitchen and the practice room become battlegrounds where gender roles are flipped and fought over, showing that the private world is just as political as the public one.

Conclusion:

Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man* serves as a poignant critique of the rigid gender constructs and patriarchal power dynamics that governed post-independence Indian society. Through the intergenerational conflict within the Parekh family, the play illustrates that masculinity is often treated as a social performance rather than an inherent identity. Amritlal Parekh's refusal to accept Bharatanatyam as a masculine pursuit highlights a utilitarian worldview where a man's worth is measured solely by his financial provision and social status. The tragedy of the play lies in the systematic dismantling of Jairaj's identity. His struggle to integrate "feminine" grace into his existence is met with "visual castration" and domestic exile, eventually leading to his personal decline. Dattani further complicates the narrative through gender politics, showing how women like Ratna, trapped within the same patriarchal framework, can become agents of oppression themselves. By striking a deal with Amritlal to "make a man" of her husband in exchange for her own artistic survival, Ratna demonstrates the cynical compromises forced upon individuals in a power-imbalanced society.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

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March 6th& 7th 2026

11

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S VIEWS ON GENDER AND RACE

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Abstract:
This paper sheds light on the issues of gender and race as they are perceived by George Bernard Shaw. It reads Shaw's The Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God (1932) in the light of Frederic Jameson's political unconscious concept. It interprets Shaw's narrative as an allegory with two fundamental latent messages that lie beneath its surface religious meaning. The first is concerned with Shaw's defense of women. The second deals with his emancipation of the black race. Women had for years been associated with weakness, intuition, feeling, irrationality and depravity. Likewise, the black race had been dealt with in terms of primitivism, savagery, superstition, ignorance and irrationality in white discourse. The first section of the discussion shows that Bernard Shaw breaks the traditional stereotypes attributed to women. This is achieved through the black girl, the black female protagonist of his narrative. Through the latter, women are given a voice thanks to which they speak out their dissent with the traditional status of subordinate they are attributed in both cultural artefacts and the Bible. The second section sheds light on the ways Shaw criticizes racial discourse and empowers the black race. Thanks to the black girl, the black people are seen through a different and new perspective that deals away from the stereotypes traditionally associated with them in white discourse.

Keywords: *Gender, Race, Feminism, Allegory, Emancipation, etc.*

The racial and woman questions have been central issues in Western thought from the Enlightenment onwards. They took an important place in the Victorian novels like those of Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad. George Bernard Shaw is another writer who may be integrated within the writers who are interested in these two questions of gender and race. In recent years, there has been a large bulk of criticism on Bernard Shaw's texts. This criticism has been carried out under a variety of perspectives, many of which focused on the writer's political and social ideas.

Within the framework of this research paper, it is assumed that George Bernard Shaw in his The Black Girl – for short - defends both the black race and women. Therefore, he counters the dominant Western discourse that maintains the idea of the superiority of the white race as opposed to the black one. This is on the one hand. On the other hand, he opposes another type of discourse which is propounded by most of the male thinkers of the period that follows the Enlightenment. This is sexist discourse that maintains the inferiority of women as contrasted to men. Therefore, it seems very appropriate to make reference to Jameson's concept of interpretation as primarily a practice that reads narrative in such a way as "to reveal its metaphysical and ideological underpinnings" (Jameson, 43) and to underscore the "latent meaning [s]" behind its "manifest"

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

one (Jameson, 45). This means that the present research takes Shaw's novella as an "allegorical narrative" that has two fundamental latent meanings which lie underneath its manifest meaning. The novella's manifest meaning is related to the black girl's quest for God. This is to say that the surface meaning is more religious than ideological. However, behind the religious meaning lie two fundamental latent meanings which are considered ideological and related to gender and race. First is Shaw's defense of women. Second is his emancipation of the black race.

To start with Shaw's defense of women, one should first account for the status attributed to women in male discourse. From the Enlightenment onwards started to emerge a sexist discourse that took different forms. It had been a common-sense belief that women were inferior to men. This inferiority status restricted their role to the domestic sphere. In Britain, especially during the Victorian era emerged the "separate spheres" ideology, which attributed women the status of the household angel. Because of her supposed "emotion, passivity, submission, dependence, and selflessness" (Kent, 179), she had no political, public and economic life; she was not allowed to work outside the family hearth, nor could she participate in the political life of the nation and public debate. The ideal of womanhood was "the angel in the house" that protects the household, bears her children and serves her husband. Even if some feminist voices emerged against this status, it remained as the standard of identification even until the early twentieth century.

After the Great War, many thinkers strongly felt a kind of crisis which affected human relations. At the level of gender relations people started to re-invent the old "separate spheres" ideology and confirm sexual difference between men and women. Therefore, some thinkers like Bernard Shaw recognized the crisis. He interested himself with bringing new ideas concerning gender relations. He sets his novella The Black Girl in the Victorian period so as to voice his antagonism towards the inferiority status traditionally attributed to women as well as express his discontent with the re-invention of this status by his contemporaries.

Perhaps the analysis of the feminist issue in the novella should start with the depiction of female characters. And for this a word about the missionary teacher is in order. As a Victorian woman, she was not ahead of her time, for she did not accept the common-place image of the women of her time. Instead of being the faithful "angel in the house", who obeys and cherishes her husband and raises her children, she is completely the opposite. She does not care about marriage, which she regards as the bondage to her freedom, nor does she care about the feelings of her lovers. She "became engaged to six of them in succession. But when it came to the point she always broke it off; for these love affairs, full at first of ecstatic happiness and hope, somehow became unreal" (Shaw, 7).

Through the black girl, Shaw also criticizes a traditional stereotype associated with unmarried women. This concerns the idea that all single women are prostitutes. This attitude was shared among men in the Victorian era, when the image of woman was viewed either as "revered wife and mother" or scorned as "prostitute" (Kent, 180). Indeed, in order to maintain women in the domestic sphere, men insisted on the idea that outside the family hearth women could only be prostitutes. Shaw's black girl surprises the first man she encounters in her adventures. When the "aristocratic looking white man" asks her to bring him her "favorite child", he was surprised by her answer, "I have no child [...] I am a virgin" (Shaw, 9; emphasis mine). It stands to reason that this man was thinking that the girl was a wife and mother and does not accept the idea that as such she could go outside the family hearth. The girl's virginity is much important, for it nullifies the idea of prostitution and questions women's role as exclusively reproductive and sexual. The girl is no prostitute despite her decision to go outside the family hearth and fly with her own wings. By

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

the same token, her quest criticizes the Victorian ideology which "offered two possible images for women […] the idealized wife and mother, the angel in the house, or the debased, depraved, corrupt prostitute" (Kent, 190). The black girl shows that a woman can have a public and political life, without being waged with prostitution.

This said about female characters in Shaw's novella, one should account for his depiction of male ones. The majority of the males in the novella are mocked on by the black girl. She criticizes their behavior which is revealed to be dogmatic and hypocritical. For instance, she nullifies the authority of the Pavlov figure, who knows things for the sake of knowing them. Throughout her conversation with him, one feels her contempt towards his dogmatism. What is the profit of knowing things if these do not contribute to the establishment of justice in the world? She would ask him, when he questions him about the importance of his scientific discovery. He says, "My business is to learn something that was not known before. I impart that knowledge to the world, and thereby add to the body of ascertained scientific truth" (Shaw, 23). But, "Have you ever considered the effect of your experiments on other people's minds and characters?" she answers. (Shaw, 24) Similarly, the men of the "Caravan of the Curious" she also encounters later on are "all fundamentalist with a top dressing of science […] the stupidest of conservatives and reactionists in politics and the most bigoted of obstructionists in science itself" (Shaw, 38).

Thematically speaking, The Black Girl transcends the girl's quest for God and becomes a quest for the rights of women. The black girl is the voice through which Shaw's vindication of the rights of women is spoken out. She asks for a public and political life for women. She shows that women could participate in public debates as much as men or far much better than them. There are many instances in the novella where she complains about the injustice and inequality among people and races that are the result of the men-ruled world. For example, she asks one of the men she meets, "Did you make the world? […] Why did you make it with so much evil in it?" (Ibid. 11); she adds to the myop, "How much better will the world be when it is all knowledge and no mercy […]. Haven't you brains enough to invent some decent way of finding out what you want to know?" (Shaw, 23-24) One can understand from these witty questions that the men-ruled world is depraved and that it is high time men gave women the chance to participate in the public life so as to ensure a better future for humanity.

To conclude, it should be kept in mind in the light of what has been said so far is that women and the black race had for years been denigrated in white male discourse. This, it has been observed, is harshly criticized by George Bernard Shaw in The Black Girl. His novella displays a sympathetic attitude towards women, for it portrays them in different terms. Through his female protagonist, the black girl, women are given voice thanks to which they speak out their dissent with the traditional status of subordinate they are attributed in both cultural artifacts and the Scriptures. In the same manner, the black race is given voice through the black protagonist. Thanks to the black girl, the black people are seen through a different and new perspective. What is important to notice is that these novelties concerning gender and race express the thought of a white male writer. This means that Shaw's discourse can only be objective; it cannot be biased, for it is not the discourse of a black or female writer.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

12

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH COMMUNICATION

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Abstract:
The aim of this article is to encourage the use of inclusive language in our personal and professional lives. Language is a mechanism that influences thoughts, generates ideas, shapes gender roles, and therefore carries a great potential for establishing gender equality in societies. Although, women play an active role in society and can drive change towards sustainable future, yet all too often, we use gender-discriminatory language that ignores or minimizes their important contribution. Inclusive language avoids the use of certain expressions or words that might be considered to exclude particular groups of people. Communication is a mode of exchanging ideas through verbal and non-verbal means. Communication is not just a means of expression but a powerful instrument that either dismantles or fortifies existing gender norms. Language is more than simply a medium of communication. It is a powerful tool that shapes perceptions, influences action, and fosters inclusivity or exclusion Gender-sensitive communication uses inclusive language, which promotes gender equality and the equal visibility of women and men and includes all language, lexical, syntactic and graphic devices used to ensure equal, non-sexist and non-discriminatory representation of individuals and to avoid language that is likely to suggest that one sex or gender is the norm. Gender-inclusive communication is about breaking the barriers of gender stereotypes, cultivating respect, celebrating diversity, while promoting equality and equity amongst all.

Keywords:*Gender Equality, Gender Inclusive Language, Human Rights, Gender Stereotypes, Gender-Neutral Language, etc.*

Sex and Gender:
The United Nations directives and guidelines present the following: - Sex and gender: definition and difference between the two terms;

Sex: biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women. Sex characteristics do not vary between societies (for example menstruation, reproductive capacity and breast feeding are women's characteristics, while men generally have more massive bones).

Gender: socially constructed attributes, roles, behaviours and activities that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. Gender roles are the activities ascribed to men and women on the basis of perceived societal differences. Gender roles vary greatly between societies: division of labour in families, communities and the marketplace; access to education, health care, job opportunities, financial resources and decision-making roles; and other issues.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Gender Equality: It refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration—recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a 'women's issue' but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people centered development.

The Importance of Gender Sensitive Communication:
Languages are fluid, changing as time and societies Language is not just words. It portrays a vision of the world, and the words, whether spoken or written, can touch people's lives in positive ways but they can also be harmful. The need of the time is to inculcate the sensitivity for gender-inclusive language and to raise awareness among all, not just to identify non-inclusive phrases and vocabulary that is currently rampant but also to assist and encourage each other to become gender-sensitive in our communications and consciously use inclusive language. Using gender-inclusive language means speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex or gender and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes. The use of gender inclusive language in oral and written communication is an excellent way to promote gender equality and eradicate gender bias.

The correlation between language and gender equality is strong. Gender-insensitive language perpetuates stereotypes that men and women must occupy certain roles. Gender equality cannot be achieved without first engendering the language we speak. Gender-sensitive language can foster a culture of respect and equality by ensuring that everyone regardless of their gender identity is seen, heard, and respected. This is not just a matter of semantics; it's a fundamental aspect of human dignity. Gender-biased language is subtly ubiquitous in English and its roots are deep, so developing awareness of its consequences is the first step to addressing it. Building an understanding of the social and authoritative forces that guide language to be more inclusive can enable writers and editors to make conscious linguistic shifts to help and equalize the status of women and nonbinary individuals through published words gender.

Gender-neutral Language: It is a generic term covering the use of non-sexist language, inclusive language or gender-fair language. The purpose of gender-neutral language is to avoid word choices which may be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or demeaning by implying that one sex or social gender is the norm. Using gender-fair and inclusive language also helps reduce gender stereotyping, promotes social change and contributes to achieving gender equality.
There are number of different strategies that can be used to express gender relationships with accuracy, such as avoiding, to the greatest possible extent, the use of language that refers explicitly or implicitly to only one gender, and ensuring, through inclusionary alternatives. The use of this glossary would facilitate gender-inclusive communication in the workplace to help create an accommodating work environment It is generally not difficult to find a gender-neutral term for professions, occupations, functions, etc. in English, although there are some exceptions. The examples of current derogatory language, along with respectful alternatives that reflect and validate diversity are given below:

Examples: Administrator , Ambassador, Architect ,Assistant Author, Commissioner, Director, Director-General Doctor, Editor, Engineer, Firefighter, Intern,Interpreter Journalist,Judge,

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Lawyer ,Layperson, Lecturer Mayor ,Nurse , Official ,Politician, President, Prime minister, Professor, Rector Sales representative Scientist, Speaker ,Technician, Trainee, Translator, Writer.

Some Examples of Gender Inclusive Words:

Avoid	Use	Avoid	Use
Actor /Actress	Performer/Artist	Spokesman	**Spokesperson**
Authoress	Author	Sportsman	Sportsperson
Businessman	Businessperson	Statesman	Leader
Cameraman	Cameraperson	Common man	Common person
Chairman/ Chairwoman	Chairperson	Watchman	Guard/SecurityGuard
Craftsman	Artisan	Waiter/Waitress	Server/Tableattendant
Crewman	Crewmember/ Crewperson	Housewife	Homemaker
Draftsman	Drafter	Mankind	Humankind
Fireman	Firefighter	Fatherland	Native land
Foreman	Supervisor	Mother tongue	Native tongue
Forefathers	Ancestors	Paternity Leave/ Maturnity Leave	Parental Leave
Horseman	Horserider	Headmaster / Headmistress	Head/ Head teacher
Landlord/Landlady	Owner	Repairman	Technician
Man/Woman	Person	Policeman/ Policewomen	Police Officer
Manmade	Humane made Artificial; synthetic; human-caused	Committee of wise men	Advisory Panel
Manpower	Workforce/Worker	Airhostess or stewardess	Flight Attendant/ Flight Crew
Middleman	Intermediary	weatherman	Weather Reporter/ Forecaster
Newsman	Reporter	Salesman/ Saleswoman	Salesperson/Sales Representative

The Pronouns or Honorifics that someone uses may not match what you might expect from their gender identity or gender expression. Nonbinary people often use gender neutral pronouns or honorifics. Some people may be comfortable with multiple sets of pronouns (e.g., "she/they" or "they/he"). You can ask if they prefer one pronoun over the other, or you can alternate using both pronouns. Some people do not use any pronouns and use their name instead.

Misgendering means using a gendered word or term that does not affirm someone's gender identity. This can include using incorrect pronouns, names, or gender labels (e.g., calling a nonbinary person who uses they/them pronouns a woman or using "she" pronouns for them).The use of this suggestive glossary can encourage gender-inclusive communication in the workplace

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

and has the potential of creating a large impact on society. Usage of these suggestions is expected to facilitate a gender sensitive and inclusive environment.

Summary:
Gender-sensitive language is gender equality made manifest through language. Gender equality in language is attained when women and men and those who do not conform to the binary gender system are addressed through language as persons of equal value, dignity, integrity and respect. Gender-sensitive language can foster a culture of respect and equality by ensuring that everyone regardless of their gender identity is seen, heard, and respected. This is not just a matter of semantics; it's a fundamental aspect of human dignity. We must use language in a way that honours and acknowledges all individuals. Whether in casual conversation, professional discourse, or public communication, our words have the power to include or exclude, to respect or to marginalize. Using inclusive language involves avoiding terms that perpetuate erasure or exclude people based on prejudices, biases and stereotypes, while proactively using words that are welcoming and advocate for a more inclusive society.

Gender-sensitive language aims to apply gender equality to written and spoken language. We should pay maximum attention to the need to use gender sensitive language when writing in their official capacity and avoid sex-specific and potentially discriminatory expressions. The ninth edition of the MLA Handbook introduces an all-new chapter discussing its guidelines for inclusive language. Inclusive language is composed of words and phrases that avoid biases, slang, and expressions that could discriminate against any particular group of people. Utilizing inclusive language allows everyone to feel comfortable in the classroom, workplace, and everyday life. Achieving greater equality between women and men will require changes at many levels, including changes in attitudes and relationships, changes in institutions and legal frameworks, changes in economic institutions, and changes in political decision-making structures.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

13

THE HUNTER AND THE HUNTED: AN ECOFEMINIST CRITIQUE OF MAHASHWETA DEVI'S *THE HUNT*

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Abstract:
This research paper explores the intersectional framework of ecofeminism through a critical analysis of Mahashweta Devi's short story, The Hunt. By examining the parallel exploitation of nature and women within a patriarchal and capitalist structure, the study highlights how the character of Mary Oraon serves as a site of resistance against dual oppression. The paper begins by defining ecofeminism-a term coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne-and traces the historical commodification of the environment and the female body. Through the lens of the protagonist, a "double marginalized" tribal woman, the analysis demonstrates how the destruction of the Sal forests by the antagonist, Collector Singh, mirrors his predatory intent toward Mary. The study emphasizes the symbolic significance of the JaniParab festival, where the traditional ritual of hunting is transformed into an act of radical reclamation and justice. Ultimately, the paper concludes that Devi's narrative serves as a powerful critique of industrialization and patriarchy, envisioning a liberation that restores dignity to both the marginalized woman and the devastated earth.

Keywords: *Ecofeminism, The Hunt, Patriarchy, Female Subjugation, Double Marginalisation, Tribal Empowerment, Environmental Exploitation, etc.*

Introduction to Ecofeminism:

The term "ecofeminism" was first coined by the French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974. The concept is an intertwining of two major ideologies: feminism and ecology. Advocates of ecofeminism argue that both women and nature have been victims of patriarchal dominance and have been equally exploited. Some scholars hypothesize that women are inherently closer to nature than men. Ecofeminists believe there is a profound interconnectedness between the patriarchal domination of women and the exploitation of the natural world. Consequently, the movement advocates for a society free from violence against both nature and women. Ecofeminism identifies a parallel between the oppression of the wild and the exploitation of female society, envisioning liberation from the controls of patriarchal power. According to this ideology, both women and nature deserve respect and possess an equal right to exist. Within patriarchal frameworks, however, both are often presented as commodified victims; ecofeminism thus aims to liberate them from their current state of melancholy.

Historical Context and Parallel Exploitation:

Since time immemorial, humans have lived intimately with nature. Both ancient and modern scholars have respected the natural world, giving it a prominent place in literature. Women and nature share parallels in that both are often characterized as lovable, delicate, and selflessly giving.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Historically, men have exploited women across almost all civilizations to varying degrees. The patriarchal mindset has frequently treated women as objects or commodities. Similarly, nature has been treated as a source to satisfy man's endless greed. Consequently, while industrialization, globalization, and urbanization have marked worldly progress, natural resources have been devastated as the price of this advancement.

To quote from *The Hunt*: "Every five years or so some trees will be ready and I'll buy. One two three. This is still a virgin area, and I'll do the monopoly on tree felling" (68). Especially since the Industrial Revolution, nature has been systematically destroyed and replaced by man-made creations. Today, the world pays the price for these crimes against the environment. Simultaneously, women are often downgraded to the status of objects-means for male satisfaction. Ecofeminists find a clear intersection between these two forms of subjugation, giving birth to the intersectional concept of ecofeminism.

Mahashweta Devi: The Voice of the Oppressed:

Mahashweta Devi (14 Jan. 1926 – 28 July 2016) was a notable Bengali writer and social activist. She authored numerous short stories and novels, earning prestigious literary and civil awards in India, including the *SahityaAkademi Award, the Padma Shri, and the Padma Vibhushan.* Her works have been translated into several languages, establishing her as an eminent figure in Indian literature. Beyond her writing, she was an activist dedicated to the upliftment of the Adivasi (tribal) communities. She became a voice for the voiceless who had been oppressed for generations.

Notably, she wrote about Adivasi women as "double marginalized" within the already marginalized tribal sections. Her female characters represent ordinary women who stand firmly against violence and injustice. Characters like Draupadi and Mary serve as symbols of those victimized by patriarchal power. Devi also opposed the acquisition of farmers' land for industrialization. She remained closely associated with tribal struggles throughout her life.

Analysis of *The Hunt*:

The Hunt is a powerful short story by Mahashweta Devi. It is translated into English by the noted scholar GayatriSpivak. Set in the village of Kuruda in post-colonial India, the story features Mary Oraon, a half-white tribal girl of eighteen, as the protagonist. She is a strong, enthusiastic, and rebellious woman who challenges the patriarchal power of the cruel Collector Singh. Mary works at Dixon's bungalow for Mr. Prasad, living with her mother, Bhikni-who was herself a victim of the white Australian Dixon's son.

The peace of the village is disrupted by the entry of Collector Singh, who arrives for the Sal tree trade. He treats both Mary and nature as mere commodities. He destroys the forests and views Mary solely as a target for physical satisfaction. However, Mary eventually gets rid of him by killing him during the annual tribal hunting festival. Finally, she joins the celebration and decides to leave the village with her lover, Jalim.

Parallelism and Commodification:

The Hunt represents the parallel exploitation of nature and tribal women. The village environment was once unspoiled and beautiful, but the entry of timber brokers brought devastation: "Once there were animals in the forest, life was wild, the hunt game had meaning. Now the forest is empty, life wasted and drained, the hunt game meaningless" (Devi, 73). Just as industrialization destroys nature, it erodes the lives of tribal women. The ongoing deforestation is described

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

vividly: “The felling goes on. Slowly the weather warms. There are miles and miles of poppy fields around here” (Devi, 72).

Bhikni, Mary’s mother, was a victim of the lust of Dixon’s son, who abandoned her to a life of suffering. Mary expresses her resentment toward this abandonment: "Big white chief! Puts a child in a woman's belly and runs like a rat. My mother is bad news. When you see a white daughter, you kill her right away. Then there are no problems!" (Devi, 65). Following Mary’s birth, they lived as laborers in the Dixon house under the new owner, Mr. Prasad.

Collector Singh, representing capitalist society and patriarchy, enters the village to massacre the trees for profit. He illegally cuts down thousands of Sal logs to be transported elsewhere. The writer notes: “Tohri's real benefactors are the timber brokers. It is a Sal-growing area. Sal-logs arrive night and day by truck” (61). The helpless tribal people are forced to work for trivial wages to destroy their own environment. Simultaneously, the Collector’s greedy gaze falls upon Mary. He attempts to "hunt down" Mary’s beauty just as he hunts the timber, viewing both as objects to be owned. This dual commodification is a central principle of ecofeminist critique.

Resistance and Empowerment:

Mary represents the modern tribal woman who challenges patriarchal authority. As the daughter of a white father and a tribal mother, she is viewed as different from others in the village. She is sharp-minded and carries a machete for self-protection. She asserts her independence, telling her mother: “Why should I take a cheap sari? I'll dress well, use soap and oil, give me everything" (Devi, 65).

Unlike the timber traders, Mary lives in harmony with nature, making her living by selling fruit. She challenges the Collector's authority and refuses to be an object of his pleasure. She unsuccessfully tries to persuade the tree owners not to sell the Sal trees so cheaply and encourages laborers to demand better wages: “twelve annas daily for men, eight annas for women” (Devi, 68). Though the people recognize her wisdom, they remain helpless.

Mary remains the only one to openly challenge the Collector’s sexual advances, threatening him with dire consequences. Unlike her mother, who succumbed to Dixon’s son, Mary refuses to be a victim. She loves Jalim, a Muslim boy who respects her. By protecting her dignity and refusing the Collector's "gifts," she eventually turns the hunter into the hunted, securing a future on her own terms.

The Collector as the Patriarchal Catalyst:

The Collector represents the convergence of capitalism and patriarchy. He is the primary culprit in the exploitation of both the land and its women. Using his money and political influence, he strips the Dixon estate of its beauty for illegal profit. Simultaneously, he attempts to appropriate Mary’s body. When he tries to tempt her with a sari, she rebukes him publicly: "You think I'm a city whore? You want to grab me with a sari? If you bother me again, I'll cut off your nose" (Devi, 71). His actions demonstrate that he views women as tools for satisfaction. While he succeeds in spoiling the beauty of the forest, he fails to compromise Mary’s dignity.

The Climax: *JaniParab*:

The tribal ritual of *JaniParab*-where women disguise themselves as men to hunt every twelve years-serves as the story’s climax. While other women hunt forest animals, Mary decides to hunt the human predator. She lures him into the forest, playing on his lust: “But don't tell anyone! A man can do no wrong, but a woman is soiled” (Devi, 75). As the Collector approaches her, Mary

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

kills him with her machete. Devi describes the moment: "Mary caresses Collector's face... the face changes and changes into? Now? Yes, becomes an animal" (Devi, 78). By killing the exploiter, Mary achieves justice for both the earth and herself. Her subsequent cleansing ritual in the river symbolizes a restoration of balance.

Symbolism:

The title *The Hunt* is deeply symbolic, focusing on the killing of a predator who sought to rob both the Earth and its women. The arrival of the train and the presence of the railway station symbolize the intrusion of merchants who loot the environment. The stripped timber logs represent the literal and metaphorical stripping of the land. Mary herself is a symbolic character-the product of colonial violence who refuses to be abandoned to her "destiny." The festival of *JaniParab* symbolizes the reclaimed power of the female to hunt down cruelty. In the end, Mary's act of hunting the Collector is a powerful ecofeminist statement: a refusal to be commodified and a violent reclamation of agency.

Conclusion:

The research paper concludes that Mahashweta Devi's *The Hunt* serves as a profound testament to the principles of ecofeminism, illustrating the inseparable link between the violation of the environment and the oppression of women. Through the predatory character of Collector Singh, Devi mirrors the capitalist greed that views both the Sal forests and the female body as resources to be harvested and discarded. Mary Oraon, however, emerges as a transformative figure who transcends her status as a victim of "double marginalization." By reclaiming the tribal ritual of *JaniParab*, she shifts the narrative from one of passive suffering to one of active resistance, effectively "hunting" the source of patriarchal corruption. Her act of violence is presented not merely as a crime, but as a symbolic cleansing ritual that restores the moral and physical balance of the village. Ultimately, the story suggests that the liberation of nature cannot be achieved without the liberation of women, and vice versa. By killing the exploiter, Mary asserts her agency and provides a visionary blueprint for an ecofeminist future where the sanctity of the earth and the dignity of the individual are held in equal regard.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

14

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AS A KEY TO EMPLOYABILITY: A STUDY OF ENGINEERING STUDENTS IN THE MARATHWADA REGION

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Abstract:
In the present AI-driven era, technical expertise alone is no longer sufficient; rather, communicative competence has become a critical survival skill enabling engineering graduates to adapt to, cope with, and sustain their roles in contemporary industrial environments. This paper examines communicative competence as a key factor influencing the employability of engineering students in the Marathwada region, where a large number of learners come from rural and semi-urban backgrounds with limited exposure to the English language. The study adopts an applied and analytical approach, integrating a conceptual framework of communicative competence with a survey conducted among engineering students. The paper explores students' perceptions of English communication skills, challenges faced in professional communication, and the relevance of communicative competence in coping with day-to-day workplace demands. The findings indicate a significant gap between industry expectations and the communicative abilities of students, particularly in spoken interaction, confidence, and professional discourse. The study highlights the urgent need to strengthen communication skills training along with the integration of communicative-competence-based pedagogy in engineering colleges, especially in regions like Marathwada.

Keywords: *Communicative Competence, Employability, English Communication Skills, Engineering Students, Marathwada Region, etc.*

Introduction:

In the contemporary rapid AI-driven technical world, communication is emerging as a vital skill that determines professional success across disciplines. With the rapid expansion of AI-driven technology, multinational collaboration, and knowledge-based economies, the ability to communicate effectively has become indispensable.

Engineering education in India has traditionally emphasized the development of technical knowledge and domain-specific skills. However, in today's AI-driven job market, proficiency in English has become equally crucial. English is essential for learning new tools, accessing online courses, collaborating on international projects, and working with multinational companies. Professionals who possess strong English communication skills are better equipped to adapt quickly to rapid technological changes and to access a wider range of career opportunities.

Moreover, many AI applications—such as chatbots, virtual assistants, and recommendation systems—are initially designed and optimized for English users. As a result, effective interaction with these systems often requires a functional command of English, particularly in advanced academic and professional contexts. Therefore, integrating English proficiency with technical

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

training is vital for preparing engineering graduates to succeed in the global, AI-driven technological landscape.

Despite the growing importance of communication skills, a significant number of engineering graduates in India face challenges in securing employment due to inadequate proficiency in English communication. This issue is more pronounced in the Marathwada region, where many students come from rural and semi-urban backgrounds.

Methodology of the Study:

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. A structured questionnaire was administered to undergraduate engineering students from a selected engineering college in the Marathwada region. The questionnaire aimed to assess students' perceptions of English communication skills, confidence levels, challenges in professional communication, and awareness of industry expectations. Following are some of the sample questions that were included in the survey.

Section : English Communication Skills:

Responses: Strongly Agree / Agree / Neutral / Disagree / Strongly Disagree

1. I am comfortable communicating in English during classroom discussions.
2. I am confident while speaking English in group discussions or presentations.
3. I am able to express my ideas clearly in English.
4. I face difficulty in speaking English fluently.

Section : Employability and Workplace Communication

5. English communication skills are essential for getting a good job in my field.
6. Employers expect strong spoken English skills from engineering graduates.
7. Lack of communication skills can negatively affect career growth.
8. Communicative competence helps in adapting to workplace challenges.

Section : Training and Improvement

9. My institution provides adequate training in communication skills.
10. Communication skills should be given equal importance as technical subjects.

To ensure a broader and more balanced perspective, the questionnaire also considered the opinions of alumni who have completed the course and are currently employed in companies, in addition to current students.

Survey Findings and Discussion:

Perception-Based Summary of Survey Findings: The following table summarises key perceptions emerging from the survey conducted among engineering students in the Marathwada region.

Aspect of Communication	Observation from Survey
Awareness of importance of English communication	High
Confidence in spoken English	Low
Ability to express technical ideas orally	Moderate to Low
Interview and group discussion performance	Low
Exposure to professional communication contexts	Limited

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Perceived gap between academic preparation and industry expectations	High

The survey findings indicate that a majority of engineering students are aware of the importance of English communication skills for employability. However, this awareness does not translate into communicative confidence or competence. Many respondents reported difficulty in expressing ideas fluently during interviews, technical discussions, and classroom presentations.

The survey further revealed that students from rural and semi-urban backgrounds experience greater anxiety while communicating in English, particularly in formal or evaluative contexts. Although students possess adequate technical knowledge, their inability to articulate ideas clearly often leads to underperformance in recruitment processes.

These findings logically lead to the concept of communicative competence, as mere linguistic knowledge is insufficient unless learners are trained to use language appropriately, strategically, and effectively in professional contexts.

Concept of Communicative Competence:

The term **Communicative Competence** was **coined by Dell Hymes** in **1972**. He introduced this concept as a reaction to Noam Chomsky's idea of *linguistic competence*, which focused only on grammatical knowledge. Hymes argued that knowing a language means not only knowing its rules but also knowing how to use the language appropriately in different social situations.

> Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible; whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available; whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated; and whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails. (Hymes, 281–286)

Communicative competence extends beyond the knowledge of grammatical rules to include the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in real-life situations. Hymes introduced this concept to highlight the importance of social, cultural, and contextual factors in language use. He believed that language learning should prepare learners for real-life communication rather than only teaching grammatical accuracy.

According to Hymes, communicative competence includes:

- **Grammatical knowledge** (knowledge of correct sentence structure),
- **Feasibility** (whether an utterance can be produced and understood),
- **Appropriateness** (suitability of language to the situation and participants),
- **Actual use** (how language is used in real-life communication).

Thus, communicative competence integrates both linguistic ability and social understanding, making it a key concept in language teaching and communication studies.

Hymes' framework highlights four interrelated dimensions of language use: possibility, feasibility, appropriateness, and performance, all of which are essential for effective professional communication.

While Dell Hymes introduced the idea of communicative competence by emphasizing the social and contextual use of language, his concept was broad and theoretical. To make it more operational and applicable to language teaching, Michael Canale and Merrill Swain (1980)

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

extended Hymes' model by identifying specific components of communicative competence that could be directly addressed in classroom instruction and assessment.

Their framework translated Hymes' sociolinguistic insights into a pedagogically practical model, especially useful for developing students' linguistic and communicative abilities.

Canale and Swain's Model of Communicative Competence:

> Communicative competence refers to the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence (Canale and Swain. 29).

Canale and Swain build upon Hymes' theoretical foundation by presenting a pedagogically applicable model that explains how different competencies operate together in real communication.

Grammatical Competence:

> Grammatical competence includes knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology (Canale and Swain, 29).

As far as grammatical competence is concerned, students from the Marathwada region, whose primary medium of thought and education is Marathi, often face serious difficulties due to direct translation from Marathi to English. While forming sentences, learners tend to transfer Marathi sentence structure, word order, and expressions into English, which frequently results in grammatically incorrect or unnatural constructions.

For example: the sentence, "He is doing the work from morning" is a direct translation of Marathi sentence which is incorrect in English where Present Perfect Continuous Tense should be used. Correct English is: "He has been working since morning."

Such errors occur because Marathi follows different tense usage, auxiliary patterns, and syntactic structures compared to English. This phenomenon, known as mother tongue interference (MTI), negatively affects students' grammatical accuracy in both spoken and written English. Therefore, there is a strong need for a restructured Communication Skills syllabus that specifically addresses the problem of translation-based errors. A grammar syllabus that merely teaches rules in isolation is insufficient. Instead, it should help students unlearn incorrect transfer patterns and internalize English sentence structures through usage and exposure.

For engineering students, grammatical competence is essential for writing technical reports, professional emails, and answering interview questions clearly and accurately. For instance, an engineer reporting a system malfunction must clearly indicate time, cause, and consequence using accurate tense, sentence structure, and technical vocabulary. Grammatical errors in such communication may lead to ambiguity, misinterpretation of instructions, or even operational risks, thereby affecting workplace efficiency and professional credibility.

Sociolinguistic Competence:

Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use language appropriately according to social context, cultural norms, and institutional expectations. Canale and Swain emphasise that effective communication requires sensitivity to factors such as status relations, formality, and situational

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

context. In professional environments, especially in engineering industries, communication is not evaluated solely on correctness but also on appropriateness.

> Sociolinguistic competence is the knowledge of the socio cultural rules of language and of discourse. (Canale and Swain 30)

In industrial workplaces, engineering graduates are frequently required to interact with supervisors, colleagues, clients, and external stakeholders. Each of these interactions demands a different level of formality and tone. Furthermore, Engineers working in diverse teams must be aware of culturally acceptable modes of address, taking norms, and conversational politeness strategies. A lack of such awareness can lead to unintended offence or breakdown in professional relationships. Thus, sociolinguistic competence enables engineering graduates not only to convey information but also to maintain harmonious and effective workplace interactions, directly influencing their employability and career sustainability.

Therefore, the literature that provides natural, contextualized language use and reflects social relationships and cultural norms should be incorporated in the syllabus. For example: Short Stories like "The Luncheon" by W. Somerset Maugham shows politeness, social class, and indirect communication. It is useful for analyzing social expectations and conversational norms. In addition to this there are many more stories that will help student improve their sociolinguistic competence. For eg.The Gift of the Magi" – O. Henry. Essays such as "On Saying Please" – A. G. Gardiner, etc.

Strategic Competence

Strategic competence involves the ability to manage communication effectively, particularly when linguistic resources are limited or when communication breaks down. According to Canale and Swain, this competence includes the use of verbal and non-verbal strategies to overcome difficulties and sustain interaction.

> Strategic competence is composed of mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication (Canale and Swain 30).

In professional contexts, this ability is often tested under pressure. In industrial settings, engineers frequently encounter situations that require spontaneous communication, such as technical discussions, project presentations, or problem-solving meetings. During such interactions, graduates may face unfamiliar terminology, complex questions, or unexpected interruptions. Strategic competence enables them to paraphrase ideas, use simpler expressions, or seek clarification without disrupting the flow of communication. This ability helps maintain confidence and professional credibility, even in challenging communicative situations. Engineers or professionals should be able to simplify complex ideas when speaking to non-experts, clients, or management, using examples or analogies instead of jargon. During discussions or negotiations, professionals should be able to adjust their language, tone, and arguments depending on the audience to achieve desired outcomes.

Strategic competence does not develop in a single day; it evolves gradually over time. It depends on strong foundational skills such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Learners must also develop listening and reading skills to understand others effectively. Using language appropriately requires awareness of context, audience, and purpose. Strategies like paraphrasing or

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

clarification work only with basic language control. Repeated exposure to real-life communication situations is essential. Learners need time to recognize problems and choose suitable strategies. Reflection and feedback help refine these strategies. With practice, strategic responses become more automatic. Thus, strategic competence is the result of sustained and holistic language development.

Discourse Competence:

Discourse competence refers to the ability to organise sentences into coherent and meaningful spoken or written texts. Canale and Swain describe this competence as essential for maintaining cohesion and coherence in communication.

> Discourse competence concerns mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text (Canale 9).

First, AI systems such as chatbots, virtual assistants, and conversational agents rely on discourse competence to maintain coherence across multiple turns. Understanding how ideas connect over sentences and turns enables AI to respond meaningfully rather than producing isolated or fragmented replies. Second, discourse competence helps AI interpret context and intention. In human–AI interaction, meaning often depends on previous exchanges, implicit references, or shared knowledge. Discourse awareness allows AI to track topics, resolve references (such as pronouns), and infer user goals more accurately. In essence, discourse competence enables AI not just to generate grammatically correct sentences, but to participate in meaningful, goal-oriented communication that mirrors human conversational logic.

In the workplace, engineers are required to produce various forms of discourse such as project reports, feasibility studies, emails, presentations, and technical documentation. Discourse competence enables them to structure information logically, maintain continuity of ideas, and present complex technical data in a clear and comprehensible manner. A well-organised report or presentation reflects not only linguistic ability but also analytical thinking and professional discipline.

Conclusion:

The study concludes that communicative competence plays a decisive role in enhancing the employability of engineering students, particularly in regions like Marathwada, where linguistic and socio-educational challenges are more pronounced. In the contemporary AI-driven and globally competitive industrial environment, technical expertise alone is insufficient to ensure professional success. The findings of the study clearly indicate that the ability to communicate effectively, appropriately, and confidently has emerged as a critical survival skill for engineering graduates. Integrating communicative competence into engineering education is therefore essential for bridging the gap between academic knowledge and industry expectations. The survey analysis reveals that deficiencies in communication skills often hinder students' performance in interviews, workplace interactions, and collaborative professional tasks, despite adequate technical knowledge. Concepts proposed by Dell Hymes and further elaborated by Canale and Swain provide a comprehensive framework to understand the multidimensional nature of communicative competence. Grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies together equip

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

learners to function effectively in real-life professional contexts. The study strongly recommends the systematic incorporation of communicative competence-based pedagogy, classroom simulations, and industry-oriented communicative tasks within engineering curricula. Such an approach will not only enhance students' employability but also prepare them to adapt, cope with, and sustain themselves in the dynamic demands of the modern workplace. There is a need to reframe and restructure the content of the Communication Skills syllabus in engineering colleges. The syllabus should incorporate appropriate literary content that helps inculcate linguistic skills among students, exposes them to real-time conversational situations, and provides opportunities for group discussions and presentations. Additionally, it should help students acquire vocabulary, expressions, and phrases commonly used in corporate culture, thereby enabling them to communicate effectively and confidently in professional environments.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

15

STRENGTHENING THE FEMALE EDUCATION: GOAL OF VIKSIT BHARAT 2047

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Abstract:
The Viksit Bharat 2047 offers both opportunities and challenges for female, significantly influenced by globalization, digital technology, and progressive policies aimed at improving their access to education, careers, and leadership roles. Female strengthening and education are recognized as foundational for the realization of the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, which aspires to cultivate an inclusive and progressive society. Education is positioned as the cornerstone of empowerment, endowing female with the necessary knowledge, confidence, skills, and opportunities to engage equally in economic, social, political, and technological fields.Despite advances in digital learning and a growing global consciousness, various persistent obstacles impede progress, such as the digital divide, entrenched gender inequality, and prevailing patriarchal norms. The paper underscores education's pivotal role in enhancing female's status as a vital catalyst for achieving gender equality, sustainable development, and broader social transformation. While it celebrates the noteworthy progress that female have made in educational attainment, it also confronts the ongoing hurdles posed by gender bias, socio-economic limitations, and cultural constraints.The discussion emphasizes the transformative impacts education can have on empowering female, highlighting the continuous efforts required to ensure that education is inclusive and equitable for all female, thereby facilitating gender equality and supporting social advancement.

Keywords: *Strengthening ofFemale Education, Goal, Viksit Bharat 2047, Transformative Impacts Female Education, etc.*

Introduction:

Female strengthening involves granting individuals the authority to make decisions regarding their own lives. Specifically for female, empowerment translates into the assurance of equal rights, opportunities, and dignity across various life facets. In the contemporary context of the Viksit Bharat 2047, education has emerged as a fundamental pillar for female's empowerment. An educated female is more likely to attain economic independence, cultivate social awareness, and engage in political activities.The benefits of education extend beyond the individual, positively impacting families, communities, and nations. Educated females are instrumental in enhancing child health, alleviating poverty, and fostering economic development. Despite these significant benefits, numerous social obstacles persist, including child marriage, entrenched gender stereotypes, and insufficient access to higher education, all of which curtail female's advancement. This paper posits that education is the primary catalyst for female's strengthening in today's world. By fostering educational opportunities for all girls and women, societies can strive towards achieving gender equality, promoting sustainable development, and engendering positive social

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

transformation.Understanding the role of education in female's strengthening, assessing the state of female's education in the future Viksit Bharat 2047, identifying obstacles to female's access to education, and proposing methods to advance female's strengthening through education are among the study's objectives.

The Contribution of Education to Female's Strengthening:

Education plays a pivotal role in enhancing women's knowledge and awareness, enabling them to read, write, and think critically. This education provides women with insight into their fundamental rights, duties, and the opportunities available in society. They become aware of legal protections against violence, equal property rights, and job possibilities, thereby empowering themselves and others.

Furthermore, education is essential for achieving economic independence for women. It opens doors tovarious employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, and self-employment.Financial independence not only reduces dependency on male family members but also serves as a vital means to alleviate poverty on a broader scale.Health and well-being are also significantly improved through education, as educated women are better equipped to seek proper medical care for themselves and their families. They gain awareness about reproductive health, family planning, and disease prevention, contributing to better health outcomes within their communities.

On a political front, education fosters women's active participation in governance and decision-making. Educated women are informed about their political rights, facilitating their involvement in voting, contesting elections, and participating in local self-governance structures.

Additionally, education acts as a transformative force in society. Women who are educated are more likely to challenge and change harmful social customs, such as child marriage, dowry practices, female foeticide, and gender discrimination. They champion the principles of equality, justice, and modern values, steering societal norms towards progressive directions.

Contests for Female Education for Viksit Bharat 2047:

Many households still prioritise the education of boys over girls due to gender inequality.This bias stems from the perception that girls are merely "temporary members" of the family, often anticipated to marry at a young age, which diminishes the incentive for investing in their education. In the context of poverty, financial barriers exacerbate this situation, as limited resources are typically allocated for boys' educational needs. Consequently, girls may be compelled to assume domestic roles or enter early marriages to alleviate the family's economic pressures.

Child marriage presents a significant challenge, forcing many girls to abandon their education in order to fulfil household responsibilities, thus truncating their academic pursuits. Additionally, safety and security concerns further inhibit girls' educational access; issues such as inadequate transportation, insufficient infrastructure, and the threat of harassment discourage parents from allowing their daughters to attend schools, particularly at the secondary and higher education levels.

Although there has been progress in the accessibility of primary education for girls, opportunities for higher education remain severely constrained by financial, social, and mobility factors, leaving many young women with limited pathways to further their education and achieve their aspirations.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Initiatives and Policies of the Government for Female Educational Success:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes equity and inclusion in education while promoting digital learning to narrow the gender gap in technological access. Additionally, scholarships and reservations provided by central and state governments for girls from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), and minority communities enhance access to education at various levels.

The Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Yojana, launched in 2015, aims to combat the declining child sex ratio in India by promoting the survival, protection, and education of the girl child. The Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009 ensures free and compulsory education for all children aged 6 to 14, specifically targeting girls from weaker sections of society to facilitate their schooling.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) serves as a housing and educational solution for girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas. The Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana, introduced under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative, encourages parents to save for their daughters' education and marriage. The UDAAN Scheme, facilitated by CBSE, aims to increase girl students' participation in higher education, especially within the fields of engineering and technology.

The Digital India Campaign strives to improve internet access and provide digital tools in rural areas, helping to bridge the divide between male and female students, particularly in remote locations. The Skill India Mission emphasizes vocational training and skill development for women, promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities.

To further support these initiatives, it is suggested that free and compulsory education be extended to higher levels for girls, along with enhancements to school infrastructure and safety measures for female students. Promoting digital literacy, raising awareness to counteract societal barriers, and encouraging vocational and technical training can significantly improve employability for women, thus contributing to gender equality in education and the workforce.

Conclusion:

Education is recognized as a vital instrument for empowering females in the Vikasit Bharat-2047, equipping them with knowledge, skills, confidence, and social awareness. Educated females are better positioned to engage in economic, social, and political activities, thus contributing to gender equality and sustainable development. Their empowerment positively impacts family health, nurtures future generations, and promotes economic growth, enabling them to become agents of social change who challenge harmful practices and inspire others.

However, obstacles persist, including gender discrimination, poverty, early marriage, safety issues, and limited access to higher education. Addressing these challenges necessitates a collective effort from governments, society, families, and communities. Government initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, the RTE Act, NEP 2020, scholarships, and skill development programs have made notable advancements, yet further actions in raising awareness, enhancing infrastructure, and fostering digital inclusion are essential to ensure that every girl has access to education.

Thus, promoting females' education should not only be seen as a social responsibility but as a national priority. Providing equal access to quality education for girls and females is crucial for cultivating a just, progressive, and inclusive society, reinforcing that females' empowerment through education is fundamental to creating a stronger, sustainable, and equitable world.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
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March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

16

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SKILLING COMMUNICATION AND ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY

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Abstract:
This paper examines the role of women in skilling communication and advancing gender equality. Communication, encompassing verbal, written, digital, and non-verbal forms, is presented as a transformative skill that strengthens women's agency and leadership. The study highlights how women function both as learners and as agents of change, acquiring competencies such as public speaking, negotiation, digital literacy, and professional writing. These skills enhance employability, civic participation, and leadership readiness while enabling women to challenge discriminatory norms and advocate for equal rights. The paper further explores the relationship between communication and power, arguing that effective communication enables women to articulate concerns, influence policy, and participate meaningfully in governance and civil society. In the digital era, communication skills intersect with technology, providing women with platforms to build networks and mobilize collective action, though barriers such as digital divides and online harassment persist. The intergenerational impact of mentorship and peer learning is also emphasized, demonstrating how communication skills create multiplier effects that normalize women's leadership. Overall, the paper concludes that investing in women's communication skilling is essential for sustainable gender equality and inclusive social development.

Keywords: *Women's Communication, Gender Equality, Digital Literacy, Leadership Development, Women's Empowerment, etc.*

"My attempt is not dogmatic but deliberate" - F.R. Leavis.
"Women will enjoy the same rights as men" - Young India 10-09-1931.

Introduction:
Women play a pivotal role in skill, communication and gender equality. Communication is no doubt a skill by means of language, oral or written. At the time, Body Language plays an important role in skilling communication which includes verbal, written, digital, interpersonal, and leadership communication. It helps women not only to enhance but also to influence social norms, institutions, and policy outcomes. In the context of gender equality, women's access to, engagement with, and leadership in communication skilling play a transformative role.

Women and Communication Skilling:
Women participate in communication skilling both as beneficiaries and as agents of change. As learners, women acquire competencies such as public speaking, negotiation, professional writing, digital literacy, and media engagement, which improve employability, leadership readiness, and civic participation. As learners, educators, journalists, and community leaders, women disseminate

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

communication skills within families, workplaces, and communities, often using inclusive and participatory methods.

Research suggests that women's communication styles frequently emphasize collaboration, empathy, and contextual awareness. These attributes contribute to more inclusive dialogue and effective knowledge transfer, particularly in education, health communication, and community development settings.

Communication, Power, and Gender Equality:

Communication is intrinsically linked to power. Historically, women's voices have been marginalized in public, political, and institutional spaces. Skilling women in communication helps address this imbalance by enabling them to articulate needs, challenge discriminatory practices, and participate in decision-making processes. Skilled communication allows women to:

- Advocate for equal rights and opportunities
- Negotiate within households and workplaces
- Engage effectively in governance and civil society
- Challenge gender stereotypes through counter-narratives

Thus, communication skilling functions as both a practical tool and a means of social transformation.

Digital Communication and Bridging Gender Gaps:

In the digital era, communication skills increasingly intersect with technology. Women's participation in digital communication-social media, online education, digital journalism, and virtual advocacy—helps bridge gender gaps in access to information and public discourse. Digital communication skills empower women to bypass traditional gatekeepers, build networks, and mobilize collective action, particularly in contexts where physical mobility or public presence is restricted.

However, digital divides and online gender-based harassment remain significant barriers, underscoring the need for safe, gender-sensitive communication training.

Multiplier Effects: Mentorship and Intergenerational Impact:

Women skilled in communication often act as mentors and role models, creating multiplier effects. Through mentorship and peer learning, communication skills are transmitted across generations, normalizing women's leadership and public participation. This intergenerational transfer strengthens gender equality by embedding communication competence within social and institutional structures.

Conclusion:

The role of women in skilling communication is integral to the advancement of gender equality. Communication skills enhance women's individual agency while enabling broader social change through advocacy, education, and leadership. Investing in women's communication skilling-particularly in inclusive and digital domains should therefore be recognized as a strategic priority for achieving sustainable gender equality and inclusive development.

Indian women have been playing remarkable roles in all fields for example in politics. Indira Gandhi played predominant role as Prime Minister of India, Aruna Asaf Ali, an activist and a freedom fighter who was awarded Bharat Ratna, Sonia Gandhi as President of Indian National Congress, Vijayalakshmi Pandit as 8th President of United Nations General Assembly and 6th

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Governor of Maharashtra, Mamta Banerjee as Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jaya Lalitha as Chief Minister, Tamil Nadu, Mayavati as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Nirmala Sitaraman as Finance Minister of India, Margaret Alwa as Governor of Kerala, Mother Teresa as Social Worker and Nobel Prize winner for Peace. Literary figures like Sarojini Naidu, Bahinabai Chaudhari, Durga Bhagvat, Savitribai Phule, Aydakki Marayya are well known for their exemplary work; Historical Figures like Jijabai and Ahilyabai Holkar have done tremendous work by contributing to the welfare of the Society. The devotional activists like Gangambika, Nilambika, Akka Nagamma, Akka Mahadevi, who were spiritual figures, always believed in the principle of "Kayakave Kailas" , in other words "Work is Worship". They all consider that Work itself is Heaven or Paradise. In the field of astronomy, Kalpana Chawla who was the first woman flying in the space. Lata Mangeshkar, the melody queen; Kasturba Gandhi, wife of Mahatma Gandhi, assisted him; Rani Lakshmibai, Queen of Jhansi, a prominent figure of freedom struggle; Kiran Bedi, the first IPS officer; PT Usha, Queen of Indian track and field and Sant Mirabai, Hindu mystic poet and devotee of Krishna have played significant role in skill communication.

We must be aware of the fact that Rome was not built in a day. All men should allow women to take a lead and inspire irrespective of dignity of labour and work for the welfare of all human beings forgetting inferiority or superiority complex. Positive thinking helps to do justice and believing that the universe is on the side of justice. The role of women create Paradise or Heaven. There is no full stop. Life is open ended. Women are born to Work, Have been Working and they will be Working unto their last. Women are experts in Skilling Communication and Gender Equality by considering all is right with the world and God is in the Heaven. "Heard Melodies are Sweet and Those of Unheard are still Sweeter".

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March 6th& 7th 2026

17

WOMEN AS AGENTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE IN DAMODAR MAUZO'S NOVELS

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Abstract:
Damodar Mauzo is an important contemporary Indian writer whose novels portray the social and cultural realities of Goan society. His works reflect issues such as migration, religion, economic struggle, and patriarchal traditions that shape everyday life. In many social contexts, women are often seen as silent sufferers within family and community structures. However, Mauzo presents a different and more complex picture of women in his fiction. This paper examines the portrayal of women in Karmelin, Teresa's Man, These Are My Children, and Tsunami Simon. It argues that Mauzo's female characters are not merely victims of social oppression but active agents of social change. Through economic independence, emotional strength, moral courage, and responsible decision-making, these women influence their families and communities. Their resistance is not always loud or dramatic; instead, it appears in everyday acts of survival, negotiation, and ethical firmness. By giving importance to women's voices and experiences, Mauzo highlights their role in reshaping social values and challenging patriarchal expectations. Using feminist literary analysis along with a socio-cultural approach, this study explores how Mauzo represents women as powerful contributors to social transformation. The paper suggests that Mauzo's fiction shows that meaningful social change can begin within domestic spaces and personal relationships. Ultimately, his novels recognize women as central figures in building moral strength, social awareness, and progressive change in Goan society.

Keywords: *Agency, Economic Independence, Gender Roles, Maternal Authority, Moral Resistance, Social Transformation, etc.*

Damodar Mauzo's fiction is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural landscape of postcolonial Goa, a region shaped by Portuguese colonial history, migration, religious plurality, and complex social hierarchies. Goan society reflects a unique blend of Catholic and Hindu traditions, yet beneath this cultural diversity lies a strong patriarchal structure that defines gender roles and limits women's autonomy. Migration to the Gulf and other countries, economic instability, and shifting family systems further complicate women's lives, often placing them in positions of emotional, economic, and moral responsibility. Within such a framework, women are frequently perceived as silent sufferers confined to domestic spaces. As Simone de Beauvoir observes, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 283), highlighting how social systems construct and

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

restrict female identity. Mauzo's novels engage directly with these constructed roles and the pressures placed upon women in Goan society.

Critical discussions on Mauzo have largely emphasized his realism, political concerns, and depiction of social change in Goa. Scholars have examined themes such as migration, communal tension, and socio-economic transformation; however, relatively limited attention has been given to the active role women play in shaping these changes. While his female characters are often seen in contexts of suffering or marginalization, their transformative influence within family and community structures deserves closer study. This paper seeks to examine how women in *Karmelin*, *Teresa's Man*, *These Are My Children*, and *Tsunami Simon* challenge patriarchal expectations, influence social relationships, and emerge as moral and emotional anchors within their communities. It argues that Damodar Mauzo portrays women not merely as sufferers of social injustice but as powerful agents of social change who negotiate, resist, and gradually reshape oppressive structures through resilience, ethical strength, and communicative agency. Through subtle yet significant actions, these women redefine the boundaries of power and responsibility in Goan society.

The present study is grounded in feminist theoretical perspectives that help in understanding how women function within, and sometimes transform, patriarchal social structures. Liberal feminism provides an important foundation for this analysis. It emphasizes women's demand for equality within existing social institutions rather than complete structural overthrow. Liberal feminist thought argues that women seek access to education, work, dignity, and decision-making power on equal terms with men. In Mauzo's fictional world, women do not always attempt to escape society; instead, they negotiate their position within it, asserting their rights to respect, autonomy, and recognition. Simone de Beauvoir's influential assertion that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 283) is particularly relevant here. Beauvoir explains how society constructs woman as the "Other," defining her identity in relation to male authority. This concept helps in examining how Mauzo's female characters are initially positioned within restrictive gender roles. However, the process of "becoming" also suggests the possibility of transformation. Through experience, struggle, and self-awareness, women can move from passive acceptance to conscious subjecthood. Mauzo's characters often undergo such internal growth, gradually redefining their roles within family and community.

The idea of agency is further illuminated by Saba Mahmood's argument that agency should not be understood only as open resistance but also as the capacity to act within cultural norms (Mahmood, 15). In many traditional societies, women exercise power through negotiation, endurance, and moral influence rather than confrontation. This perspective allows a more nuanced reading of Mauzo's women, whose strength frequently appears in subtle, everyday actions. Indian feminist thought similarly recognizes that resistance may take place within domestic and relational spaces. Social change often emerges through what may seem like silent transformation through caregiving, ethical steadfastness, and gradual shifts in family dynamics. By combining these theoretical approaches, this study interprets Mauzo's female characters as active participants in shaping social reality rather than as passive victims of patriarchal control.

In *Karmelin*, Damodar Mauzo offers a powerful portrayal of female economic agency through the journey of a young Goan woman who migrates to the Gulf in search of work. Migration in the novel is not simply a physical relocation but a turning point in Karmelin's understanding of herself and her place in society. Faced with poverty and limited opportunities in her village, she makes the difficult decision to leave home and enter an unfamiliar world of

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

domestic labour abroad. This act itself challenges the traditional belief that a woman's role must remain confined within the boundaries of home and marriage. By stepping into the global labour market, Karmelin disrupts the pattern of economic dependence that structures patriarchal family life. Economic independence becomes central to her transformation. Through her earnings, she gains a new sense of confidence and authority. At one point, reflecting on her condition as a worker far from home, she recognizes the harsh reality of her situation: "In this house I am only a servant" (Mauzo, 23). This statement captures both her vulnerability and her awareness. While she occupies a subordinate position in her employer's household, she is also conscious of her labour's value. Her work, though undervalued in the foreign setting, becomes a source of empowerment when viewed in relation to her family's survival. Liberal feminist thought stresses that access to paid work allows women to negotiate power within social institutions. Karmelin's income enables her to contribute actively to household decisions, gradually altering the dynamics of dependence.

Migration also broadens her perspective. Exposure to different cultures, routines, and hierarchies compels her to adapt and acquire new skills. She learns to survive emotionally and practically in a space marked by isolation and exploitation. Through this process, womanhood in the novel is redefined. It is no longer restricted to domestic obedience but includes economic responsibility, resilience, and strategic endurance. Most importantly, Karmelin's financial contribution reshapes her identity within her community. She returns not merely as a daughter or wife but as an earning individual whose labour commands respect. Social change in the novel unfolds quietly through this economic shift. By transforming traditional dependency into autonomy, Karmelin embodies the idea that women's labour can become a powerful instrument of dignity, self-respect, and structural change within Goan society.

In *Teresa's Man*, Damodar Mauzo presents Teresa as a woman whose emotional endurance becomes the moral centre of the narrative. Though she suffers neglect and betrayal in her marriage, she does not react with loud confrontation. Instead, her strength lies in quiet awareness and self-respect. At one painful moment, Teresa expresses her emotional isolation. This line reveals not only her suffering but also her consciousness of her position within the domestic space. She recognizes the injustice, yet she chooses dignity over humiliation. Teresa's silence is not weakness. It is a form of moral resistance. When she observes her husband's behavior, she does not beg for validation. Instead, her composed presence exposes his ethical failure. Her restraint gradually shifts the reader's sympathy and moral judgment toward her. Through Teresa, Mauzo suggests that emotional endurance can be more powerful than open rebellion. Her pain does not destroy her identity; rather, it strengthens her inner resolve. By maintaining self-control, she forces the male character to confront his own moral shortcomings.

In *These Are My Children*, Mauzo presents motherhood as a source of social responsibility and transformation. The women in the novel do not see motherhood as mere biological duty; they understand it as shaping the moral future of society. One character reflects on the importance of guiding children carefully because "children grow into what we teach them to become" (Mauzo, 112). This statement captures the central idea that social reform begins within the home. Women influence the next generation through education, discipline, and ethical guidance. Their power may appear private, but its impact is public and long-lasting. Motherhood in Mauzo's fiction becomes a conscious act of leadership. Through everyday instruction and emotional care, women prepare their children to face social realities with responsibility. In this way, maternal agency transforms into cultural and ethical reform. The domestic space becomes the foundation of broader social change. In *Tsunami Simon*, female agency becomes especially visible during crisis. When

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

disaster disturbs normal life, women emerge as stabilizing forces within the community. They console, organize, and maintain emotional balance. Mauzo shows that during chaos, it is often women who provide psychological strength and continuity. Their leadership is not official, but it is deeply effective. Through calm reasoning and compassion, they help others endure fear and uncertainty. Crisis reveals their resilience and quiet authority.

Across these novels, communication becomes an important tool of social change. Mauzo's female characters use measured speech, thoughtful silence, and emotional intelligence to negotiate power structures. Teresa's statement about feeling like "a stranger" is not merely personal pain; it is a subtle challenge to patriarchal control (Mauzo, 47). Silence, in these works, becomes strategic rather than submissive. Dialogue becomes negotiation instead of confrontation. Through such communicative strength, women reshape family dynamics and influence social understanding. When we read Mauzo's novels together, we see a clear pattern. In *Karmelin*, economic independence creates autonomy. In *Teresa's Man*, moral endurance reshapes ethical perception. In *These Are My Children*, maternal guidance builds the future. In *Tsunami Simon*, crisis leadership restores community stability. Mauzo redefines heroism by placing women at the centre of social transformation. Their power is subtle but deeply transformative.

Damodar Mauzo does not portray women merely as victims of patriarchy. He presents them as agents of change within domestic, economic, and communal spaces. Their resilience, communication, and moral clarity allow them to reshape oppressive structures from within. Mauzo's fiction ultimately reclaims the woman not as the "other," but as the ethical and social axis around which society rotates. His narratives demonstrate that transformation does not always arise from public rebellion or dramatic protest. Instead, it often begins in intimate spaces within kitchens, classrooms, conversations, and moments of personal crisis where women negotiate dignity and responsibility. By foregrounding everyday endurance, Mauzo challenges traditional literary models that associate heroism with masculine dominance or visible power. His women lead through economic contribution, emotional intelligence, and ethical steadfastness, revealing that stability and progress frequently depend upon their unseen labour. Mauzo's portrayal contributes meaningfully to Indian feminist discourse by presenting agency as culturally grounded rather than imported or abstract. His female characters do not abandon their social contexts; they engage with them critically and transform them gradually. Through migration, motherhood, moral resistance, and crisis leadership, they redefine the meaning of strength in a society structured by hierarchy and gender expectations. Mauzo's fiction invites readers to reconsider how social change occurs. It suggests that sustainable reform is often rooted in patience, negotiation, and moral courage. By centering women as stabilizing and transformative forces, Mauzo affirms that the foundation of community life rests upon their capacity to endure, guide, and reform. His novels thus stand as powerful literary testimonies to the quiet yet enduring agency of women in contemporary Goan society.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

18

DIGITAL LITERATURE AS FEMINIST PRAXIS

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Abstract:
The current study of digital literature is considered one aspect of feminist praxis, or the ways that people put feminist theory into action through their use of digital literary techniques. As such, this study utilizes elements of feminist theory, cyber feminism and the field of digital humanities to analyze the ways that blogs, social media stories, digital poetry, and interactive fiction serve as vehicles for creating spaces of resistance, community, and participation by empowering those who have been historically marginalized through means of digital literature. The author contends that through their use of digital literature, individuals can amplify previously oppressed voices, redefine traditional authorship and readership, while also considering the challenges faced by women online, such as misogyny and lack of access to technology. Therefore, this study contributes to the overall understanding of how digital literature is a critical venue for exercising feminist agency in the current digital era.

Keywords: *Digital Literature; Feminist Praxis; Cyber feminism; Digital Activism; Feminist Theory, etc.*

Introduction

Feminism has never merely been a theoretical collection of ideas. It has always existed as a practice based on real lived experiences, acts of resistance, and transformative acts (Hooks 5; Freire 87). Feminist thought has evolved from the early suffrage movement to present-day struggles for gender justice by continually seeking ways to translate knowledge into action. The feminist concept of praxis-the union of reflection and action-plays a vital role in the development of feminist discourse. Literature has traditionally served as a vehicle for expressing feminist ideas; it provides women an avenue through which to express their experiences of oppression, imagine new possibilities, and challenge patriarchal norms. At the same time, however, print-based literature is also subject to institutional gatekeeping, market limitations, and limited access to resources.

As digital technologies have emerged, literature has changed its form (or substance) in a significant manner; digital technologies have changed the way in which literary texts are created, distributed, and consumed. The emergence of digital platforms has led to the creation of online blogs, social media narratives, hypertext fiction, digital poetry, and online performance venues-new opportunities for feminist expressions. These forms of expression go beyond representing feminist concepts; they serve as instruments of feminist praxis by facilitating ongoing dialogue, providing opportunities for the formation of communities, and fomenting activism. Therefore, I will argue that digital literature acts as feminist praxis because it brings together literary

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

expression and political activism; thus, transforming feminism from a primarily discursive framework into a participatory and performative practice.

This research considers feminist theory, cyber feminism and digital humanities in relation to how digital literary forms enact feminist praxis, or the relationship between theory and practice (Marx) through a Marxist lens of achieving social justice through action. The analysis explores how the transition from print to digital forms of literature has opened up new avenues for women and explores some of the primary types of feminist digital literature available today, as well as a critique of the limitations and potentials for feminist practitioners and scholars working within the realm of digital technology. In conclusion, this paper argues that digital literature is a powerful tool for creating feminist alternatives and ways of thinking about the future by shaping new understandings of the concepts of authorship, agency, and resistance in a digital world.

Feminist Praxis: From Theory to Action:

Praxis is a term derived from Marxist philosophy in which it has been used to describe the inseparable connection between theory and practice (Marx, 123). Freire expanded Marx's definition of this term to mean a type of action in which reflection can be employed to create transformative change in an oppressive system. Feminist theorists have adopted the concept of praxis to convey that feminism is not simply an interpretation but an act of creating social change (Hooks, 17). For example, Bell Hooks suggests that the creation of feminism is meant to be experienced as a form of practical living not just theory confined to an academic environment.

The Feminist Practice is characterized by the raising of consciousness, collective action, and resistance to systems of domination. Historically speaking, literature has been a contributor to feminism's work by allowing women's stories to be told, and, revealing the ideological underpinnings of patriarchy. From Virginia Woolf's novels to Sylvia Plath's confessional poetry to Audre Lorde's politics; these works of literature have acted as consciousness raising and critical tools for women. However, the distribution of these works of literature has been largely through elite publishing channels that have excluded many women's voices based on class, race, caste, language and geography.

According to Hayles (29), digital literature has posed a challenge to these limitations through providing instantaneous, decentralized and interactive modes of expression. As a result, in digital spaces feminism's work is not limited only to representation but also includes participation, circulation and engagement. Therefore, digital literature demonstrates a feminist practice by collapsing the distance between author, reader and activist.

The Shift from Print to Digital Literary Spaces:

Throughout history, different hierarchies of power have influenced print culture. For example, publishing companies, literary canons, and academic institutions have decided what voices are heard as well as which stories are preserved. Feminist literary authors have been fighting this type of structure for many years and have encouraged the development of alternative publishing methods; i.e. small presses and pamphlets. Although these efforts have provided some important areas for resistance, the reach of these outlets has been limited.

Digital media have radically changed this situation. The internet provides relatively inexpensive platforms to publish and distribute information worldwide. Writers use blogs, websites, and social media to circumvent traditional means for delivering messages and reach their audience directly. In particular, feminist authors have benefited from the ability to publish and

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

distribute their work through alternative digital media due to experiences of censorship, marginality, and misrepresentation in mainstream publications.

In addition, the characteristics of digital literature disrupt print literature's linearity and fixity. Because digital literature includes hypertext links, multimedia features, and interactive formats, narratives can be presented non-linearly, in fragments, and in open-ended forms, which aligns with feminist epistemology (Hayles, 42; Braidotti, 96). These formal characteristics correspond to a critique of rigid power structures and fixed identities by feminists. Digital literature does not allow closure or impose authority; therefore, it provides a space for feminist epistemology to value multiplicity, and fluidity.

As feminist authors have moved their work from print to the digital realm, the temporal and spatial aspects of their literature will also extend. The current era of digital literature offers the possibility of being not only continually edited, annotated, and re-crafted, but it has also created a way for literature to exist as an ever-evolving process, rather than just an end product. Thus, the living characteristic of digital literature allows its use as a feminist praxis, as it promotes continuous interaction with other people to create meaning and knowledge together.

Forms of Digital Literature as Feminist Praxis:

Blogs and Personal Narratives:

A number of the earliest and most significant examples of feminist digital literature are blogs (Poletti and Rak, 10). Feminist blogs are often grounded in personal experience and serve as vehicles for consciousness-raising work based on the premise that "the personal is political". By sharing their own everyday experiences, many feminist bloggers challenge societal prejudice against women based on gender, sexual orientation, work, and violence.

Blogs differ from traditional autobiographical writing because they provide real-time feedback and conversation between the author and readers. By having a comment section available to readers, the author can receive feedback and readers can share their own personal experiences, thereby creating a network of support and understanding among readers. In this way, blogging serves as a feminist praxis by helping to connect individual stories to create social awareness.

Narrative Creation via Social Media:

New forms of feminist narrative creation on social media have provided new ways of challenging dominant power structures and institutionalized silence (Mendes, Ringrose, & Keller, 4). While these narratives may be short and fragmented, they are often collective, thus challenging dominant structures and traditional literature. Even though they may not fit the traditional definition of literature, they exist as digital literature and can produce social actions proved through the virality of social media.

From the perspective of feminist praxis, storytelling via social media eliminates the divide between literature and activism because composing a post/story and sharing them is considered an act of resistance, while reading and re-creating them are politically active. In addition, social media's viral nature allows feminist digital literature to extend beyond its original audience.

Digital Poetry and Performance:

Digital poetry and spoken word performances on online platforms are another significant example of feminist praxis that combines the phenomenological aspect of feministic embodiment with technology (Kember & Zylinska, 112). Thus, all of these forms often merge

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

text/sound/image/movement into their narratives addressing political/social issues related to body politics, sexual identities, trauma, and personal identity. Furthermore, the embodied performance aspect of digital poetry illustrates the disembodied nature of traditional literary theory, while focusing on the materiality of the body.

Feminist poets have established a way to produce performance archives through the use of the internet by distributing their performances online. These pieces serve as a record of the feminists' concerns and are also a way to intervene in the cultural aspects of the community. As such, digital poetry represents a profound manifestation of the principles underlying feminist practices.

Hypertext and Interactive Fiction:

Hypertext fiction and online interactive narrative forms enable readers to engage with the act of creating meaning; thus, they have the potential to cause disruptions in the authority of authorship (Landow 56). The use of multiple paths and endings within hypertext fiction challenges preconceived notions of hierarchical forms of authorship and authority. Many works of feminist hypertext fiction relate to issues of the development of agency, selection, and individuality in addition to connecting the structure of the text to feminist-themed content. The interactive elements of the text also inherently demonstrate feminist principles of practice through the reader's ability to co-create works. This collaborative process exhibits a key tenant of feminist principles by demonstrating the significance of creating knowledge together as well as acting collectively.

Participation, Community, and Collaborative Authorship:

The collaborative aspect of the digital literary genre is one of its most salient characteristics. Digital literature creates interactive, responsive and collaborative experiences for readers as opposed to traditional literature that places readers in a position of passively consuming media. Thus, the culture of participation within digital literature is at the core of feminist practice because of its emphasis on the collective contribution toward knowledge and action rather than on individual authority.

Digital feminist communities emerge from common texts, discussions, and campaigns. Texts on the Internet create a shared experience through common stories and symbols, thereby serving as a catalyst for solidarity among women online. The act of creating collaboratively (as in the case of collaborative blogs or stories together) as opposed to the traditional "sole genius" model aligns with many feminist critiques of individualism.

Through digital archives, feminist voices that could be lost forever are being documented and preserved. Digital literature supports the creation of a living history (including documented experiences, protests, and creative expressions) that remains available and relevant to the present.

Challenges and Limitations of Digital Feminist Praxis:

Digital literature has transformative possibilities, and still suffers from limitations such as online misogyny and platform capitalism (Banet-Weiser, 63). The online world is often a hostile space for feminists and includes many challenges in the form of harassment, trolling, and censorship. The emotional labour of navigating through these spaces can detract from the empowering nature of digital feminist praxis. In addition to the challenges posed by hostile online environments, the corporations that have control over digital platforms impose their own set of challenges (i.e., surveillance, data exploitation, algorithmic bias) and feminist content may be suppressed or commodified, thereby limiting the radical potential of that content. Lastly, women from

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

marginalized communities that do not have access to technological resources may be particularly impacted by the digital divide.

The above challenges create the need for critical engagement with digital platforms and feminist praxis in digital literature must consider power, access, and sustainability. In particular, digital spaces cannot reproduce the same hierarchies that they are trying to break down.

Digital Literature and Feminist Futures:

Digital writing will be key to female activists' success. New tools like AI, virtual reality and immersive narrative offer unprecedented ways for feminists to experiment. But these same tools also raise important issues of ethics regarding representation, authorship and control.

Feminists need to approach these new technologies using praxis - creatively adapting new ideas to create social change instead of imposing power over others - as their way of fighting against injustice.

Through feminist engagement with these technologies by creating digital forms of literary practice, they can help ensure that future digital technologies will advance justice, equity and creativity.

Furthermore, digital literature challenges how we think about and teach literary studies. By teaching feminist digital literature, students will experience firsthand that literature can play a key role in creating social change. Digital literature expands feminist praxis beyond simply being online; it incorporates not just classrooms, but also other types of communities and institutions.

Conclusion:

As a revolutionary form of feminist expression, Digital Literature transforms the way we view literature, changing it from a medium whose purpose is mainly representational to being an active practice of praxis. Digital feminist literature combines theory, creativity, and activism to create textual works that disrupt the patriarchal structure and make visible the voices of those who are often silenced or marginalized while also creating opportunities for collective action. Examples of how digital writing functions as a form of resistance and community-building can be found in blogs, social networking sites, digital poetry, and interactive fiction.

Although there are many barriers to access, control over content, and experiences of harassment on digital platforms, there are also more chances than ever to engage in feminist activism through participation in these platforms. Understanding Digital Literature as feminist praxis helps us recognize its political, cultural, and ethical importance. As feminism continues to adapt to advances in technology, Digital Literature will remain a vital space to imagine and create a more equitable and inclusive future (Braidotti, 201).

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

19

PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE ISSUES & CONCERNS IN THE BOLLYWOOD CINEMA: A STUDY WITH FEMINIST LENS

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Abstract:
A closer look at Bollywood movies shows a mixed image of gender equality where most mainstream successes uphold patriarchal values and films increasingly starting to oppose them. Gender is shown in complicated forms in Bollywood, as it represents the patriarchal society in India, but continues to provide progressive criticisms of the norm. It acts as both a mirror to deep-seated inequalities and a platform for change. The purpose of this article is to show and depict the changing roles and images of the women on the screen. This paper is the humble introspection on the significant role played by social and electronic media in the development of present-day feminism. Hindi as well as English cinema has been a major point of reference in this century. Cinema plays a key role in depicting the stereotypes of men and women. Even in a form of art where men are mostly the main characters and women the supporting characters, there were some amazing films that were not like the other and had strong women characters that made a mark in the society making them a role model to many. The image of female problems and issues in the Bollywood cinema represents a complicated compromise between tradition and modernity, trade and art, depiction and the reality. Although much has been achieved in the evolution of the film industry, even though the era of one-dimensional archetypes of the Golden Era has been replaced by more sophisticated feminist ideas in films, there are still many issues that prevail and require attention. The industry is also still struggling to deal with binary representations, structural inequalities, and commercial drivers that are more inclined towards trying to use well-worn storylines over creative storytelling. Bollywood's portrayal of women mirrors broader Indian societal attitudes toward gender equality. Given its global reach, the industry holds the responsibility to dismantle regressive norms. By navigating structural constraints and moving beyond tokenism, Bollywood can provide transformative, complex representations. This shift empowers women and fosters more equitable social relations both on-screen and in reality, driving genuine cultural progress.

Keywords: *Women, Stereotypes, Bollywood, Indian Cinema, Feminism, Gender Equalities, etc.*

Introduction:

Bollywood is a contested space. Its commercial heart, though, tends to reinforce the mass culture patriarchal rules, and it is also a potent force of feminist discourse. The shift towards increasingly diverse female characters and narratives can reflect a slow yet meaningful shift, which signals and potentially accelerates the change in the society as a whole in India. Bollywood is a reflection and a shape of the standards of the Indian society. On the one hand, its mainstream centre tends to concentrate the inequality and on the other hand, it is a powerful source of feminist discourse and changes as well. The tendency to use more diverse and realistic female characters is a positive but

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

slow change that mirrors and may stimulate the spread of wider social discourse surrounding gender equality in India.

Background of the Study:

Bollywood, the biggest and most powerful movie industry in India, is a reflection and a social structure of the Indian society regarding their approach to gender roles and the problems of women. Throughout decades, it has been conservative and radical in its treatment of females, creating a complex filmic landscape that should be critically analysed by feminists. The paper uses the feminist prism to focus on how the Bollywood cinema approached female issues, and continues to do so, such as structural oppression and patriarchal domination, as well as agency, autonomy, and resistance. The research is historical and follows the evolution of how the female gender is portrayed throughout the years, the current feminist narratives, the theoretical framework, and presents the issues that still prevail in the industry. Exploring this line, we are better placed to realise just how mainstream Indian cinema strengthens and challenges gender norms in a society that is rapidly undergoing social change. This discussion is especially timely with the current world awareness of Indian feminist film in 2024, which suggests a possible change in both industry and viewer perception of female stories being more nuanced.

Statement of the Problem:

Film is regarded as a significant form of art, the source of entertainment for citizens and the potent means of educating them. It is not only a kind of entertainment or time-pass, but it is more symbolic, aesthetic and more attractive to the social change. It possesses up to that extent the influence that the literature has.

Aims and Objectives of the Study:

The aim of this qualitative research in general is to critically assess the way women are portrayed in Hindi cinema and to analyse the change in the traditional stereotypical representations to contemporary films with more empowered women on the base of the feminist theoretical perspective as follows:

- To critically analyze the portrayal of women in Bollywood cinema through a feminist lens, identifying whether characters are depicted as active agents or passive objects.
- To examine the evolution of female characters from the early stages of Bollywood to the contemporary era, assessing the transition from submissive, idealized roles to more autonomous, career-oriented, and complex portrayals.
- To explore the impact of patriarchal values in mainstream cinema on the societal construction of gender roles, including the normalization of female objectification.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of "women-centric" films in bringing social issues—such as domestic abuse, sexual agency, and professional ambition—to the forefront.
- To identify prevalent stereotypes: To highlight the persistent, stereotypical depictions of women (e.g., the sacrificial mother, the dutiful wife, the "vamp") and the objectification of women through "item numbers" and the male gaze.
- To analyze the shift in portrayal: To compare and contrast the representation of female characters in early cinema (e.g., 1970s-80s) versus modern, contemporary cinema (post-2000s).
- To explore female agency: To analyze the extent to which female characters are shown to have agency, decision-making power, and independence in contemporary films.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

- To study the impact of "Women-Centric" Cinema: To evaluate if recent films focused on women truly empower them or simply create new, sometimes, "rebellious" stereotypes, as seen in films like Queen, Mimi, or Gangubai Kathiawadi.
- To assess societal influence: To understand how these cinematic representations influence societal attitudes toward women and contribute to changing or reinforcing gender norms.

Methodology:

- Qualitative Content Analysis: Reading through the plots, dialogues, and character development of some chosen films in order to find the theme of agency or submissiveness.
- Feminist Film Theory: Application of theories like the "male gaze" to determine the objectification or empowerment of characters.
- Case Studies: Focusing on specific, high-grossing, or critically acclaimed "female-centric" movies.

A Brief Historical Evolution:

- The image of women has developed greatly throughout the decades:
- 1950s-60s: The Idealized Archetype – Films like Mother India (1957) celebrated the self-sacrificing mother and wife, reinforcing traditional roles.
- 1970s-90s: Blending Tradition & Glamour – Some movies had kept women in classicized, traditional frames, whereas others had created more independent, career-oriented female characters, though they frequently were objectified. The "angry young woman" archetype emerged in parallel cinema.
- 2000s-Present: Rise of Nuanced Narratives – This era saw a clearer split. While big-budget, male-led hits often remained regressive, a distinct wave of films began placing women's inner lives, agency, and struggles at the center.The table below captures this dual reality, contrasting the dominant, problematic patterns with the growing, progressive shifts seen in recent years.

Aspect of Portrayal	Dominant (Regressive) Trends	Progressive Shifts & Counter-Narratives
Screen Presence & Roles	Male-dominated stories (72% male vs. 26% female characters). Women often in stereotypical jobs (doc tors, teachers) rather than decision-making roles.	Rise of **women-centric films** with complex leads (e.g. *Quee n, Raa- zi*).
Societal & Family Pressure	Women expected to prioritize domestic duties over careers. The "ideal" woman is coy, demure, and defi- ned by her family role.	Films challenging domestic nor -ms and **shared responsibility** (e.g., *Mission Mangal*, *Thapp- ad*).
Portrayal of Violence & Consent	Stalking/harassment often framed as romantic pursuit, normalizing toxic masculinity.	**Consent** central to plot; violen ce against women confronted (e.g., *Pink*, *Thappad*, *Chhapa -ak*)
Beauty & Objectification	Glamorous heroine as object of desire; focus on physical appearance and item numbers. Preference for lighter skin tones.	Films critiquing colori- sm; focus shifting to ch- aracter's agency over ap- pearance.
Beyond the Gender Binary	LGBTQ+ characters as joke fodder, rarely in decision-making roles.	Mainstream films on **gender identity and sexuality** (e.g., *Chandigarh Kare Aashiqui*).

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

The portrayal has evolved from the self-sacrificing archetypes of the 1950s (Mother India), through the glamorized but often sidelined roles of the 70s-90s, to the current era of clearer split. Today, big commercial hits often remain regressive, while a distinct wave of films driven by new filmmakers and audiences actively centers women's lives and rights.

Historical Evolution of Female Portrayals in Bollywood:

Women representation in Bollywood has gone through huge changes throughout the various eras of the movie industry, reflecting the socio-political changes of India and usually trailing behind the feminist changes. The attitude the industry has adopted towards female characters has changed to the one dimensionality of the symbols to more detailed characters, but this has not been a steady advance.

Table 1: Major Waves of Feminist Portrayals in Bollywood History:

Period	Dominant Female Archetypes	Key Films/Examples	Feminist Significance
1940s-1960s (Golden Era)	Suffering mother, virtuous wife, seductress/vamp	*Mother India* (1957), *Pyaasa* (1957)	Established moral binaries; celebrated sacrifice but limited agency
1970s-1980s (Parallel Cinema)	Socially oppressed women, intellectuals, rebels	*Charulata* (1964), *Ankur* (1974), *Arth* (1982)	Introduced complexity and agency; addressed caste/class intersections
1990s-2000s (Liberalization)	Modern independent woman, glamorous heroine, item girl	*Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995), *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001)	Superficial progressivism; increased objectification alongside career women
2010s-Present (Contemporary)	Autonomous protagonists, intersectional characters, feminist narratives	*Queen* (2014), *Pink* (2016), *GangubaiKathiawadi* (2022)	Explicit feminist themes; challenges to patriarchy; greater diversity

Contemporary Feminist Portrayals and Themes:-

The years around 2010 to the current time are characterised by an immense change of more overtly feminist stories in the Bollywood world and can be signified by both commercial and critically praised independent productions. This modern stage shows a more readiness to concern themselves with women issues as a main subject, not as subplots, although such depictions are disproportionate throughout the industry. Feminist movies of the recent past have increasingly focused on the issue of agency as well as self-determination of women, beyond simplistic revenge narratives or masculine mimicry. The Kahaani (2012) film is a twist on the typical thriller movie by portraying a pregnant woman as a detective who outsmarts the male polity and uses the femininity that the social believes a female to be vulnerable to as a weapon. Also, English Vinglish (2012) provided an extensive insight into the path of a homemaker as a way to achieve self-worth without asking her to change her identity altogether. The protagonist Shashi of the movie finds that her worth does not lie in learning English and adhering to the westernised ideas

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

of a successful woman, but instead in understanding what she already has and insisting that her input is appreciated.

The landmark achievement of some female-directed movies in 2024 shows that there will be a possible shift in the way women narratives are told and perceived. Payal Kapadia's *All We Imagine As Light*, which won the Grand Prix at Cannes, explores the lives of three migrant women in Mumbai navigating interpersonal relationships, professional challenges, and interfaith dynamics with remarkable subtlety. Kapadia observes that "love in India is very political," noting how women bear the burden of maintaining family honor and caste lineage, making their romantic choices subject to intense social scrutiny. Likewise, Kiran Rao, in Laapataa Ladies, uses satire to reveal the patriarchal systems with the premise of the two veiled brides being switched up on a train which comments on the way in which the identity of women is usually lost in the strict gender roles.

Intersectional Perspectives and Expanded Representation:-

Intersectional issues of caste, class, religion, and sexuality have started to be covered by contemporary feminist cinema, but this has not been extended very much. Such films as Margarita with aStraw (2014) discuss the concept of disability and queer sexuality, and Lipstick Under My Burkha by Alankrita Shrivastava (2016) addresses the issue of female desire in different generations and religious backgrounds. But, as critics have pointed out, most so-called feminist movies continue to focus on urban, high-end experiences, with little to no attention paid to the lives of Dalit women, rural women and other marginalised groups. The British-Indian movie Santosh (2024), which was chosen as the Oscar submission in the UK, is a step in this direction, as it portrays the issue of violence against women in the context of a thriller, but also, in its cross-national production, refers to the fact that more domestic investment in this type of story is still required. The Madonna-whore dichotomy that has dominated the Bollywood representation is also now being challenged by recent films. Research indicates that audiences continue to perceive female characters through this binary lens, associating heroines with "virtue, respectability, and relatability" while viewing "item girls" as marked by "hyper-sexualization and social deviance". Nevertheless, the contemporary narratives increasingly feature female characters that transcend these simplistic categories, but instead conveying complex women who cannot be simply defined as either good or purely transgressive.

Table 2: Common Stereotypes of Women in Bollywood Cinema

Stereotype	Characteristics	Examples	Feminist Critique
Sacrificial Mother	Selfless, suffering, family-centric, morally superior	*Mother India* (1957), *Deewaar* (1975)	Limits women to caretaker ro -le; valorizes sufferi- ng as fe -minine virtue
Ideal Wife/Daughter	Obedient, traditional, places family above self	*Hum Aapke Hain Koun* (1994), *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001)	Equates female morality with submission to patriarchal fam -ily structures
Femme Fatale/Vamp	Sexually provocative, morally ambiguous, independent	Helen's cabaret roles, *Aitraaz* (2004)	Punishes female sexuali- ty and autonomy; reinforces Madonna-whore binary
Glamorous Heroine	Physical attractiveness emphasized, often objectified	Item numbers in *Dabangg* (2010), *Tees Maar Khan* (2010)	Reduces women to objects of male visual pleasure; priority-zes appearance over agency

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Future Directions and Recommendations:-

The changing face of Bollywood feminism has its challenges and opportunities that enable more equitable and nuanced representations of women. According to the existing trends and the enduring lacks, a number of strategic directions might hasten the achievement of gender-equitable cinema. It is also suggested to make women more involved in decision-making. As the Geena Davis Institute research recommends, "employment of more women in decision-making positions would automatically help in making both the industry and films more women friendly". This is not just the directors and producers but also the cinematographers, editors, writers, and executives of production companies and studios. The intersectoral caste, class, religious, regional, disability, and sexuality experiences should be brought into the focus of feminist cinema in the future. As research indicates, "very few films portray the struggles of disabled women, Dalit women, or women from queer backgrounds". The cinemas in the region such as the Malayalam have occasionally provided more subtle representation than the Bollywood and there is a potential of cross-industry learning and collaboration.

Conclusion:

The representation of the female issues and concerns in the Bollywood film is a negotiation of tradition and modernity, commerce and art, representation and reality. Although a lot of progress has been made, from the one-dimensional archetypes of the Golden Era to the more complex feminist stories of the modern cinema, there are still challenges. The latest events, especially the global acclaim of female-produced Indian movies in 2024, indicate that it may have reached the point at which the trajectory toward feminism in Bollywood turns. Nonetheless, to change something, it is necessary to focus not just on what can be viewed on the screen, but also on who owns the means of production behind the camera. Individual feminist film requires a multiplicity of writing, directorial, production, and technical personnel, a range of storylines that embrace the experience of the women in terms of caste, class, religion, ability, and sexuality. With the ongoing development of Bollywood, the way it addresses the female issues will both be a significant gauge of the general social perception of gender equality in India. It is this internationalisation of the industry that gives it a certain responsibility and opportunity to challenge regressive norms and present alternative possibilities of gender relations. Bollywood will be in a position to do more than a tokenistic feminist approach to really disruptive depictions that empower rather than inhibit, complicate rather than simplify and assist in making the social relations more equal both on screen and off the screen.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

20

THE SKILL SHIFT: REWIRING WOMEN'S AGENCY IN MODERN INDIA

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Abstract:
The conceptual history of vocational education in India has evolved from the simple transfer of technical skills to a more in-depth engagement with the ideals of gender justice and economic empowerment. As the country strives toward the high goal of "Viksit Bharat@2047," the Skill India Mission has undergone a paradigm shift, transitioning from a volume-driven training model to a quality-oriented framework that sees women's empowerment as crucial to national productivity. This shift is represented by the recognition that for women to effectively participate in a modern, AI-integrated economy, technical aptitude must be matched with communication skills and a solid legislative framework that assures workplace safety and income equality. The current landscape, particularly as of late 2025, reflects an integrated approach in which the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) collaborates with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) to break down systemic barriers such as patriarchy, limited mobility, and information asymmetry.

Keywords: *Skill Shift, Rewiring Women's Agency, Modern India, NAVYA, Training Module, Communication Competency Marginalised Communities, etc.*

Introduction:

The Skill India Mission began in July 2015, with the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana. Initially, the program emphasised short-term training and certification to offer adolescents with industry-relevant skills and financial incentives. However, experience with PMKVY 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0 indicated that gender-neutral policies frequently fail to account for the distinctive socio-cultural restrictions that women confront, such as the disproportionate load of unpaid care work and a lack of familial authorisation to seek employment. As a result, PMKVY 4.0 (2022–2026) was designed with a more detailed "gender lens," emphasising on-the-job training, business partnerships, and specific support for marginalised groups, including women and people with disabilities.

The Longitudinal Progress of National Skilling Initiatives:

The quantifiable impact of these schemes can be seen in the increased enrolment and certification rates among women across the various components of the Skill India Mission.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Scheme/Initiative	Total Candidates Trained (Cumulative to Oct 2025)	Female Participation/Beneficiary Rate	Key Focus in 2024-2025
PMKVY (Overall)	1.64 Crore [8]	52.3% (as of FY24) [12]	Emerging sectors like AI, Drones, and Green Energy.[1]
Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)	26.36 Lakh [12]	~82% [12]	Reaching non-literate and rural populations with local trades.[11]
National Apprenticeship (NAPS)	49.12 Lakh [8]	20.77% [12]	Transitioning from 7.74% in 2016 to broader industry engagement.[12]
ITIs (Long-term)	14,682 Centers [8]	13.3% [12]	Upgrading 1,000 ITIs through the PM SETU Hub-and-Spoke model.[8]

Female involvement increased from 42.7% in FY16 to 52.3% in FY24 under PMKVY, indicating that focused mobilisation and the implementation of "future skills" have begun to resonate with the female demographic. This success is supported by a larger national plan that views gender equality not just as a moral imperative, but also as a strategic goal for long-term development, as exemplified by the NITI Aayog's Vision 2047 and SDG 5.

The NAVYA Initiative: Nurturing aspirations via holistic development:

On June 24, 2025, the NAVYA (Nurturing Aspirations via Vocational Training for Young Adolescent Girls) project will be launched, which marks a critical milestone in the gender-responsive skilling narrative. This program focuses on adolescent girls aged 16 to 18, who are frequently at danger of dropping out of school owing to marriage or home responsibilities. NAVYA combines resources from flagship programs such as PMKVY 4.0 and PM Vishwakarma to provide demand-driven training for non-traditional career categories such as digital marketing, cybersecurity, AI-enabled services, and drone assembly.

The 7-Hour Holistic Training Module: Bridge the Gap:

NAVYA sets itself apart by acknowledging that technical training alone cannot guarantee success in a patriarchal labour market. The program includes a specially designed 7-hour additional training session that addresses the "navigational agency" required by women to survive and succeed in professional environments.

Module Pillar	Content Coverage	Objective for Gender Justice
Interpersonal Skills	Hygiene, self-presentation, conflict management	Building professional demeanor and internal resilience against stereotypes.[1]
Communication Skills	Active listening, verbal/non-verbal interactions	Empowering women to negotiate salaries, handle feedback, and lead teams.[1]
Workplace Safety	POSH (Sexual Harassment) and POCSO laws	Ensuring legal literacy and the right to a safe work environment.[1]
Financial Literacy	Budgeting, earnings management, digital banking	Facilitating economic autonomy and control over household resources.[1]

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

This module provides a third-order perspective into the Skill India Mission's strategy, indicating that women's exclusion from high-growth sectors is frequently due to a lack of 'social capital' and 'legal awareness' rather than a lack of cognitive aptitude. It combines POSH awareness with cybersecurity training, and the state develops a full toolkit that enables young women to enter the sector with both the ability to perform and the knowledge to maintain their dignity.

Communication Competency as a Tool for Social and Economic Justice:

Communication is sometimes considered as a 'soft skill' in professional growth, but it is a key 'power skill' in the context of gender justice. Women's ability to speak effectively is closely tied to their ability to demand their rights, negotiate fair compensation, and take on leadership roles. Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) has institutionalised this by providing tier-based communication courses that range from fundamental grammar and corporate etiquette to advanced strategic planning and dispute resolution.

The Psychology of Communication in Marginalized Communities:

According to data from Industrial Training Centres (ITCs), communication training has a transforming impact on rural women, who frequently confront 'restricted mobility' and 'patriarchal norms' that prohibit public speaking. An ITC's encouraging environment allows women to practise group talks and speaking exercises, which gradually builds confidence in their ability to connect with bank officials, manage digital transactions, and deal with clients in a micro-enterprise setting.

Study Observation	Impact on Women's Agency	Long-term Social Ripple Effect
Public Speaking Exercises	Reduces hesitation and fear of social judgment.[17]	Increased participation in village governance and Nari Adalats.[7]
Role-play in Negotiation	Enhances ability to attract and retain customers.[17]	Higher income generation and economic independence.[17]
Active Listening Modules	Improves conflict resolution at home and work.[1]	Better household decision-making and social respect.[17]

Moreover, gender-sensitive communication is being introduced through programs like "Gender-Ed" (sponsored by the Tech Mahindra Foundation), which helps both men and women understand how power and privilege express in language. This inclusive communication approach is critical for overcoming "unconscious bias," which frequently presents an invisible barrier to women's equal opportunity in high-growth industries.

The 2025 Labour Codes: Establishing the Statutory Floor for Equality:

Gender justice cannot be achieved without a strong legal framework that transforms policy intent into statutory rights. The implementation of India's new Labour Codes on November 21, 2025, marks a significant shift from "paternalistic protection" to "rights-based empowerment". These laws address various long-standing issues of wage inequality, occupational safety, and maternity benefits.

Wage Parity and the Prohibition of Discrimination:

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

The Code on Wages, 2019 (which supersedes the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976) expressly forbids gender-based salary discrimination for work of the same or similar type. This is especially important in industries like construction, where women have historically received much less than men for performing equivalent labour-intensive work. The Codes also include a "national floor wage," which prohibits governments from undercutting salaries in "women-rich" industries like textiles and retail.

Flexibility and Workplace Safety:
The Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions (OSH) Code of 2020 eliminates the "invisible curfew" that prevented women from working night shifts.2 Women are now allowed to work in any place for any type of labour, including after 7 p.m., as long as their consent is acquired and the company provides necessary safety and transportation measures.

Legislative Provision	Impact on Female Workforce Participation	Social Implications
26 Weeks Maternity Leave	Ensures job security during early motherhood.[18]	Reduces the "motherhood penalty" and career drop-outs.[4]
Mandatory Appointment Letters	Provides proof of employment for loans and tenure.[4]	Formalizes millions of women in micro-enterprises.[4]
Crèche Facilities (50+ Workers)	Reduces the "care burden" on working mothers.[18]	Increases the feasibility of returning to work post-childbirth.[4]
Gratuity after 1 Year	Benefits women in seasonal or part-time work.[4]	Provides social security for mobile female labor.[4]

These laws accomplish something unprecedented: they create a legislative framework that treats women as "full economic citizens" rather than exceptions to the male norm.4 By mandating female representation on Grievance Redressal Committees (GRC), the law ensures that women have a legal voice in workplace conflict resolution, eliminating the possibility of arbitrary and gendered undervaluation of their labour.

Barriers to Participation: The Persistence of Social and Institutional Constraints:
In spite of legal and regulatory improvements, a comprehensive gender analysis conducted by the DGT and the World Bank demonstrates that structural barriers continue to prevent women from reaching their full labor-market potential. These limits operate on various levels, ranging from the physical infrastructure of training facilities to the deeply ingrained "permission culture" in families.

Institutional Infrastructure and Trade Segregation:
A key impediment at the ITI level is the preponderance of female enrolment in "traditional" industries such as beauty, wellness, and tailoring, which sometimes pay lower wages than industrial jobs. This isolation is frequently compounded by a lack of "gender-friendly" facilities. Many ITI's lack separate, functional restrooms for women and are located in isolated places with limited public transportation, raising safety concerns among trainees and their families. Furthermore, the low proportion of female teachers (sometimes less than 50% in several institutes) limits the availability of mentors and role models for female students.

The "Permission Burden" and Unpaid Care Work:

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

The most persistent barrier remains the sociocultural context. Approximately 84% of Indian women need permission from their families to work. Regardless of a woman's personal competence or aspirations, key decision-makers in families sometimes prefer that she work from home or in traditionally "feminine" roles (e.g., teaching or nursing). This is worsened by the "care burden," in which women perform over 76% of unpaid care work worldwide; in India, this burden is estimated to be 3.1 billion hours each day.

The Dropout Crisis:
The gender disparity is also seen in dropout rates. In 2017-18, the female dropout rate in government ITIs rose to 38.86%, significantly higher than the male rate of 24.86%. These dropouts are commonly linked to early marriage, household responsibilities, or the "safety bias" of employers who are hesitant to hire girls for labour-intensive professions due to additional security and transportation costs.

Regional Intuitions: The Maharashtra and Aurangabad Division Context:
Maharashtra, as one of India's most industrialised states, provides as a testing ground for the Skill India Mission's gender equity efforts. The state has formed a Women Entrepreneurship Cell (WEC) and allocated INR 100 crore to nurture women-led enterprises. However, the reality in divisions such as Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (previously Aurangabad) demonstrates the continued struggle for wage equity.

Wage Disparities in Aurangabad's Construction Industry:
Empirical data from Aurangabad's construction sector show a persistent salary difference, which gender justice programs seek to close. Construction is a key source of income for rural women, although females are disproportionately concentrated in unskilled employment, whilst men dominate higher-paying skilled roles.

Employment Metric	Female Workers (Aurangabad)	Male Workers (Aurangabad)	Wage Gap / Difference
Average Monthly Wage	INR 13,484.50 [27]	INR 15,949.80 [27]	INR 2,465.30 (Male Advantage) [27]
Wage Distribution Share	~44–45% [26]	~52–53% [26]	Significant imbalance [26]
Skilled Job Participation	Predominantly Unskilled Helpers [26]	Masons, Carpenters, Electricians [26]	Masons earn ~INR 1,948 more [27]

The study emphasises that this disparity is caused by a "failure to recognise" the skills that women possess, rather than a difference in ability levels. Historically, women were barred from official apprenticeships in masonry or carpentry under the traditional skill transmission system (father to son). The state may demolish these "gendered occupations" by tackling this through gender-inclusive skill development, ensuring that women have better access to high-paying technical roles.

Local Successes and "Real Role Models":
Despite these limitations, initiatives led by local governments have yielded impressive outcomes. In Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, the rural police organised a two-month residential skill training program for 88 individuals, 70 of whom were hired by respectable industrial enterprises and

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

hospitals.31 The presence of women in leadership positions, such as Additional SP Annapurna Singh, provides what she refers to as "real role models" for local youth, as opposed to "reel role models" on social media.

The Employability Paradox: Analyzing the 2025 and 2026 Skills Reports:

The narrative of female employability in India is currently at a critical juncture, marked by a data paradox. While long-term trends have shown a decline in female labour force participation (from 45% to 27% between 2005 and 2019), recent figures from 2025 and 2026 indicate a historic reversal.

The Historic Shift of 2026:

For the first time in Indian history, the India Skills Report 2026 discovered that women outperformed males in terms of work preparedness and employability.

Employability Indicator	2024-2025 Predictions (ISR 2025)	2025-2026 Actuals (ISR 2026)
Overall Employability	55% [32]	56.35% [5]
Male Employability	53.5% (Rising) [32]	51.5% (Falling relative to 2025) [5]
Female Employability	47.5% (Falling prediction) [32]	54.0% (Rising and Surpassing Men) [5]

This increase in female employability is attributed to the increasing adoption of digital skills, hybrid work structures, and generative AI. India now accounts for 16% of the world's AI talent, with women excelling at using online learning to achieve "AI as a baseline competency". This shows that the Skill India Mission's emphasis on digital literacy is paying dividends, as women use these tools to break down traditional geographic and mobility restrictions.

Leadership and Success Stories: Shifting the Mindset:

The lived experiences of women who have moved from "homemakers to changemakers" provide the greatest proof of the Skill India Mission's effectiveness. These examples show how, when vocational training is paired with self-esteem and assertiveness modules, women become "beacons of hope" in their families and communities.

Narratives of resilience in Maharashtra:

Anita Gosavi: Overcame poverty and societal constraints to become Maharashtra's first female ambulance driver during the COVID-19 pandemic, breaking into a traditionally male-dominated profession.

Archana Mane: A Marathwada farmer who put herself through university as a mother while also leading her village in the construction of water-harvesting structures, finally establishing a women-led producer firm.

Nisha Shrivastav: She was raised in a one-room chawl but overcame her lack of self-confidence via personality development training and now works as a manager for an aviation company.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

These examples highlight the role of "soft skills" in identity creation. For women like Nisha, the Skill India Mission was more about 'personality development' than technical training, which helped her, overcome her shyness and navigate a corporate environment.

Corporate Leadership and Global Capability Centres (GCCs):

Women's leadership is also becoming more prevalent at the top levels of the corporate sector. In India, Global Capability Centers (GCCs) have established over 6,500 leadership positions, 1,100 of which are held by women. Leaders such as Lalitha Indrakanti (CEO, Jaguar Land Rover Technology India) and Sirisha Voruganti (CEO, Lloyds Technology Centre India) are pushing stereotypes by focusing on core engineering and innovation mandates rather than traditional HR or marketing roles.

Even at this level, women face minor disadvantages. Sreema Nallasivam, a GCC leader, recalled being mistaken for an administrative assistant despite her true role. This emphasises the importance of "leadership mastery" programs that educate women executives with strategic insight and negotiation techniques for overcoming organisational restrictions.

Future Outlook: AI, Green Energy, and the 2030 Agenda:

As India approaches 2030, the demand for skills will be driven by disruptive technological advancements. It is anticipated that the services sector (BFSI, IT-ITES, and healthcare) will account for 60% of new job prospects in Maharashtra, whilst traditional manufacturing will require personnel with advanced automation and robotics skills.

The future workforce can be estimated using the following model:

Future Workforce Gap = Workforce Demand - Workforce Supply

In this framework, gender justice policies serve as a multiplier. The nation may enhance employment elasticity and assure inclusive economic growth by training women in "high-growth" industries such as renewable energy and cybersecurity (the NAVYA initiative's focus).

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goal Targets:

The Skill India Mission is consistent with global goals, particularly SDGs 5 (Gender Equality) and (Decent Work and Economic Growth). The government's commitment to "gender mainstreaming" entails incorporating a gender lens into all government acts, from "gender budgeting" (practiced in 61% of OECD nations) to "gender-sensitive hiring".

Global Target	Skill India Implementation Strategy
Eliminate all forms of discrimination.	Enforcement of the 2025 Code on Wages and OSH Code.
Enhance use of enabling technology.[43]	Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) and NAVYA digital modules.
Recognize unpaid care work.	Mandatory crèche facilities and maternity benefits.
Full participation in leadership.	Specialized leadership programs for women in management.

Synthesis and Strategic Recommendations:

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

The Skill India Mission's complete review in late 2025 demonstrates a successful transition from "skilling for volume" to "skilling for agency." The incorporation of communication skills, legal literacy, and technical expertise into programs such as NAVYA offers a comprehensive approach to gender justice. To maintain the 54% employability rate attained in 2026 and progress toward the 70% workforce participation objective, the following second and third-order solutions are required.

Dismantling Trade Segregation: While women thrive in AI and digital professions, their representation in fundamental industrial sectors (masonry, carpentry, and electrical repair) is still low. Scholarships and mandated apprenticeship quotas in "male-dominated" trades must be used to encourage women's participation.

Addressing the "permission culture": Skill-building projects must expand their "outreach and mobilisation" efforts to include adolescent girls' families. Engaging community gatekeepers (fathers and husbands) in "gender-awareness" programs helps lower social obstacles to participation.

Implementing Safety as a Skill: The 7-hour NAVYA module on POSH and conflict resolution should be included in all occupational training programs, especially those for males. Gender justice is more than just empowering women; it is also about raising awareness within the workforce in order to foster an inclusive culture.

Infrastructure Upgrades: The success of ITIs and PMKKs is dependent on their "gender-friendliness." Ensuring adequate restrooms, safe transportation, and 30% female professors must be considered non-negotiable standards for center certification.

Formalisation of Micro-Enterprises: As women like Sunita go from trainees to entrepreneurs, the state must create a bridge to formal loans and markets (for example, through Stand-Up India and the Manjari Sakhi Producer Company model) to ensure their firms' long-term viability.

To conclude, the convergence of communicative competency and gender justice in the Skill India Mission is the driving force behind India's future development. By providing women with leadership language and legal protection, the country is not only creating a trained workforce, but also a more egalitarian and resilient society capable of realising Viksit Bharat@2047's vision.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

21

WOMEN'S COMMUNICATION SKILLS AS TOOLS FOR LEADERSHIP AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT

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Abstract:
In the contemporary professional landscape, communication skills have emerged as central to leadership effectiveness and career advancement. For women, communication operates not only as a professional competency but also as a transformative instrument for empowerment and gender equality. This paper explores how verbal clarity, assertiveness, emotional intelligence, negotiation ability, digital literacy, and public speaking function as strategic tools enabling women to assume leadership roles across sectors. It further examines structural barriers such as gender bias, stereotypical perceptions, and restricted access to decision-making spaces that often hinder women's voices. By connecting communication competence with economic participation, organizational growth, and inclusive governance, the study highlights that investing in women's communicative abilities produces multidimensional benefits. The research argues that communication training strengthens confidence, enhances visibility, and supports equitable representation in leadership hierarchies. Ultimately, empowering women through communication skill development contributes significantly to sustainable socio-economic progress and the realization of true gender equality.

Keywords: *Women Leadership, Communication Skills, Career Advancement, Gender Equality, Professional Development, etc.*

Introduction:

Communication is more than the transmission of information; it is the expression of identity, authority, and influence. In professional environments historically shaped by patriarchal norms, women's voices have often been overlooked, interrupted, or undervalued. However, the evolving global economy now recognizes communication as a core leadership competency. Women who master strategic communication are better positioned to influence decisions, build networks, negotiate opportunities, and advance professionally.

This paper examines the multidimensional role of women's communication skills in leadership and career progression. It argues that communication is not merely a soft skill but a

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

leadership capital that enables women to break systemic barriers and redefine workplace dynamics.

Communication as Leadership Capital:

Leadership in the modern era requires clarity of vision, persuasive articulation, empathy, and adaptability. Women's communication skills contribute significantly to these dimensions. Assertiveness allows women to express ideas confidently while maintaining professionalism. Emotional intelligence strengthens team relationships and conflict resolution. Effective listening enhances collaboration. Public speaking increases visibility and credibility. Together, these competencies transform communication into leadership capital that influences organizational outcomes.

Communication and Career Advancement:

Career advancement is closely linked to visibility and influence. Women who communicate effectively are more likely to receive recognition, leadership assignments, and promotions. Negotiation skills play a crucial role in salary discussions and role expansions. Many women hesitate to negotiate due to social conditioning; structured communication training reduces this gap and builds professional confidence.

Moreover, digital communication has expanded opportunities. Through webinars, professional networking platforms, and virtual leadership spaces, women can establish personal brands and expand their professional reach beyond geographical limitations.

4. Barriers to Women's Communication in Leadership:

Despite growing participation, women continue to face structural and cultural barriers. These include unconscious bias, gender stereotyping, interruption in meetings, and unequal evaluation standards. Assertive women may be labeled aggressive, while collaborative leadership may be undervalued.

Addressing these barriers requires both institutional reform and personal skill enhancement. Organizations must create inclusive platforms where women's contributions are acknowledged and respected.

Communication Skills and Gender Equality:

Skill development in communication contributes directly to gender equality. When women articulate policy concerns, advocate for rights, and participate in governance, they reshape public discourse. Communication empowers women to challenge stereotypes and create inclusive narratives.

Investment in communication training programs at educational and organizational levels strengthens women's leadership pipelines. Such initiatives foster economic independence, increase workforce participation, and promote balanced representation in decision-making structures.

Conclusion:

Women's communication skills are fundamental to leadership effectiveness and career advancement. They enable influence, negotiation, visibility, and advocacy. Strengthening these competencies not only benefits individual careers but also accelerates socio-economic

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

development and gender equality. True progress will be achieved when women's voices are not only present but actively heard, respected, and amplified within leadership spaces.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

22

THE CRISIS OF FEMALE IDENTITY IN ANITA DESAI'S *VOICES IN THE CITY*

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Abstract:
Over the past twenty-five years, many women novelists in Indian English fiction have gained critical recognition, and Anita Desai stands out among them as a major contemporary writer. She is widely discussed in reviews, journals, interviews, and academic seminars, and her presence in criticism on Indian English literature is significant. Desai is distinctive in her approach, combining social awareness with deep individual insight. Rather than presenting abstract ideals, she focuses on the troubled psyche of modern Indian women and the tension between instinct and intellect. Her novels portray existential anxiety marked by miscommunication and mental crisis, often centering on characters searching for identity. Her fiction can be interpreted as psychological drama, employing techniques such as flashbacks, diary entries, self-reflection, and interior monologues. By probing the inner lives of her characters, she reveals complex human experiences shaped by emotional strain. Human relationships form the core of her work, especially the conflicts between sensitive wives and incompatible husbands. She observes life with subtlety and gives poetic expression to ordinary situations. Although her characters are aware of reality, they experience loneliness, alienation, and despair. Desai examines domestic dislocation, emotional imbalance, and the chaos of modern existence. Through imagery and symbolism, she conveys deeper meanings, selecting details carefully to portray inner turmoil. While she sympathizes strongly with her female protagonists, she maintains fairness toward male characters and distances herself from organized feminism. Unlike novelists such as Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Bhabani Bhattacharya, Desai emphasizes psychological depth over social or political concerns. Her characters often narrate their own stories, and even minor incidents generate intense subjective responses, highlighting the existential mystery at the heart of her fiction.

Keywords: *Patriarchy, Alination, Modernity, Feminist Criticism, Material Confinement, etc.*

Desai's unquestionable existential concerns have distinguished her from other novelists of her generation. She shows sort of similarity to Arun Joshi, but Joshi has yet to attain the depthness of Desai. Committed to fiction writing, she is very sincere and practical to her art and craft. For her, freedom implies the liberty into such is the nexus of ideas that make up the background of her conception of life. There is the recognition that liberty is at one with creativity and that only total freedom can make the world happy. Our highest proposals fall without positive action. The neurotic behaviour of Desai's heroines echoes this pattern of action. Their voices terminate in madness and again in an action that appears half accidental and half-willed.

In Desai's fiction, the novel is not a sociological phenomenon, rather it is psychic. She sets herself seriously to voice the mute miseries and helplessness of millions of married women. These

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

women are tormented by existentialist problems and predicaments. Desai reveals a rare imaginative awareness of various deeper forces at work and finds a profound understanding of women sensibility. In this way, she unravels the subconscious of her highly sensitive protagonists, she writes about helplessness, agony, anger, struggle and surrender.

In Anita Desai, the theme of exile and quest for identity occupies the major part of the novel. Most of her characters feel alienated and exiled even if they stay in crowd yet they never feel the lack of culture around them. Unlike Nayantara Sahgal, Desai is more interested in the interior world of her protagonists than in political or social realities. Her novels deal with ferocious assault of existence. Her protagonists are persons for whom alienation is the ultimate reality. They are mostly women comprising school - girls to grandmothers. They all are fragile, introverts longing for their existence. Most of them suffer from the psychic deficiencies like schizophrenia, persecutory, paranoia, neurosis, super-ego, self-preservation, frigidity, hyperaesthesia, hypo-chondria, mental disassociation, introversion, inferiority complex, clausto-phobia, undischarged libido etc. Her male characters are quite different. They are phlegmatic, unsentimental, monotonous, philosophical but quite practical and prudent. Commenting on the style of Desai, Dr. R. K. Srivastava writes:

> 'Among the Indian novelists experimenting consciously with the English language, Anita Desai has a unique place. While the efforts of Mulk Raj Anand and Bhabani Bhattacharya have been towards making English close to Indian languages, to make it more adaptable to Indian needs, Anita Desai has raised it to lyrical heights, showing as it were, that Indians are capable of writing in a language which can compare well with the best in the English speaking countries. Her sentences vary, now short, now long, now endlessly gushing forth like jets of coloured water sprouting from the syringes of Holi revelers, flowing disjointedly or in a stream. She polishes her sentences, chisels her phrases and converts the rough-hewn stone into a piece of art' (Srivastava, R. K., 34).

Writing novels about one's own country on the basis of memory has been a great challenge for a number of exiled or immigrant writers. Anita Desai has accepted this challenge. She is powerful and persuasive voice among the Indian novelists cut off from their roots. A close study of her works reveals her struggle for female freedom and autonomy played off out against the backdrop of the patriarchal pattern:

> 'Her protagonists …… are constantly confronted with the stupendous task of defining their relation to themselves and to their immediate human context' (Mehta, 36).

Identity crisis or quest for identity becomes the consequence of this exiled situation. Anita Desai's *Voices in the City* (1965) is a complex novel being a structure of symbols and stereotypes. It is also at the same time a realistic representation of a decadent city culture whose only impact on the young adolescent minds appears to be negative though not nihilistic. Her admirable and competent control of the language provides the reader with a reliable mode of access to, and illumination of, contemporary human experience in one of the largest cities of Asia. It is largely

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Mrs. Desai's deeply metaphoric style and technique which render the setting in the novel immensely enlarged and the context immeasurably more complex. With this novel, Anita Desai's art becomes, what William Walsh might have said, an imaginative activity of – "registering focused and significant experience and making it available for the future as source and standard" (Walsh, xiv).

The novel is divided into four sections: I Nirode, II Monisha, III Amla and IV Mother. The point of view is mostly that of the omniscient author or an observer and occasionally that of the first person. Besides the usual means of the medium, letters, diary, magazine, paintings, a dream and a vision are instrumental in facilitating communication among the major characters. This is so because one of the major problems in the novel is the inability to communicate with one another which results in a sense of loneliness and even claustrophobia. The novel is technically brilliant and thematically totally contemporaneous in its scheme and scope.

Even though each section seems to be self-contained and conclusive, it is indeed organically linked to the next section. Thus, for instance, the first section begins with the departure of Arun and ends with the arrival of Monisha. The last line of the first section is in opposition. It imparts the indication of Monisha's death – "…… and over the still cemetery a pale dawn breeze wandered silently in through the window" (Desai, 108).

The theme of the novel is operant and suggestive. Nirode expresses it in his conversation with David. Nirode quotes Albert Camus, "In default of inexhaustible happiness eternal suffering at least would give us a destiny. But we do not have even that consolation, and our worst agonies come to an end one day" (Desai, 40).

Nirode's quest for identity is significant. His quest is marked for destiny which helps him or makes him to see beyond suffering and happiness. He is impelled to become a rebel against the better judgment of David who has found his balance and has come to terms with life after his own initial rebellion by running away from home in Ireland.

Anita Desai here portrays the story creating the atmosphere leading at once to an orderly composition and a convincing picture of life in contemporary Calcutta. She probes not only the individual consciousness of Nirode but also the social consciousness of the denizens of a world that is both real and unreal. The artistic chiaroscuro that results in this fascinating but difficult novel is truly indicative of the direction of modern India's soul. As Lionel Trilling says, "The novel is a perpetual quest for reality the field of its research being always the social world, the material of its analysis being always manners as the indication of the direction of man's soul" (Trilling, 212). It is in this sense that one may analyze Anita Desai's *Voices in the City* in the light of quest for Identity. Quest for Reality also may be studied from inner and outer point of view.

Desai achieves a dramatic effect in the narrative by shifting the point of view in the second part of the novel. Monisha's first person narrative enhances not only the authenticity, but also the intensity of experience that flaws into the novel against the backdrop of Calcutta. The narrative mode is Monisha's diary which serves as her only reliable means of communication in an atmosphere of distrust, envy, ignorance, monotonous drudgery and lack of privacy. In addition to the diary, Monisha finds that Nirode is the only other medium for communicating her feeling and ideas. Neither her husband nor her in-law tries to sympathize with Monisha. She alternates between her moods of hope and despair in the Kafkaesque world of her husband's joint family. She longs for her mother's love and seeks her brother's sympathetic company, having tragically failed to win either the affection of her mother-in-law or the affable companionship of her husband. She is so sensitive to the oppressive domestic environment that she is repelled by the

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

mechanical and monotonous recitation of the Sanskrit lessons by Nikhil. The recitation that filters through the barred windows drives her mad; and event he slightest pause in Nikhil's 'manic recitation' gives her some relief, like the rain in summer, but the noise soon get on her nerves again, for, "There is no escape from it. It surrounds this entire house, imbues it and drowns it. It lies on my bed and resign myself to it. I find my lips moving in keeping with it. It has become my own language" (Desai, 113).

Jiban, Monisha's husband, is the prisoner of a conventional culture in which a woman's most important roles are, besides child-learning, 'cooking, cutting vegetables, serving food and brushing small children's hair' (Desai, 73) under the authority of a stern mother-in-law in a 'many-headed family'. He is clearly for the static and stable social structure in any circumstances, and reckons his wife as worth nothing in consequence. In contrast, Nirode cares about people as human beings. He writes a play that satisfies his sub-conscious desire to communicate with the audience. He stands for the reconciliation of the conflicting personal desires for solitude and social communication.

Monisha's problem is how to stand on her own and to be in a room of her own. For, she says, "Alone, I could work better, and I should feel more – whole" (Desai, 115).

She hates the "meretriciousness, the rapacity, the uneasy lassitude of conscience" (Desai, 117) of the city of Calcutta and feels nostalgic about her mother's place Kalimpong and the district town where Jiban had worked earlier. Her sensitive behaviour and educational background do not make it easy for her to accept her role as the eldest daughter-in-law of a traditional joint family whose members constantly betray their lack of refinement. She desperately desires to connect herself to Nirode for whose health and welfare she feels anxious and worried. Ironically enough, it is Monisha who becomes 'an unshelled snail' when she is unjustly accused of theft by her mother-in-law and others. What hurts her most is Jiban's tacit acquiescence in their collective allegations. Later when she explains to Jiban that she has taken the money from his purse in order to clear the medical bills of the hospital on account of Nirode's treatment, Jiban's reply only deepens her sense of alienation. She is looked upon as a separate entity, as an outsider, by Jiban also. Her predicament, rendered more tragic by the fact of her inability to bear children [because 'the tubes are closed'], is probably beyond salvation.

She then broods over with pain and passion about the problems in her life. She considers Nirode – "an unshelled snail and a broken-winged bird" (Desai, 121) – more vulnerable and alienated than herself when he deliberately tries to kill himself by starvation. Monisha pleads with him silently during his delirium in the hospital, "Accept …… accept defeat, accept insignificance, accept solitude, a truer gift than any communication, any art, any faith or delusion in the world can offer you. If he accepts, he will survive" (Desai, 128).

Thus, Nirode recovers with a sense of new awareness. His return to society will not enslave his self to it with the same old sense of anxiety and concern. His self is purged of its intense involvement in the business of living, and his unshelled snail-like self will even develop fresh and protective covering against the act of communication. He will, hopes Monisha soon adapt himself to a 'one-dimensional existence'. Nirode urges his sister to hide away or destroy his book, for, he has learnt the bitter lesson of his life.

Nirode and David of course intuitive hermits, says Monisha. She notes nevertheless that an important element is missing in Nirode as well as herself – the element of love that suffers the face of David with a spiritual splendour. Instead, they seem to have been possessed by a dark and fierce element called fear – an element which makes them feel lonely, lost and bitter. Nirode

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

prefers anonymity to identity despite his mother's efforts to win him back to the protective shelter of the family. Monisha, on the other hand, prefers non-existence to a meaningless existence; she defines love as 'an awake condition of the conscience', but fears and avoids it, because love then implies a sense of duty. That is why, she remains exile in her two families – that of her mother and husband. Moreover, having been rejected by Nature an opportunity to bear children, Monisha seeks identity in the deepest darkness of the space in her life. As she says, "one unlit waste, a desert to which my heart truly belongs" (Desai, 126). Amla's reported arrival does not make any difference to her notion of 'ultimate wisdom' of being 'traceless, meaningless and uninvolved' – a condition of 'non-existence'.

In a nutshell, Anita Desai's *Voices in the City* is a panorama of various significant characters who strive for self-identity. Anita Desai has successfully achieved in her novel the most complete integration of artistic purpose and essential human experience in the urban milieu of Calcutta. The novel also shows the writer's technique of fiction in terms of a complex mix of urban consciousness and individual consciousness, both of which are found into a unison of existential experience and artistic vision. Thus, although one may be tempted to consider Nirode as the hero of the novel, the city of Calcutta is indeed the invisible protagonist of the novel. Calcutta, conceived as force of creation, preservation and destruction is ultimately identified as a symbol for the Goddess of Kali. *Voices in the City* accordingly marks the novelist's selective interpretation of the whole of actuality, the urban consciousness of Calcutta. Anita Desai no doubt succeeds in dramatizing not only the individual human relationships against the backdrop of a cosmopolitan consciousness but also the growth of individual consciousness from a cynical sense of loss of identity to the mystical realization of the meaning of existence as well as of his identity. The novel is remarkable both in its narrative technique and artistic vision.

On the whole, Anita Desai has added a new dimension by writing novels like *Voices In the City*. Probing deep into the bottomless pit of human psyche, she brings the hidden contours into a much sharper focus. Desai always emphasized character delineation caring very little for the milieu. She opts for exceptional characters in exceptional circumstances aiming at final essence of subjective life and consciousness. No character is similar to the other.

Thus, in Desai's fiction, the female is not a passive creature. She accepts the traditional role but rebels against the whole system of social relationships. They are compelled to make a choice between death and life-in-death. The thematic development of mental experience can be seen through three stages of self-delusion, fragmentation and finally visionary intuition. The charm of Anita Desai's art lies in her characters, independent, agonized, frustrated and combating with angry defiance. They are similar to our neighbours and in our society. They are individual men and women average and extreme made to stand against the general current of life.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

23

A STUDY OF MASCULINITY AND GENDER POLITICS IN LITERARY TEXTS

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Abstract:
Communication skill is one of the most essential components of human development, social interaction, and professional success. Women play a central role in shaping communication patterns within families, educational institutions, workplaces, and broader social systems. At the same time, literature reflects how gender identities and power structures are formed and maintained through cultural narratives. This paper examines the contribution of women in developing communication skills and promoting gender equality. It also explores how masculinity and gender politics are represented in literary texts and how such representations influence social attitudes toward women's participation and leadership. Through textual interpretation and gender-based analysis, the study highlights the importance of inclusive communication practices and critical reading of literature. The paper concludes that empowering women in communication and reinterpreting masculinity through literature are necessary steps toward achieving sustainable gender equality.

Keywords: *Women, Communication Skills, Gender Equality, Masculinity, Gender Politics, Literary Studies, Social Development, etc.*

Introduction:

Communication is the foundation of social life. It allows individuals to express thoughts, emotions, knowledge, and values. Effective communication is not limited to speaking fluently; it includes listening, understanding, empathy, and clarity of expression. In modern society, communication skills are closely linked with leadership, education, professional growth, and social harmony.

Women have historically contributed to communication at different levels of society. However, their contributions were often undervalued due to patriarchal social structures. In many cultures, women were expected to remain silent or confined to domestic roles. Over time, social reform movements, education, and legal reforms have expanded women's participation in public life.

Literature plays an important role in shaping social imagination. It reflects social norms and also questions them. Through stories, poems, and plays, literature presents ideas about gender roles, masculinity, power, and identity. Many classical and modern literary texts reveal the dominance of male authority and the struggle of women for recognition and voice.

This paper studies two interconnected aspects:

- ✓ The role of women in skilling communication and promoting gender equality.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

✓ The representation of masculinity and gender politics in literary texts.

The study argues that communication empowerment and critical literary analysis are both necessary for building an inclusive society.

Review of Literature:

Scholars in gender studies and communication studies have emphasized the importance of women's participation in social discourse. Feminist theorists argue that communication is closely connected with power. When women are denied space to speak, their identity is limited. The works of Virginia Woolf highlight the need for intellectual freedom and economic independence for women writers. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf explains that women require space, resources, and freedom to express themselves creatively.

Similarly, the plays of William Shakespeare often present strong male authority figures, while female characters struggle within social restrictions. Though some women characters show intelligence and courage, their power is frequently limited by patriarchal systems.

Novels by Thomas Hardy portray women facing social injustice and moral judgment. Female characters in his works suffer due to rigid social expectations and gender-based discrimination.

In Indian context, reformers like Savitribai Phule emphasized women's education as the first step toward empowerment. Education improves communication skills and builds confidence.
Recent gender studies suggest that masculinity is not natural but socially constructed. It is shaped by cultural expectations that associate men with strength, control, and authority. Literature often reinforces or questions these constructions.

Theoretical Framework:

This study is based on feminist literary criticism and gender communication theory.

Feminist Literary Criticism:

Feminist literary criticism examines how literature represents women and gender relations. It studies whether female characters are given agency, voice, and independence. It also analyzes how male dominance is presented.

Gender and Communication Theory:

Communication scholars suggest that social power influences who speaks and who remains silent. When women are encouraged to participate equally in discussions, social equality improves.
Both frameworks help in understanding the relationship between communication, literature, and gender politics.

Role of Women in Skilling Communication:

Communication within the Family:

Women play a fundamental role in early language development. Mothers and female caregivers often introduce children to language, emotional expression, and moral values. Through storytelling and conversation, they build communication foundations. This early training influences children's confidence and interpersonal skills.

Communication in Education:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

In schools and colleges, women educators contribute significantly to skill development. They guide students in public speaking, writing, group discussion, and presentation. Gender-sensitive classrooms promote equal participation of boys and girls. When girls are encouraged to speak openly, their leadership abilities grow.

Professional Communication:
In workplaces, women leaders often encourage team-based communication and collaborative decision-making. Their leadership style supports listening and dialogue rather than domination.
Modern corporate environments recognize that inclusive communication increases productivity and innovation.

Communication as Social Reform:
Communication has been a powerful tool for social change. Leaders like Savitribai Phule used education and dialogue to promote women's rights. Today, social media platforms allow women to raise their voices on issues such as equality, safety, and employment rights.

Understanding Masculinity in Literary Texts:
Masculinity is often described as strength, authority, courage, and control. However, these qualities are socially defined rather than natural. In many literary texts, male characters are shown as rulers, warriors, and decision-makers. For example, in the tragedies of William Shakespeare, political power usually rests with male figures.

Similarly, in the novels of Thomas Hardy, male authority influences the fate of female characters.

These portrayals reflect the patriarchal mindset of earlier societies. However, some texts also question rigid masculinity and show its limitations.
Modern literature challenges the idea that masculinity must be dominant. It promotes emotional openness and equality.

Gender Politics in Literary Representation:
Gender politics refers to power relations between genders. Literature often shows:
- ✓ Restriction of women's education
- ✓ Economic dependence
- ✓ Social control over marriage
- ✓ Moral judgment of women

In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf argues that women's creativity is suppressed due to financial dependence.

Such literary works reveal how gender politics shapes opportunities and identity. Modern feminist literature questions these inequalities and supports equal representation.

Communication, Identity, and Empowerment:
Communication is closely linked with identity. When women express their thoughts freely, they develop self-confidence and leadership qualities. Workshops on public speaking, technical presentation, and group discussion help women participate equally in academic and professional environments. Educational institutions should:
- ✓ Conduct communication skill programs
- ✓ Encourage women leadership forums

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

- ✓ Promote research on gender equality

Such measures strengthen inclusive development.

Contemporary Relevance:
In today's globalized world, gender equality is a major goal of social development. Women are contributing in science, engineering, politics, and literature. In technical education institutions, women engineers and academicians are proving their leadership capabilities. Communication skill training enhances their professional success. Literary studies help students understand historical inequality and build critical thinking skills.

Findings and Discussion:
The study highlights the following points:
- ✓ Women play a central role in communication skill development at family and institutional levels.
- ✓ Literature reflects and sometimes reinforces patriarchal values.
- ✓ Masculinity is socially constructed and can be redefined.
- ✓ Gender-sensitive communication practices promote equality.
- ✓ Education is the key to empowering women's voices.

The discussion shows that communication and literature are interconnected tools for social transformation.

Conclusion:
Women contribute significantly to skilling communication and promoting gender equality. Literary texts provide insight into how masculinity and gender politics influence social attitudes. By encouraging equal communication opportunities and critically analyzing literature, society can move toward balanced development. True equality can be achieved only when both men and women are given equal voice, respect, and opportunity.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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March 6th& 7th 2026

24

SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract:
In India, women's development and empowerment are important objectives of sustainable development. In this, mainly to make women economically self-reliant, to increase social prestige, and to bring about growth in decision-making capacity, the role of skill development programs is very valuable. In the present research paper, the interrelationship between skill development and women's empowerment is being studied from a geographical perspective. Rural–urban division, regional imbalance, the existing digital divide, socio-cultural factors, and infrastructure how these affect women's participation in skill training have been analyzed. Also, the impact of various government skill development schemes on women's empowerment has been explained. If geographical inequality is reduced and good training is made available to women, then women's empowerment can be achieved more effectively.

Keywords: *Skill Development, Women's Empowerment, Geographical Inequality, Rural–Urban Divide, Digital Divide, Regional Development, etc.*

Introduction:

If we see today, women are working on par with men; therefore, it is necessary to make them capable. Women's empowerment is the central point of the modern development process. Women's participation in the fields of education, health, employment, and social involvement is large, and women's progress is considered essential for the overall development of the nation. Along with this, the process of skill development makes women employable and economically self-reliant.

In India, the Central Government has started large-scale skill training programs through the Skill India Mission campaign. Similarly, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana have given training opportunities to youth in rural and urban areas. Therefore, from the point of view of women's empowerment, this is an important step. But women in rural and tribal areas are far away from development. Therefore, it is necessary to take benefit of these campaigns; without this, women will not become capable. Along with this, studying participation from a geographical point of view is also very important.

Concept of Skill Development and Women's Empowerment:

It is very important to understand the concept of skill development. Skill development means increasing a person's abilities, knowledge, and skills to make them capable for employment and entrepreneurship. The importance of skill development for women is seen in the following points:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Economic Self-Reliance:
Women need to become economically capable; therefore, it is necessary to make them self-reliant. Hence, achieving skill development is necessary. If skill development is achieved, women become strong and can play an important role in national development.

Increase in Decision-Making Power in the Family:
Due to skill development, women's role in the family does not remain limited only to that of a housewife but also increases as an economic partner. When women become economically capable, their personal opinion gains importance. When women start earning income, their opinion is considered in decisions regarding family expenditure, savings, investment, and children's education. Training also increases women's self-confidence. They can properly express their opinions on their own health, children's education, marriage, business, etc. Along with this, positive decisions regarding education can be taken. Due to women's empowerment, priority is given to girls' education. Thus, it helps in reducing gender discrimination. Awareness about health and nutrition is also an important factor along with training. Women take more appropriate decisions regarding family nutrition, cleanliness, and health. Another important factor is that social transition takes place in a good manner. Through participation in self-help or savings groups, social networks become strong. Therefore, their leadership capacity increases and their participation in that area also increase.

Social Prestige:
If women progress from the perspective of skill development, then the respect, honor, and position a person gets in society based on her work, behavior, education, economic condition, position, qualities, and contribution is called social prestige. Every person has a specific position in society. Based on the rights, duties, and expectations related to that position, a person's prestige is determined. In the same way, if women are educated, their prestige increases, their social prestige and skill development also increase, and they become capable.

Awareness of Gender Equality:
Awareness of gender equality means women and men getting equal opportunities in education, employment, resources, and decision-making processes. Through the concept of skill development, if women are given technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial training, their economic self-reliance increases and self-confidence becomes strong. Due to this, they can actively participate in decision-making processes in the family and society. In this way, skill development becomes an effective path of women's empowerment and helps in reducing gender discrimination and creating an equality-based society.

Development of Self-Confidence and Leadership Qualities:
For women's empowerment, only education is not sufficient; employment-oriented skills must also be developed. Through technical education, vocational education, and entrepreneurial training, women become self-reliant and their self-confidence increases. Due to these factors, women can participate in family and social decision-making processes. Thus, skill development becomes an effective way of women's empowerment and helps in reducing gender discrimination and building an equality-based society.

Importance of Geographical Perspective:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Geographical perspective means the study of location, region, resources, and socio-cultural conditions. In a diverse country like India, there is great inequality in opportunities, resources, and facilities according to regions.

Rural–Urban Division:
Compared to urban areas, training centers, industries, technology, and internet facilities are available in very low proportion in rural areas, whereas in urban areas these facilities are easily available. Therefore, women in cities get more skill training and employment opportunities than women in rural areas.

Lack of Training Centers:
Under the concept of skill development, women are made economically, socially, and personally capable by giving employment-oriented training. But today, due to lack of training centers in rural and remote areas, many women do not get proper guidance, technical skills, and employment opportunities. Due to this, their self-confidence, economic self-reliance, and increase in decision-making power remain limited. Therefore, if such facilities are made available at every taluka and village level, women's empowerment can take place on a large scale.

Inadequate Transport Facilities:
In rural and remote areas, due to inadequate transport facilities, women face difficulties in reaching training centers. Due to lack of safe and affordable travel arrangements, their participation decreases. This affects employment opportunities, self-confidence, and self-reliance. Therefore, if transport facilities are properly provided, positive growth can occur in women's skill development and empowerment.

Social Restrictions:
Traditional thinking, gender discrimination, early marriage, domestic responsibilities, and restrictions on working outside the home limit women's training and employment opportunities. Due to this, their self-confidence and decision-making capacity remain low. If awareness in society, understanding of gender equality, and family support are received, women's skill development can be promoted and their empowerment can be achieved more effectively.

Lack of Information:
Many women do not have proper information about available training schemes, government initiatives, and financial assistance; therefore, they cannot take benefit of these opportunities. Due to lack of information, their participation remains low and the empowerment process slows down. Therefore, through awareness campaigns, guidance camps, and effective information dissemination, women's skill development can be promoted and their economic and social empowerment can be strengthened.

Regional Inequality:
Some states in India are industrially developed, while some states are backward. In industrially developed states, skill training and employment opportunities are more. But in remote and tribal areas, opportunities are less. For example, in metropolitan cities, training in IT, digital marketing, and data management is available in large proportion, while in rural areas more emphasis is given to traditional skills.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Digital Divide:
Today, digital technology is widely used in all fields; therefore, the importance of online training has increased. But in rural areas, due to lack of internet facilities and digital tools, it becomes difficult for women to take online training. The digital divide is an important example of geographical inequality. Therefore, it is important to provide such facilities in rural areas.

Role of Skill Development Schemes:
To study women's empowerment and skill development, it is important to study the Government of India's skill development schemes. Under these schemes, women in rural and remote areas can be trained and made economically and socially capable. Under the Skill India Mission campaign, various training programs are implemented. Through this campaign, women receive training in industrial, technical, and service sectors. Under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, short-term training and certification are provided. Emphasis is given to providing training near women's homes. The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana provides employment-oriented training to rural youth. Therefore, this scheme is important for rural women.

Impact on Women's Empowerment:
Women's Skilling has impacted by various factors related with their region, social status, economic condition and political situations of the area. So, women may tackle situations and stand their own feet by taking training from skill development center.

Economic Impact:
Due to training received under skill development, women get job or self-employment opportunities. Therefore, their income increases, they become economically self-reliant, and their family's economic condition improves.

Social Impact:
Due to women's own income and increased self-confidence, their prestige in the family and society increases. Therefore, their participation in decision-making processes increases and awareness of gender equality becomes stronger.

Political and Leadership Capacity:
Due to skill development, leadership qualities, communication skills, and self-confidence increase in women. Therefore, their active participation increases in local self-government institutions and various social activities, and effective leadership is developed.

Problems and Challenges:
In women's empowerment and skill development, many difficulties arise. Mainly, social customs and traditions have a large impact. Due to many restrictions, women do not step outside the home; therefore, the concept of skill development cannot be successful. The materials required for skill development are not financially affordable, leading to economic limitations. Women have to travel to receive training; therefore, safety is also an important issue. Lack of infrastructure in rural and remote areas is also a major problem. Even after receiving training, employment opportunities are available in low proportion. Geographical inequality is also an important factor affecting all these elements.

Remedial Measures:

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

It is important to frame measures to solve the problems arising in skill development and women's empowerment:

- Start mobile training centers in rural and remote areas.
- Provide training materials in local languages.
- Increase digital infrastructure in remote areas on a large scale.
- Increase participation of NGOs and local communities.
- Create safe and accessible training environments for women.

If such measures are prepared, women's empowerment will definitely take place.

Conclusion:

Skill development and women's empowerment have a very close relationship. However, due to geographical inequality, rural–urban divide, and digital divide, large inequality is seen in women's participation. Although government schemes are improving the situation, great efforts are needed to provide equal opportunities in all regions. From a geographical perspective, if policies are framed according to local conditions, women's empowerment can be achieved more effectively. If solutions are implemented for existing problems, women's development will certainly take place. Therefore, by receiving training, women can achieve their progress.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

25

ANALYZING THE ROLE OF WOMEN-CENTRIC COMMUNICATION SKILLING IN ACHIEVING GENDER EQUITY: A SYSTEMATIC STUDY

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Abstract:
Gender equity is a foundational requirement for inclusive and sustainable development; however, persistent disparities continue to restrict women's participation across social, economic, and political spheres. While education and technical competencies have received significant scholarly and policy attention, communication skills—often categorized as soft skills—remain underrepresented in gender equity discourse. This paper presents a systematic and analytical examination of women-centric communication skilling and its contribution to achieving gender equity. Drawing on peer-reviewed literature, international policy frameworks, and documented programmatic evidence, the study evaluates how targeted communication skill development enhances women's agency, employability, leadership capacity, and decision-making power. An integrative conceptual framework is proposed to illustrate the linkage between communication skilling inputs, empowerment processes, and gender-equitable outcomes. The findings position women-centric communication skilling as a strategic and evidence-based intervention essential for fostering gender-inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Keywords:*Women Empowerment, Communication Skills, Gender Equity, Skill Development, Gender-Inclusive Development, etc.*

Introduction:

Gender equity, defined as fairness in opportunities, access, and outcomes irrespective of gender, remains a pressing global challenge despite significant policy and educational advancements. Women continue to face structural and cultural constraints that limit their participation in leadership, economic decision-making, and governance. These constraints are often reinforced by limited opportunities to acquire and practice effective communication skills.

Communication competence is central to professional success, civic participation, and leadership effectiveness. For women, particularly in patriarchal and resource-constrained contexts, deficits in communication skills are not individual shortcomings but manifestations of systemic inequality. Women-centric communication skilling programs seek to address these inequities by offering structured, gender-responsive training aimed at enhancing confidence, articulation, negotiation, and professional interaction. This paper systematically analyzes the contribution of such initiatives to achieving gender equity.

Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations:

The relationship between communication skills and gender equity can be examined through multiple theoretical perspectives. Human capital theory conceptualizes skill development as an

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

investment that enhances productivity and economic outcomes. Communication skills, in this context, directly influence employability, workplace integration, and career advancement.

The capability approach emphasizes individuals' substantive freedoms to pursue valued life outcomes. Communication competence expands these freedoms by enabling women to express preferences, participate in collective processes, and exercise agency. Feminist theory further underscores communication as a site of power, where voice and discourse shape access to resources and representation. Women-centric communication skilling thus functions as a corrective mechanism to historically gendered communication norms.

Review of Literature:

Scholarly literature consistently identifies communication skills as critical employability and leadership competencies. Empirical studies indicate that women who undergo structured communication training demonstrate higher self-efficacy, professional confidence, and participation in organizational decision-making.

International development literature emphasizes skill development as a pathway to gender equality; however, communication skills are often subsumed under general employability frameworks. This marginal positioning obscures their transformative potential. Existing research largely focuses on outcomes such as employment or income, with limited attention to communication as a mediating variable in empowerment processes. This study addresses this gap by synthesizing evidence that positions communication skilling as a central driver of gender equity.

Objectives of the Study:

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- To critically examine the role of women-centric communication skilling in promoting gender equity.
- To analyze the relationship between communication competence and women's social, economic, and leadership empowerment.
- To synthesize outcomes of women-focused communication skill development initiatives.
- To propose a conceptual framework linking communication skilling with gender equity indicators.

Research Methodology:

• Research Design:

A systematic qualitative review methodology was adopted to ensure analytical rigor and replicability. The study synthesizes secondary data from multidisciplinary sources.

• Data Sources:

- Peer-reviewed journals in gender studies, education, management, and social sciences.
- Reports from international organizations including UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, and the World Bank.
- National and international policy documents on skill development and gender equality.
- Published evaluations and case studies of women-centric communication programs

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

- **Data Analysis:**
  The selected literature was subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to communication skill acquisition, empowerment outcomes, and gender equity dimensions.

Impact of Women-Centric Communication Skilling:

A. Social Empowerment:
Enhanced communication skills enable women to participate more actively in household and community decision-making. Improved articulation and assertiveness reduce social marginalization and strengthen collective engagement.

B. Economic Empowerment:
In professional contexts, communication competence significantly influences employability, entrepreneurship, and career progression. Women equipped with effective communication skills demonstrate improved interview performance, workplace collaboration, and negotiation capacity.

C. Leadership and Political Participation:
Communication skilling enhances public speaking, persuasion, and strategic interaction, thereby supporting women's representation in leadership and governance structures. These competencies are essential for inclusive and responsive institutions.

Conceptual Framework:
The proposed framework conceptualizes women-centric communication skilling as a foundational input that generates intermediate empowerment outcomes—confidence, agency, employability, and participation—which collectively contribute to measurable gender equity outcomes such as equal opportunity, representation, and socio-economic inclusion.

Discussion:
The findings underscore the necessity of reframing communication skills as strategic empowerment instruments rather than ancillary soft skills. Integrating communication skilling with technical and vocational education enhances program effectiveness and sustainability. Gender-responsive pedagogies and culturally contextualized training models further strengthen impact.

Policy Implications and Recommendations:
- ✓ Institutionalize communication skilling within women-focused education and training programs.
- ✓ Develop gender-sensitive curricula that address socio-cultural barriers to communication.
- ✓ Promote public–private partnerships to scale evidence-based communication training initiatives.
- ✓ Encourage longitudinal research to assess long-term gender equity outcomes.

Conclusion:
To conclude, this study demonstrates that women-centric communication skilling plays a pivotal role in advancing gender equity. By strengthening women's voice, agency, and participation across social, economic, and political domains, communication skills emerge as a critical catalyst for

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

inclusive development. Embedding communication skilling within policy and institutional frameworks is essential for achieving sustainable gender-equitable outcomes.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

26

THE ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THEIR IMPACT ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYABILITY

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Abstract:
The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence into workplaces has transformed how communication occurs, how skills are evaluated, and how employability is defined. While AI-driven tools such as automated recruitment systems, digital communication platforms, and intelligent learning environments promise efficiency and inclusivity, they also raise serious ethical concerns, particularly for women's employability. This paper examines the intersection of Artificial Intelligence, communication ethics, and women's employability in the context of a global digital economy. The study explores how AI-mediated communication influences hiring practices, workplace interaction, skill visibility, and professional advancement for women. It highlights ethical challenges such as algorithmic bias, unequal digital access, misrepresentation of communication competence, and the marginalization of women's voices in automated decision-making systems. The paper argues that communication skills are no longer merely interpersonal competencies but have become digitally mediated capabilities shaped by AI technologies. Using a conceptual and literature based approach; the paper synthesizes existing research from communication studies, gender studies, digital ethics, and employability literature. It further examines the role of higher education and skill-based training in equipping women with ethical awareness, digital communication literacy, and adaptive communication strategies required for AI-driven work environments. The paper concludes that without ethical frameworks and gender-sensitive communication training, AI risks reinforcing existing inequalities rather than reducing them. It emphasizes the need for ethically informed communication education, inclusive AI design, and policy interventions to ensure that women can leverage AI technologies as tools for empowerment rather than experience them as barriers to employability.The study contributes to ongoing debates on gender equality, digital ethics, and the future of work by foregrounding communication as a critical dimension of women's professional inclusion.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Communication Ethics, Women's Employability, Digital Communication Skills, Gender Equality, Ethical AI, etc.*

Introduction:

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence has significantly reshaped contemporary workplaces, redefining how communication occurs, how skills are assessed, and how

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

employability is constructed in the digital economy. From automated recruitment systems and algorithm-driven performance evaluations to virtual collaboration platforms, AI-mediated communication now plays a central role in professional life. While these developments promise efficiency and innovation, they also introduce complex ethical challenges that directly affect women's access to employment, career opportunities.

Employability in the digital era extends beyond technical competence to include digital communication skills, ethical awareness, and the ability to navigate AI-enabled systems. For women, this shift presents both opportunities and risks. On one hand, digital platforms can enhance visibility, flexibility, and access to global labor markets. On the other, algorithmic bias, gendered data sets, and opaque decision making processes can reinforce existing inequalities and marginalize women's communication practices. The ethical dimensions of AI, particularly in how communication is evaluated and mediated, therefore become critical to understanding women's employability outcomes.

Communication ethics provides a valuable framework for examining fairness, transparency, accountability, and inclusion in AI-driven environments. Ethical communication is not only about responsible technology design but also about how individuals are trained to engage with digital systems, present their competencies, and assert professional identities. Women's communication skills, when filtered through AI based tools, risk being misinterpreted or undervalued unless ethical safeguards and gender-sensitive approaches are integrated into technological and institutional practices. Higher education and skill-based training institutions play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by equipping women with ethically informed digital communication competencies. By fostering critical awareness of AI systems alongside practical communication skills, educational frameworks can support women in adapting to the evolving demands of the future workplace. This paper explores the intersection of Artificial Intelligence, communication ethics, and women's employability, arguing that ethical communication competence is essential for ensuring equitable participation and sustainable inclusion of women in the AI driven world of work.applied to solar and wind energy integration and power system stability.

The main contributions of this review are threefold:

1. To classify physics-informed learning frameworks used in renewable energy forecasting and grid stability analysis.
2. To critically evaluate their advantages and limitations relative to traditional physics-based and data-driven approaches.
3. To identify key research challenges and future directions, including scalability, real-time implementation, and integration with advanced grid control and monitoring systems.

Conceptual Framework and Literature Review:

This section reviews key literature that informs the conceptual framework of the study by examining Artificial Intelligence in workplace communication, communication ethics in digital environments, gender bias in AI systems, and women's employability in the digital economy. Together, these strands establish how AI-mediated communication intersects with ethical and gender concerns to influence employability outcomes for women.

A. Artificial Intelligence and Workplace Communication:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Artificial Intelligence has become integral to workplace communication, particularly in recruitment, performance evaluation, and organizational interaction. AI-driven systems such as automated resume screening tools, virtual interview platforms, and conversational agents increasingly assess communication attributes including language proficiency, confidence, emotional tone, and responsiveness (Kaplan &Haenlein, 2019). Scholars argue that AI transforms communication from a relational human process into a data driven evaluative mechanism, where professional competence is inferred through algorithmic interpretation (Orlikowski& Scott, 2016).

While AI enhances efficiency and consistency, research indicates that it also normalizes specific communication patterns, often aligned with dominant cultural and linguistic norms (Bender et al., 2021). As a result, communication styles that differ due to gender, culture, or context may be undervalued or misinterpreted. This shift places communication at the core of employability, making AI mediated interaction a critical determinant of workplace inclusion.

B. Communication Ethics in Digital and Automated Environments:

Communication ethics provides a framework for evaluating fairness, transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in AI-mediated systems. In digital and automated environments, ethical concerns arise when individuals lack awareness of how their communication is collected, analyzed, and judged (Floridi et al., 2018). Scholars emphasize that opaque algorithms undermine ethical communication by limiting user agency and informed consent. Ethical communication in AI contexts also involves responsibility in design and deployment. Research highlights the need for explainable AI systems that allow individuals to understand evaluation criteria and contest automated decisions (Mittelstadt et al., 2016). From an employability perspective, ethical lapses in communication assessment can distort perceptions of competence, disproportionately affecting women and marginalized groups.

C. Women's Employability in the Digital Economy:

Women's employability in the digital economy is increasingly linked to digital communication competence, adaptability, and visibility in virtual professional spaces. Research suggests that digital platforms can expand employment opportunities for women by enabling flexible work and global engagement (World Economic Forum, 2020). However, persistent digital divides, limited AI literacy, and ethical vulnerabilities constrain these benefits. Scholars emphasize that communication skills, when combined with digital and ethical awareness, significantly enhance women's employability and career advancement (OECD, 2019). Higher education and skill-based training are therefore critical in equipping women with the competencies required to navigate AI-driven communication environments effectively and ethically.

Methodology:
ArtificialIntelligenceandWorkplaceCommunication:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

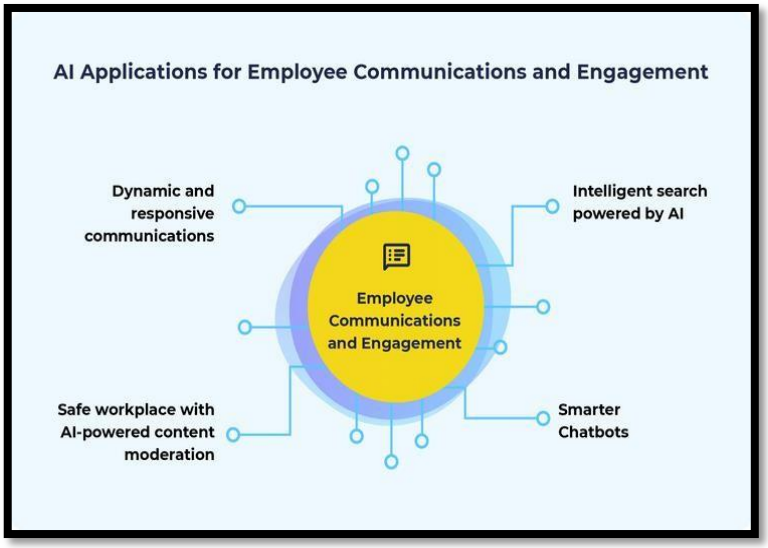

Figure1:AI-MediatedWorkplaceCommunication Systems

This figure illustrates how Artificial Intelligence is integrated into employee communication and engagement systemswithin modern organizations. At the center is employee communication, surrounded by AI-enabled functions such as dynamic and responsive communication, intelligent search, AI-powered chatbots, and content moderation.These applications demonstrate how AI mediates everyday workplace interactions by automating information flow, responding to employee queries, and managing internal communication at scale.

From the perspective of workplace communication, the image highlights a shift from human-centered interaction to technology-mediatedcommunicationsystems.Whilethese tools enhance efficiency, consistency, and accessibility, they also standardize communication formats and expectations. Such standardization can disadvantage employees, whose communication styles differ from algorithmically preferred norms, raising concerns about inclusivity and equitable evaluation, particularly for women.

CommunicationEthicsinDigitalandAutomated Environments:

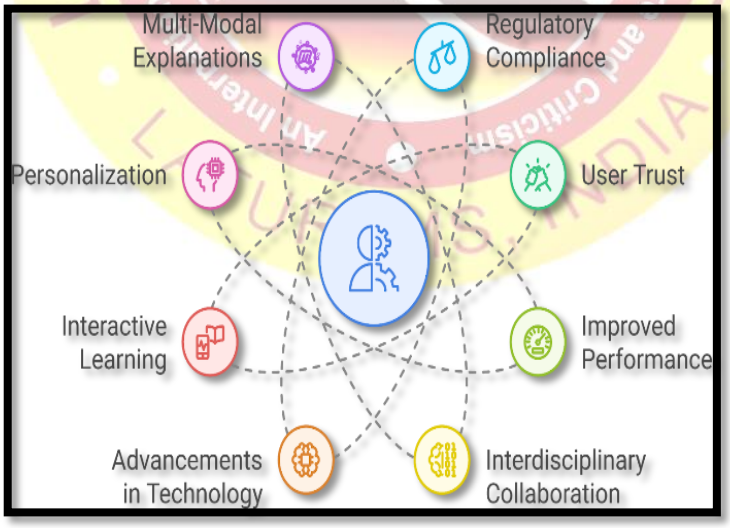

Figure2:EthicalDimensionsofAI-Mediated Communication

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

This figure presents a human-centered AI ecosystem, placing the individual at the core of interconnected ethical and functional dimensions. Surrounding elements such as personalization, multi-modal explanations, regulatory compliance, usertrust, and improved performance reflect the ethical foundations required for responsible AI deployment.

In relation to communication ethics, the image emphasizes that AI systems must be transparent, explainable, and accountable. Concepts like user trust and explainability are especially critical in AI-mediated communication, where decisions are often automated and opaque. For women in professional environments, the absence of ethical safeguards can lead to misinterpretationof communication competence. This image reinforces the argument that ethical AI design is essential to ensure fairness, inclusivity, and responsible communication practices.

GenderBiasandExclusioninAISystems:

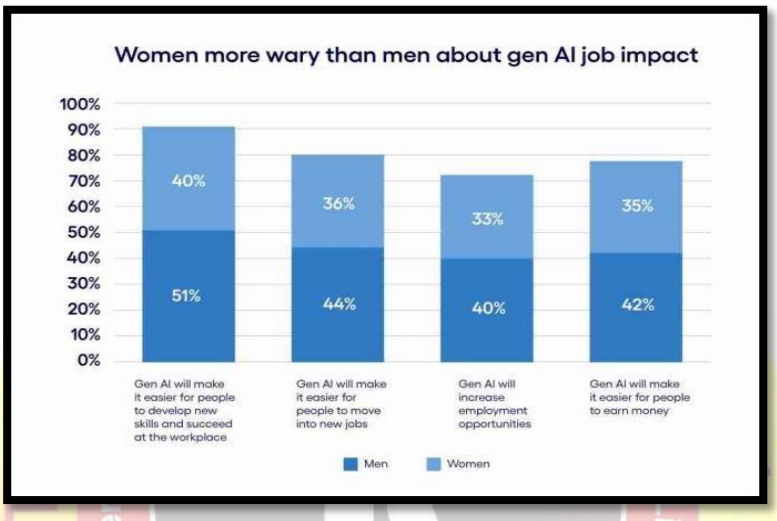

Figure3:GenderBiasandExclusioninAI-Based Communication Systems

This figure presents comparative data showing that women express greater concern than men about the impact of generative AI on jobs. Across multiple indicators such as skill development, job mobility, employment opportunities, and income potential, women consistently report higher levels of worry.

The image underscores the gende redimplications of AI adoption in the workplace. Women's heightened concern reflects existing structural inequalities, including limited access to digital upskilling, biased evaluation systems, and underrepresentation in technology-driven decision-making. In the context of communication, this data highlights howAI- mediated systems may amplify uncertainty and exclusion if ethical and gender-sensitive interventions are not implemented.

Discussion:

A. EthicalRisksofAIforWomen'sCommunication Visibility:

Artificial Intelligence systems are increasingly used to evaluate communication in recruitment, performance reviews, and workplace interactions. These systems often measure features such as language style, tone, speed of response, and confidence. However, AI tools are usually trained on existing data that reflects traditional workplace norms, which have historically been shaped

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

by male- dominated environments. As a result, communication styles commonly used by women may not be recognized or valued in the same way by automated systems.

One majorethical concern is the lack oftransparency inhow AI evaluates communication.Many women are not aware of how their communication is being analyzed or why certain decisions are made. This makes it difficult to question or correct unfair outcomes. When communication visibility depends on algorithmic judgment, women's contributions maybecomelessvisibleorunderestimated.Overtime,this can limit career growth and reinforce gender inequality in professional spaces.

B. Role of Digital Communication Competence in Employability:

In the digital workplace, employability depends not only on technical knowledge but also on strong digital communication skills. Employees are expected to communicate through emails, virtual meetings, online platforms, and AI-assisted systems. Women who are able to adapt their communication to these digital environments are more likely to succeed in AI- driven recruitment and professional evaluation processes.

Digital communication competence includes understanding how to present ideas clearly in virtual settings, engage with automated systems, and maintain a professional digital presence.When women lack access to digital tools or training, they may struggle to compete in technology-driven job markets. Therefore, communication skills should be viewed as essential employability skills rather than optional soft skills, especially in AI-mediated work environments.

C. Education and Training as Mediators of Ethical AI Use:

Education and training play a crucial role in helping women use AI systems in an ethical and informed manner. When women understand how AI tools function and how communication is evaluated, they are better equipped to navigate automated systems confidently. Training programs can help women recognize potential biases, improve digital communication strategies, and protect their professional identity.

Higher education institutions and training centers can reduce ethical risks by teaching communication ethics alongside digital skills. This combination enables women to engage critically with AI technologies rather than passively accepting automatedoutcomes. Education therefore actsasa bridgebetweentechnologyandfairness,helpingtopreventAI from reinforcing existing gender inequalities.

Recommendations:

I. EthicalAI-AwareCommunicationTrainingfor Women:

There is a strong need for communication training programs that are specifically designed for AI-driven workplaces. These programs should teach women how AI evaluates communication and how to adapt communication strategies without losing authenticity. Training should also focus on ethical awareness, including understandingbias, data usage, and decision-making processes in AI systems.

Such training can help women build confidence, improve digital presence, and communicate effectively across automated platforms. By combining communication skills with ethical understanding, women can better protect their visibility and opportunities in AI-mediated professional environments.

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

II. RoleofHigherEducationInstitutions

Higher education institutions have an important responsibility in preparing women for the future of work. Universities should include digital communication, AI literacy, and communication ethics in their academic programs. These topics should not be limited to technology courses but integrated across disciplines.

Practical learning methods, such as simulated AI-based interviews or virtual collaboration exercises, can help students gainreal-world experience. Institutions should also encourage interdisciplinary learning that connects technology, ethics, and gender studies. This approach ensures that women develop both technical awarenesss and ethical communication competence.

III. PolicyandOrganizationalInterventions:

Governments and organizations must work together to ensure ethical and inclusive use of AI in workplaces. Policies should require transparency in AI-based recruitment and evaluation systems, allowing individuals to understand and challenge automated decisions. Regular monitoring of AI tools is necessary to identify and reduce gender bias.

Organizations should maintain human oversight alongside AI systems to ensure fairness in communication assessment. Investment in digital skill developmentprogramsfor women should be prioritized at both organizational and policy levels. These interventions are essential to ensure that AI supports gender equality rather than reinforcing existing workplace barriers.

IV. Future Research Directions:

The present study provides a conceptual understanding of how Artificial Intelligence, communication ethics, and women's employability intersect in the digital workplace. However, several areas remain open for future research.

First, empirical studies are needed to examine how AI- based recruitment and evaluation systems assess women's communication in real workplace settings. Future research can involve surveys, interviews, or case studies across different industries to understand women's lived experiences with AI-mediated communication tools. Such studies would help validate the ethical concerns discussed in this paper with practical evidence.

Second, comparative research can be conducted to analyze how AI affects women's employability across different cultural, economic, and organizational contexts. Communication norms vary across regions, and AI systems may amplify or reduce gender bias depending on local practices.Cross-culturalstudieswouldprovidevaluable insights into inclusive AI design and global employability patterns.

Third, future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of AI-aware communication training programs for women. Longitudinal studies can assess how ethical literacy and digital communication competence influence career outcomes over time. This would help in designing evidence-based educational interventions.

Finally, interdisciplinary research involving communication scholars, technologists, ethicists, and policy experts is essential to develop gender-sensitive AI frameworks. Such collaboration can contribute to more inclusive and ethical AI systems that recognize diverse communication styles and promote equality in the future of work.

Conclusion:

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Artificial Intelligence has become a powerful force shaping workplace communication and employability in the digital economy. While AI-driven systems offer efficiency and innovation, they also introduce ethical challenges that disproportionately affect women. This paper has examined how AI-mediated communication, when guided by standardized and opaque evaluation mechanisms, can limit women's communication visibility and reinforce existing gender inequalities.

The study highlights the importance of communication ethics in ensuring fairness, transparency, and inclusivity in automated professional environments. It emphasizes that women's employability in the AI-driven workplace depends not only on technical expertise but also on strong digital communication competence and ethical awareness. Education and training emerge as critical mediators that can empower women to engage confidently with AI technologies and protect their professional identities. The paper concludes that ethical, gender-sensitive approaches to AI design, communication training, and policy development are essential for achieving equitable employability outcomes.

By integrating communication ethics into AI systems and educational frameworks, stakeholders can ensure that technological progress supports women's empowerment rather than reproducing inequality. This study contributes to ongoing discussions on gender, ethics, and the future of work by positioning communication as a central element of women's professional inclusion in the digital age.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

27

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA LITERACY FOR WOMEN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract:
In the contemporary digital era, digital communication and media literacy have emerged as fundamental skills influencing women's participation in education, employment, entrepreneurship, governance, and social life. As digital platforms increasingly mediate access to information, services, and decision-making processes, women's capacity to communicate effectively online and critically assess media content has become central to empowerment and gender equality. This paper explores the role of digital communication and media literacy in enhancing women's social, economic, and professional development in the 21st century. The study is based on a qualitative review of scholarly literature, international organization reports, and policy documents published between 2018 and 2023. The analysis highlights both the opportunities created by digital technologies—such as access to education, employment, and civic engagement—and the persistent challenges, including the digital gender divide, unequal access to technology, online harassment, privacy concerns, and misinformation. The findings suggest that gender-sensitive digital literacy initiatives significantly improve women's confidence, employability, entrepreneurial visibility, and participation in public life. The paper concludes that sustained collaboration among policymakers, educators, and institutions is essential to promote inclusive access, digital safety, and long-term skill development for women in a digitally driven society.

Keywords:*Digital Communication, Media Literacy, Women Empowerment, Digital Inclusion, Online Safety, etc.*

Introduction:

The rapid growth of digital technologies has reshaped how individuals communicate, access information, and engages in economic and social activities. Digital platforms—including social media, online education systems, mobile technologies, and e-governance services—now play a crucial role in shaping modern societies. In this evolving landscape, digital communication skills and media literacy have become indispensable for meaningful participation in the digital world.

For women, digital communication and media literacy are especially significant as they influence access to education, employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, and public participation. Although global efforts toward digital inclusion have increased, gender-based inequalities in access to digital resources and skills remain evident. Reports by international organizations indicate that women, particularly in developing and rural regions, continue to face barriers related to internet access, digital device ownership, and advanced digital competencies (World Economic Forum, 2023).

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Media literacy, defined as the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, create, and responsibly engage with media content, enables individuals to navigate the digital environment critically and ethically (UNESCO, 2021). When combined with effective digital communication skills, media literacy empowers women to make informed decisions, counter misinformation, and engage confidently in online spaces. This paper examines the importance of digital communication and media literacy in empowering women in the 21st century by analysing existing literature, identifying key challenges, and proposing policy-oriented recommendations.

Digital Communication and Media Literacy: A Conceptual Overview:

Digital communication refers to the exchange of information using digital technologies such as email, social networking platforms, video conferencing tools, and mobile applications. Effective digital communication goes beyond technical proficiency; it also involves clarity, ethical responsibility, and awareness of digital norms.

Media literacy complements digital communication by enabling individuals to critically interpret media messages, identify misinformation, recognize bias, and produce responsible digital content. In the context of women's empowerment, these competencies provide tools for access, expression, and autonomy. Digital communication allows women to participate in online education, professional networking, and entrepreneurship, while media literacy equips them to engage safely and critically with digital content.

Together, digital communication and media literacy help women reduce vulnerability to online risks such as cyberbullying, misinformation, and privacy violations, thereby supporting confident and informed digital participation.

Review of Literature:

Existing research highlights a strong link between digital literacy and women's empowerment. The OECD (2022) reports that women who receive digital skills training experience improved employability, higher income potential, and increased participation in leadership roles. Similarly, UN Women (2022) emphasizes that digital platforms enable women entrepreneurs to expand market access and improve business sustainability.

The GSMA (2023) mobile gender gap report demonstrates that targeted digital inclusion initiatives enhance women's access to financial services, health information, and economic opportunities. UNESCO (2021) further stresses that media and information literacy is essential for enabling women to engage critically with digital content and participate meaningfully in democratic and cultural life.

At the same time, scholars have identified significant risks associated with digital participation. Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) highlight how misinformation disproportionately affects marginalized groups, including women, by reinforcing stereotypes and limiting informed decision-making. Amnesty International (2018) documents widespread online harassment and abuse directed at women, which negatively impacts mental well-being and restricts freedom of expression. These studies underline the necessity of comprehensive digital and media literacy programs that address both opportunities and challenges.

Research Methodology:

This study employs a qualitative research approach based on a systematic review of secondary sources. Peer-reviewed journal articles, reports from international organizations, and policy documents published between 2018 and 2023 were selected based on their relevance to women's

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

digital literacy, communication skills, and empowerment. The collected data were analysedthematically to identify recurring patterns, challenges, opportunities, and policy implications related to digital communication and media literacy for women.

Findings and Discussion:

Educational Empowerment:

Digital communication and media literacy significantly improve women's access to education. Online learning platforms, virtual classrooms, and open educational resources offer flexible learning opportunities for women facing geographical, social, or time-related constraints. Women with higher levels of digital literacy demonstrate increased confidence in using technology and greater participation in lifelong learning initiatives.

Economic and Professional Advancement:

The analysis reveals that digital competencies expand women's employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. Digital communication tools facilitate job searching, remote work, and professional networking. For women entrepreneurs, social media and e-commerce platforms provide affordable means to promote products, reach broader markets, and interact with customers. Evidence suggests that women-led enterprises using digital platforms experience enhanced visibility and business growth (UN Women, 2022).

Civic Engagement and Social Participation:

Media literacy enables women to engage actively in civic and social life by helping them critically evaluate news and online information. Informed digital participation allows women to contribute to public discussions, advocate for social change, and engage in community initiatives. However, these benefits are closely linked to the availability of safe and inclusive digital environments.

Challenges to Women's Digital Participation:

Despite the advantages of digital engagement, several challenges persist. The digital gender divides remains prominent, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas where access to devices, connectivity, and training is limited (GSMA, 2023). Online safety concerns, including cyber harassment, privacy violations, and digital abuse, disproportionately affect women and discourage sustained participation (Amnesty International, 2018).

Additionally, the prevalence of misinformation and gender-biased content undermines trust in digital platforms and reinforces social inequalities. Limited awareness of digital rights and inadequate legal protection further intensify these challenges, highlighting the need for comprehensive policy and educational interventions.

Policy Implications and Recommendations:

To strengthen digital communication and media literacy among women, the following measures are recommended:

- **Equitable Access:** Investment in affordable digital infrastructure and connectivity, especially in underserved regions.
- **Gender-Sensitive Training:** Digital literacy programs tailored to women's social, cultural, and economic contexts.
- **Online Safety Awareness:** Inclusion of digital safety, privacy, and ethical behaviour in media literacy curricula.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

- **Collaborative Support:** Strong partnerships among governments, educational institutions, civil society, and the private sector to sustain digital inclusion initiatives.

Conclusion:

To conclude, the digital communication and media literacy are critical drivers of women's empowerment in the 21st century. These skills enable women to access education, enhance employment prospects, engage in entrepreneurship, and participate actively in civic life. The reviewed literature demonstrates that women equipped with strong digital and media literacy competencies are better positioned to benefit from digital transformation.

However, unequal access to technology, online harassment, privacy concerns, and misinformation continue to restrict women's full participation in digital spaces. These challenges indicate that access alone is insufficient; women must also be supported through critical media literacy education and safe, inclusive digital environments.

Therefore, promoting digital communication and media literacy for women should be a strategic priority for sustainable development. Coordinated efforts by policymakers, educators, and institutions are essential to ensure inclusive access, digital safety, and ethical online practices. Strengthening women's digital capacities will contribute significantly to gender equality, inclusive growth, and informed participation in an increasingly digital world.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

28

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: THE HINDU CODE BILL

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Abstract:
Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar known as the architect of the Constitution of India. Whatever he had experienced as vulnerable in case of the society, he tried to criticise and attack to revise or eradicate it. In 1950, the cabinet had been formed to draft the Hindu Code Bill. The Bill had been drafted and introduced in order to constitute the gender equity in case of marital issues and parental property Rights. While expounding the Bill Dr Ambedkar has introduced words like Mitakshara, Dayabhag, Stridhan or Women's Estate etc.The prime object of the Bill to free men and women from the cruel clutches of the Shastras, especially women who were ignored and crushed to push into the den of atrocities. The Hindu Code Bill to provide that marriages between Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and their different castes and sub-castes are valid. The Bill has been providing the codes for marriages between Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and their different castes and sub-castes validity. It is a matter of great pity and also of great regret both for the nation, so important a measure as the codification of Hindu Law should have come for discussion before us utmost. Dr Ambedkar thought it is the national duty that within the limitations in which the nation is placed, the nation should express her views on the various points raised by this Bill and nation should like to contribute her own mite to the fulfilment of this wish which our nation had expressed. The only way by which Dr Ambedkar could do it is to set an example by himself to make his opinion briefly. He could possibly make. That regrets it very much to have been required to come to that decision because this Bill is of such a vast character that if one were to expound it fully and thoroughly, and to explain its provisions as against the background of the existing Hindu Law, he had not the slightest doubt, but that is impossible, and the confinement of Dr Ambedkar to placing before it the most salient points which mark a departure from the existing law as across known it today. this Bill, the aim of which is to codify the rules of Hindu Law which are scattered in innumerable decisions of the High Courts and of the Privy Council, which form a bewildering motley to the common man and give rise to constant litigation, seeks to codify the law relating to seven different matters.

Keywords: *Hindu Code Bill, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Gender Equity, Inheritance Rights, Mitakshara & Dayabhag, Women's Estate, etc.*

Firstly, it seeks to codify the law relating to the rights of property of a deceased Hindu who has died intestate without making a will, both female and male.

Secondly, it prescribes a somewhat altered form of the order of succession among the different heirs to the property of a deceased dying intestate. The next topic it deals with is the law of maintenance, marriage, divorce, adoption, minority and guardianship. We will see what is the

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

ambit and the periphery of this Bill. To begin with the question of inheritance. Under this head the Bill enacts a new principle, at least for certain parts of British India.

So far as inheritance is concerned, the Hindus are governed by two different systems of law. One system is known as *Mitakashara* and the other is known as *Dayabhag*. The two systems have a fundamental difference. According to *Mitakshara*, the property of a Hindu is not his individual property. It is property which belongs to what is called a coparcenary, which consists of father, son, grandson and great grandson, except female members . All these people have a birth-right in that property and the property on the death of anyone member of this coparcenary passes by what is called survivorship to the members who remain behind, and does not pass to the heirs of the deceased.

The Hindu Code contained in this Bill adopts the *Dayabhag* rule, under which the property is held by the heir as his personal property with an absolute right except female to dispose it of either by gift or by will or any other manner that he chooses

That is one fundamental change which this Bill seeks to make. In other words, it universalises the law of inheritance by extending the *Dayabhag* rule to the territory in which the rule of the *Mitakshara* then operated. Coming to the question of the order of succession among the heirs, there is also fundamental difference of a general character between the rule of the *Mitakshara* and the rule of the *Dayabhag*. Under the M*itakshara* rule the agnates of a deceased are preferred to his cognates; under the *Dayabhag* rule the basis of heirship is blood relationship to the deceased and not the relationship based on cognatic or agnatic relationship. That is one change that the Bill makes; in other words, here also it adopts the rule of the *Dayabhag* in preference to the rule of the *Mitakshara*. In addition to this general change in the order of succession to a deceased Hindu, the Bill also seeks to make four changes. One change is that the widow, the daughter, the widow of a pre-deceased son, all are given the same rank as the son in the matter of inheritance. In addition to that, the daughter also is given a share in her father's property; her share is prescribed as half of that of the son. Here again, I should like to point out that the only new change which this Bill seeks to make, so far as the female heirs are concerned is confined to daughter; the other female heirs have already been recognised by the Hindu Women's Right to Property Act of 1937.

Therefore, so far as that part of the Bill is concerned, there is really no change in the Bill at all; the Bill merely carries the provisions contained in the Act to which I have made reference. The second change which the Bill makes so far as the female heirs are concerned is that the number of female heirs recognised now is much larger than under either the *Mitakshara* or the *Dayabhag*. The third change made by the (Bill is this that under the old law, whether the *Mitakshara* or the *Dayabhag*, a discrimination was made among female heirs, as to whether a particular female was rich or poor in circumstances at the death of the testator, whether she was married or unmarried, or whether she was with issue or without issue. All these consideration which led to discrimination in the female heirs are now abolished by this Bill.

A woman who has a right to inherit gets it by reason of the fact that she is declared to be an heir irrespective of any other considerations. The last change that is made relates to the rule of inheritance in the *Dayabhag*. Under the *Dayabhag* the father succeeds before in preference to the mother; under the present Bill the position is altered so that the mother comes before the father. So much for the order of succession of heirs to a deceased male Hindu he came to the provisions in the Bill which relates to intestate succession to females. As Members of the House who are

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

familiar with Hindu Law will know, under the existing law the property held by a Hindu female falls into two categories; one is called her *stridhan*, and the other is called "woman's property". Taking first the question of *stridhan*, under the existing law s*tridhan* falls into several categories; it is not one single category, and the order of succession to the *stridhan* of a female under the existing law varies according to the category of the *stridhan*; one category of *stridhan* has a different law of succession than another category and these rules are alike both as to *Mitakshara* as they are to the *Dayabhag*. So far as *stridhan* is concerned the present Bill makes two changes. The one change it makes is that it consolidates the different categories of *stridhan* into one single category of property and lays down a uniform rule of succession; there is no variety of heirs to the *stridhan* in accordance with the different categories of the *stridhan*—all *stridhan* is one and there is one rule of succession.

The second change which the Bill seeks to make with regard to the heirs is that the son also is now given a right to inherit the *stridhan* and he is given half the share which the daughter takes. Members will realise that in formulating this Bill and making changes in rules of succession, it is provided that while the daughter is getting half the share in the father's property, the son is also getting half the share in the mother's property so that in a certain sense the Bill seeks to maintain an equality of position between the son and the daughter. Coming to the question of the "woman's estate", as members of the House will know under the Hindu Law where a woman inherits properly she gets only what is called a 'life estate' She can enjoy the income of the property, but she cannot deal with the corpus of the property except for legal necessity; the property must pass after the death of the woman to the reversioners of her husband. The Bill, here again, introduces two changes. It converts this limited estate into an absolute estate just as the male when he inherits gets an absolute estate in the property that he inherits and secondly, it abolishes the right of the reversioners to claim the property after the widow. An important provision which is ancillary to the rights of women to inherit property contained in this Bill is a provision which relates to Dowry .To Dr Ambedkar should brood over a scandalous affair this dowry is; how, for instance, girls who bring enormous lot of property from their parents either by way of dowry or *stridhan* or gift are treated, nonetheless, with utter contempt, tyranny and oppression. The Bill provides in my judgment one of the most salutary provisions, namely, that this properly which is given as dowry to a girl on the occasion of her marriage shall be treated as a trust property, the use of which will inure to the woman and she is entitled to claim that property when she comes to the age of 18, so that neither her husband nor the relations of her husband will have any interest in that property; nor will they have any opportunity to waste that property and make her helpless for the rest of her life. Coming to the provisions relating to maintenance, there is mostly nothing new in this part of the Bill. The Bill prescribes that the dependents of a deceased shall be entitled to claim maintenance from those who inherit his property either under the rules of intestate succession or who inherit the property under his will.

There are eleven kinds of dependants, enumerated in this Bill. it is an unfortunate thing that even a concubine is included in the category of dependants, but there it is; it is a matter for consideration. The liability to maintenance is cast upon those who take the estate of the deceased. As to him , there is nothing very new in this part of the Bill. There is another part of the Bill which is important and it relates to the rights of a wife to claim separate maintenance when she lives separate from her husband. Generally, under the provisions of the Hindu law, a wife is not entitled to claim maintenance from her husband if she does not live with him in his house. The Bill, however, recognises that there are undoubtedly circumstances where if the wife has lived away

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

from the husband, it must be for causes beyond her control and it would be wrong not to recognise the causes and not to give her separate maintenance.

Consequently the Bill provides that a wife shall be entitled to claim separate maintenance from her husband if he is (1) suffering from a loathsome disease, (2) if he keeps a concubine, (3) if he is guilty of cruelty, (4) if he has abandoned her for two years, (5) if he has converted to another religion and (6) any other cause justifying her living separately. The next topic to which I wish to make a reference concerns the question of marriage. The Code recognises two forms of marriages. One is called "sacramental" marriage and the other is called "civil" marriage. As members will know, this is a departure from the existing law. The existing Hindu law recognises only what is called "sacramental" marriage, but it does not recognise what we call a "civil" marriage. When one considers the conditions for a valid sacramental marriage and a valid registered marriage, under the Code there is really very little difference between the two. There are five conditions for a sacramental marriage. Firstly, the bridegroom must be eighteen years old, and the bride must be 14 years old. Secondly, neither party must have a spouse living at the time of marriage. Thirdly, parties must not be within prohibited degree of relationship. Fourthly, parties must not be *sapindas* or in the context of cousin marriages of each other. Fifthly, neither must be an idiot or a lunatic. Except for the fact that similarity of sapindaship is not a bar to a registered marriage, so far as other conditions are concerned, there is no difference between the sacramental marriage and the civil marriage. The only other difference is that the registered marriage must be registered in accordance with the provisions in the Bill while a sacramental marriage may be registered if parties desire to do so. Comparing the rules of marriage contained in the Bill and the existing law, it may be noticed that there are three differences which the Bill makes. One is this, that while the existing law requires identity of caste and sub-caste for a valid sacramental marriage, the Bill dispenses with this condition. Marriage under the Bill will be valid irrespective of the caste or sub-caste of the parties entering into the marriage.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

29

WOMEN'S COMMUNICATION SKILLS AS TOOLS FOR LEADERSHIP AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT

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Abstract:
The contribution of women in the current workforce is immense. Although women have made considerable progress in the workforce, they are still influenced by various factors in pursuing a leadership role. The purpose of this research paper is to discuss the contribution of women in developing communication as a powerful tool in leadership and career growth. Moreover, this paper also highlights how women's participation in society helps maintain gender equality. The research paper is based on a qualitative method of investigating a single situation in depth. The study is based on the personal journey of Mrs. Srushti Subodh Malgonde, a Senior Manager at Cognizant Technology Solutions India Private Limited. The paper also focuses on how women have made a considerable contribution to society and the growth of the company in which she is employed. The personal history of the interviewee shows how she grew from a Software Engineer/Developer Trainee to a Senior Manager in a multination company in India. The paper also explains how women have to balance their role as mothers and wives and how women's communication skills are a powerful tool in overcoming the challenges faced by the company and society in general.

Keywords: *Women Leadership, Communication Skills, Career Advancement, Gender Equality, Work–Life Balance, etc.*

Introduction:

Change in the role of women in professional environments: The role of women in professional environments has witnessed a transformative change in recent decades. The expansion of educational opportunities, globalization, and the advancement of technology has provided opportunities for women to be actively involved in skilled professions, particularly in the domain of software and information technology. However, gender inequality still prevails in leadership, wages, and progression. Communication skills have become one of the primary factors for the empowerment of women in leadership and professional progression.

This is important in empowering women to effectively communicate their ideas confidently, develop networks, negotiation of roles, and leadership skills. This paper will discuss women leaders and their communication skills, their role in career success and gender equality, in relation to a real-life case study of a woman leader in the software industry.

Role of Women in Skilling Communication:

Communication skills include both written, digital, as well as both verbal and non-verbal abilities that are required to effectively communicate within a work environment. Communication skills

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

are of utmost importance for women to break free from stereotypes, to display leadership qualities, and to tackle complex work environments.

Skilling in terms of communication includes learning, practice, feedback, and being flexible. Generally, women leaders employ listening, empathy, clarity, and dialogue so as to gain trust and cohesion within teams, thus building their visibility and credibility, as well as decision-making power.

Women's Communication Skills and Gender Equality:

Equal gender distribution in the workplace is, however, not just referring to, nor limited to, the numerical representation of gender, but it is, in fact, referring to and addressing issues beyond that, such as equitable distribution of opportunities, leadership, and platforms of decision-making, among others.

The role of women in addressing gender biases through communication skills is of by adopting an assertive yet empathetic style, women leaders can influence policies, mentor junior professionals, and support the progress of diversity and inclusion programs. Communication, therefore, emerges not just as a personal skill, but also as a collective instrument for social change.

Research Methodology:

The career development of Mrs.Srushti Subodh Malgonde, a senior manager at Cognizant Technology Solutions India Private Limited, was examined in this study using a qualitative case study methodology. Secondary sources were used in the study to collect the required information and consider the respondent's professional achievements.

The case study approach will enable a thorough understanding of how leadership abilities, effective work-life balance, and communication skills contribute to ongoing professional development in a global corporate environment.

Case Study: Career Advancement of a Woman Leader in Software Industry:

Mrs.Srushti Subodh Malgonde's professional success is deeply rooted in her consistent academic excellence and strong communication developed right from an early stage of her life. Her educational career reflects a pattern of discipline, determination, and intellectual capability that later translated into professional leadership.

Her outstanding academic performance in school has been commendable under the Maharashtra State Board curriculum: State Board Topper in 10th grade achieving 96% and State Board Topper in 12th grade obtaining 90%, attaining the highest rank. These serve as proof of outstanding conceptual precision, clear expression, and enthusiastic effort on paper, which establish the foundation for professional excellence in written communication.

In the academic field, her academic excellence was further continued during her engineering education, as she excelled in her academic performance throughout her undergraduate course of studies in engineering college. In addition to academic knowledge, she also developed her skills in interpersonal communications and presentation during her academic course of study in engineering college. With her academic as well as professional skills, she was placed on the college campus in Cognizant Technology Solutions India Private Limited and began her professional career in the software industry.

Mrs.Malgonde started her career as a Software Engineer/Developer Trainee, during which, she sought to advance her technical skills, as well as lay a foundation in basic communication skills such as proper technical documentation, team management, among other skills, which

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

enabled her to quickly adapt to the organizational needs, thereby having a tangible impact on the outcome of the projects.

This was particularly so as she moved to positions requiring greater responsibilities, and her ability to communicate and explain complex technologies to non-technical stakeholders became one of her core strengths. Her ability to strategically communicate, organize, present ideas, solve problems, and lead others facilitated her progressive move to ever more powerful positions of management.

Mrs.Malgonde is currently serving as a Senior Manager for Cognizant Technology Solutions India Private Limited, managing multifunctional teams while at the same time working with international clients, thus being a key contributor to strategic decision-making processes. The effectiveness of her leadership can be measured through her communication abilities, sensitivity, and leadership flexibility. This case study shows that the advancement of her career is not the only determinant of her competence to communicate effectively or her leadership and management abilities while taking into consideration her other responsibilities as a woman.

Balancing Professional Growth with Roles as Mother and Wife:

One of the biggest challenges, which working women commonly face, is the balancing act required for their professional and family life. Mrs. Malgonde's story is an example of work and life integration, not work and life separation. The woman was able to fulfill her roles as a mother and wife, as well as excel in her career through time management and efficient communication with her family and stakeholders at the workplace.

Findings and Discussion:

Moreover, the case study showed that the communication skill acted as a catalyst for the advancement of women to greater leadership careers. The key findings include visibility, team performance, conflict resolution, and building professional networks. Importantly, the research has also emphasized that organizations benefit from women leaders who have an inclusive and empathetic communication style, which can result in sustainable performance and gender balance.

Conclusion:

The research concludes that women's communication abilities are instrumental as tools in any leadership position and also in career advancement as well as promotion of gender equality. The professional path of Mrs.Srushti Subodh Malgonde highlights the value of continuous development in communication skills as a tool to attain excellence in women leadership. The study recommends the successful implementation of integrated communication training programs in the corporations to uplift women leaders across various industries worldwide.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

30

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS WITH DIGITAL STRATEGIES: THE POWER OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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Abstract:
Women entrepreneurship has emerged as a critical driver of inclusive economic growth, innovation, and employment generation across both developed and developing economies. Despite increasing policy support and financial inclusion initiatives, women entrepreneurs continue to face structural and socio-cultural barriers that limit business scalability. Among the most underexplored determinants of entrepreneurial sustainability is business communication competence. This study investigates the role of strategic, negotiation, digital, and leadership communication in strengthening women-led enterprises. A mixed-method research design was adopted, including a structured survey of 126 women entrepreneurs across retail, service, manufacturing, education, and digital sectors, supported by qualitative case studies. Findings indicate a significant relationship between communication competence and revenue stability, customer retention, partnership development, and investor engagement. Although 84% of respondents actively use digital platforms for business promotion, 62% lack formal communication training. Entrepreneurs with structured communication training reported higher confidence levels and improved financial performance. The study proposes a Women-Centered Business Communication Capability Model and recommends integrating communication modules into entrepreneurship development ecosystems to enhance gender-equitable economic participation.

Keywords: *Women Entrepreneurs, Business Communication, Digital Entrepreneurship, Gender Equality, Communication Skills, etc.*

Introduction:

Women entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of sustainable and inclusive economic development. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2023), women's entrepreneurial participation has steadily increased worldwide, yet gender disparities in business scale and revenue generation persist. The World Economic Forum (2023) also reports that economic participation gaps remain a major component of the global gender gap index.

In India and other emerging economies, women-owned enterprises are expanding across diverse sectors including digital services, education, handicrafts, healthcare, and micro-manufacturing. Government schemes such as Stand-Up India and Startup India have improved financial accessibility. However, financial support alone does not guarantee sustainability. Women entrepreneurs frequently face credibility challenges, negotiation barriers, and limited access to influential business networks (Brush, 98).

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

One critical yet underemphasized factor influencing entrepreneurial outcomes is business communication. Communication competence shapes investor perceptions, customer trust, leadership effectiveness, and partnership formation (Eddleston, 40). In modern digital economies, communication also determines brand positioning and market visibility.

This paper argues that business communication must be recognized as a core entrepreneurial capability rather than a supplementary soft skill. For women entrepreneurs, communication competence can reduce structural disadvantages and enhance economic empowerment.

Objectives of the Study:

The study aims to:

- Examine the theoretical relationship between women entrepreneurship and business communication.
- Analyse the impact of communication competencies on business performance.
- Evaluate digital communication as a gender-equality enabler.
- Empirically assess communication skill levels among women entrepreneurs.
- Propose a structured capability model for training integration.

Review of Literature:

Women Entrepreneurship and Structural Barriers:

Research highlights those women entrepreneurs operate within socially embedded contexts influenced by gender norms (Henry, 34). Brush, 98, emphasize that women-led ventures often face limitations in accessing venture capital and high-growth networks. Ahl and Nelson (2015) argue that policy discourse itself can shape how women entrepreneurship is perceived and supported.

Roomi and Parrott (2018) found that socio-cultural expectations often limit women's confidence in public negotiation and leadership communication. These barriers directly influence business expansion decisions.

Communication and Entrepreneurial Performance:

Entrepreneurial success is closely linked to persuasive communication and negotiation capacity. Zhao et al. (2020) identify self-efficacy as a mediator in entrepreneurial intention and performance, with communication competence playing a key role. Eddleston, 40 demonstrate that signalling effects, including professional communication style, influence investor decisions. Similarly, Carter and Shaw (2018) observed that structured communication training enhances women-owned firm performance.

Digital Communication as an Equalizer:

Digital entrepreneurship literature suggests that online platforms reduce traditional barriers to entry (Nambisan, 2021). UNESCO (2022) reports that as far as the ecosystems of conventional business are concerned, the digital communication enables women entrepreneurs to bypass gatekeeping mechanisms. OECD (2023) emphasizes that digital literacy significantly improves sustainability among women-led enterprises. Social media branding, digital storytelling and online customer engagement create visibility and credibility independent of traditional networks.

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Gender Stereotypes and Communication Perception:
Gupta et al. (2020) argue that gender stereotypes influence entrepreneurial evaluation processes. Women are often perceived as less assertive in formal negotiation environments. Effective strategic communication can counteract stereotype-driven bias and reinforce professional authority. Despite growing academic attention, limited empirical research directly measures communication capability among women entrepreneurs. This study addresses that research gap.

Conceptual Framework:
The Women-Centered Business Communication Capability Framework proposed in this study includes five interrelated dimensions:

- **Strategic Communication** – Vision articulation and business storytelling.
- **Negotiation Communication** – Contract discussions and financial bargaining.
- **Market Communication** – Customer engagement and brand messaging.
- **Digital Communication** – Online presence and social media interaction.
- **Leadership Communication** – Internal team management and stakeholder coordination.

These dimensions collectively influence enterprise sustainability and growth potential.

Research Methodology:
A mixed-method research design was adopted.

Sample:
A structured questionnaire was administered to 126 women entrepreneurs from urban and semi-urban regions. Participants were selected through purposive sampling via business networks.

Data Collection Tools:
Survey components included:

- Communication skill self-rating (1–5 scale)
- Digital platform usage frequency
- Negotiation confidence assessment
- Training exposure
- Revenue stability indicators

Two in-depth case studies supplemented quantitative findings.

Data Analysis:
Descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation were used to identify correlations. Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative interviews.

Findings and Analysis:
Survey findings indicate:

- 78% believe effective customer communication drives repeat business.
- 71% experience difficulty in formal negotiation environments.
- 84% actively use digital platforms for promotion.
- 62% lack structured communication training.
- Communication-trained entrepreneurs show 27% higher revenue stability.

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Cross-analysis indicates strong correlation between communication confidence and investor outreach frequency. Entrepreneurs with higher digital communication proficiency reported fewer gender-based market access challenges.

These findings align with OECD (2023) and World Bank (2023) reports emphasizing digital capability as a sustainability driver.

Case Study Insights:

Case Study 1: Digital Education Enterprise:

A woman-led digital education startup scaled nationally using storytelling-based branding strategies. Structured webinar communication enhanced brand credibility. Improved investor pitch articulation led to successful funding rounds.

Case Study 2: Manufacturing Enterprise:

A small-scale manufacturing entrepreneur reduced procurement costs by 14% after negotiation training. Improved supplier communication increased trust and contract stability. Both cases validate the theoretical framework linking communication competence with business performance.

Discussion:

The findings confirm that communication capability acts as an entrepreneurial multiplier. Strategic communication strengthens brand differentiation. Negotiation communication enhances financial outcomes. Digital communication expands market access. Consistent with Nambisan (2021), digital tools reduce structural inequality in entrepreneurial ecosystems. Furthermore, communication competence enhances entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Zhao, 95). Training gaps remain a critical concern. Many incubation programs focus on finance and compliance while underemphasizing communication development. Integrating communication modules can significantly improve women-led enterprise outcomes.

Women-Centered Business Communication Capability Model:

The proposed model consists of five progressive layers:

- **Confidence Foundation Layer** – Addressing psychological barriers.
- **Skill Development Layer** – Negotiation and presentation mastery.
- **Strategic Branding Layer** – Value proposition clarity.
- **Digital Engagement Layer** – Online platform management.
- **Leadership Excellence Layer** – Stakeholder communication.

This model can be embedded into university entrepreneurship curricula, incubation programs, and policy frameworks.

Policy Implications:

- Government entrepreneurship schemes should include mandatory communication certification.
- Incubation centers must establish digital branding labs.
- Financial institutions should conduct investor communication workshops.
- Universities should integrate business communication into entrepreneurship programs.

Future Research Directions:

Future studies may:

- Conduct longitudinal impact assessments of communication training.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

- Compare rural and urban communication barriers.
- Employ regression analysis for statistical validation.
- Explore cross-country comparisons.

Conclusion:

To conclude, women entrepreneurship represents a powerful engine of inclusive growth. However, financial access alone cannot guarantee sustainability. Communication competence significantly influences investor confidence, customer retention, leadership authority, and market positioning. This study empirically confirms the relationship between communication capability and enterprise performance. Digital communication tools further enhance gender-equitable participation. Therefore, structured communication training must be integrated into entrepreneurship development ecosystems. Strengthening communication capabilities will not only empower women entrepreneurs but also accelerate national economic progress.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

31

WOMEN BANKERS AS TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNICATORS: ENHANCING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

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Abstract:
Women leaders in the banking sector increasingly act as agents of social transformation beyond their formal financial roles. This study examines women bankers as change communicators who promote political participation, gender equality, and institutional accountability. Their empathetic leadership and social credibility make them approachable, enabling women and youth to voice sensitive issues such as harassment, discrimination, and governance failures. Women leaders facilitate the mobilization of higher authorities to address women-centric concerns, ensure effective implementation of rules and regulations, and help reduce corruption through transparent and ethical practices. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature from leadership studies, gender communication, political participation, and financial governance, the paper argues that women's leadership in banking contributes to reduce gender-based violence, improved ethical standards, and strengthened democratic engagement. The study highlights the need to promote women into leadership roles to achieve inclusive development and participatory governance.

Keywords: *Women Leadership; Banking Sector; Change Communication; Gender Equality; Political Participation; Governance, etc.*

Introduction:

Context and Rationale:

The banking sector occupies a unique and powerful position within modern societies. Banks influence not only economic growth but also social development, governance, and public trust. Leadership within banking institutions therefore has far-reaching implications. Traditionally, this leadership has been male-dominated, limiting the representation of women's perspectives in decision-making processes.

In recent decades, however, women have increasingly entered leadership positions in banking. Their presence has coincided with growing recognition of gender equality as a key driver of sustainable development, democratic participation, and ethical governance. Women bankers, particularly in leadership roles, often function as change communicators—individuals who translate personal and collective grievances into institutional and policy responses.

Problem Statement:

Despite constitutional guarantees and legal protections, women continue to face:

- Harassment and violence (attāyachar)
- Economic exclusion

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

- Political underrepresentation
- Institutional neglect of gender-specific problems
- The absence of empathetic leadership and effective communication channels often prevents women's issues from reaching higher authorities. This paper contends that women banking leaders reduce this communication gap and act as catalysts for institutional and political change.

Objectives of the Study:
This research aims to:

- Analyze women bankers' role as change communicators
- Examine how women leaders reduce harassment and corruption
- Explore their influence on political participation and civic engagement
- Study their effectiveness in implementing rules and regulations
- Provide policy recommendations for inclusive leadership

Review of Literature:
Women and Leadership Studies:
Extensive research confirms that women leaders differ from men in leadership style, often adopting participatory, inclusive, and ethical approaches (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Studies show that women leaders emphasize transparency, accountability, and collective problem-solving. The World Economic Forum (2018) highlights those financial institutions with women leaders demonstrate stronger governance and risk management.

Women in Banking Sector:
Women remain underrepresented in senior banking positions globally. International Banker (2023) notes that while women form a large proportion of the banking workforce, they occupy fewer board-level roles. However, banks with higher female representation show improved compliance, customer trust, and social responsibility.

Gender and Change Communication:
Change communication theory emphasizes dialogue, trust-building, and problem framing. Scholars argue that women's communication styles foster safer spaces for expressing grievances—especially related to gender-based violence and discrimination.

Political Participation and Women's Leadership:
Women's leadership in non-political sectors indirectly enhances political participation by:

- Encouraging civic awareness
- Enhancing confidence among women
- Creating leadership role models

Westminster Foundation for Democracy (2022) notes that women leaders across sectors contribute to democratic deepening even without holding elected office.

Theoretical Framework:
Representation Theory:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Representation theory argues that leaders who share lived experiences with marginalized groups are more effective advocates. Women leaders understand gendered challenges, enabling them to communicate problems authentically to decision-makers.

Feminist Leadership Theory:
Feminist leadership emphasizes care, ethics, and inclusivity. Women bankers often integrate these principles, creating institutional cultures that discourage corruption and abuse of power.

Change Communication Model:
Women bankers function across three levels:

- **Micro-level** – Listening to individual grievances
- **Meso-level** – Institutional communication and policy formulation
- **Macro-level** – Engagement with regulators, policymakers, and society

Women Bankers as Change Communicators:
Accessibility and Trust:
Women—especially young women—approach women leaders more freely, viewing them as sisters or maternal figures. This relational trust enables open communication of sensitive issues such as harassment, workplace injustice, and exploitation.

Problem Identification and Framing:
Women leaders effectively frame women's issues as institutional and societal concerns rather than personal complaints, increasing the likelihood of action by higher authorities.

Mobilization of Higher Authorities:
Women bankers engage with:

- Regulatory bodies
- Internal committees
- Government agencies

Their structured communication ensures that women's problems are documented, escalated, and addressed systematically.

Reducing Harassment (Attāyachar) Against Women:
Women leaders strengthen enforcement of:

- POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) mechanisms
- Ethical grievance redressal systems
- Workplace safety protocols

Their leadership discourages perpetrators and creates fear among corrupt and abusive actors due to enhanced accountability.

Women Leadership and Anti-Corruption:
Studies link women leadership with:

- Lower corruption tolerance
- Ethical financial decision-making
- Transparent implementation of rules

Women leaders are perceived as rule-abiding and fair, strengthening institutional credibility.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Political Participation and Democratic Impact:
Indirect Political Influence:
Women bankers influence political participation by:

- Encouraging women's civic awareness
- Supporting women-centric financial inclusion programs
- Advocating gender-sensitive policies

Role Modeling Effect:
Visibility of women leaders inspires younger generations to participate in governance, activism, and politics.

Implementation of Rules and Regulations:
Women leaders ensure:

- Fair application of policies
- Reduced favoritism
- Strong compliance culture

When women leaders communicate issues clearly, higher authorities respond more effectively due to clarity, credibility, and ethical framing.

Challenges Faced by Women Bank Leaders

- Gender bias and stereotypes
- Work-life balance pressures
- Limited mentorship
- Cultural resistance

Despite these barriers, women leaders continue to assert transformative influence.

Policy Recommendations:

- Mandatory gender diversity in bank leadership
- Leadership training for women bankers
- Strengthening grievance redressal mechanisms
- Encouraging women-led financial literacy initiatives
- Institutional recognition of women as change communicators

Conclusion:
To conclude, women bankers as change communicators play a pivotal role in advancing gender equality, reducing harassment, curbing corruption, and strengthening democratic participation. Their empathetic leadership and ethical governance transform banks into socially responsive institutions. Promoting women into leadership positions is not merely a matter of equity but a strategic necessity for inclusive and accountable governance.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

32

WOMEN LEADERS AS CHANGE COMMUNICATORS FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

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Abstract:
Women leaders have increasingly emerged as essential agents of change, not only through their political roles but also as communicators who form public conversation and mobilise communities. This research examines how women leaders engage in communication strategies to promote political participation and gender equality. Drawing on case studies from diverse contexts, the study highlights the ways in which women leaders use speeches, storytelling, grassroots mobilisation, and digital platforms to challenge patriarchal norms and inspire civic engagement. Their communicative practices encourage inclusivity, boost marginalised voices, and reshape narratives around justice and empowerment. At the same time, the research acknowledges the structural and cultural barriers women leaders face, including gender bias, media stereotyping, and limited access to resources. By analysing both their successes and challenges, this study underscores the transformative potential of women's leadership in building impartial democracies. Ultimately, it argues that effective communication by women leaders is not only a tool of political participation but also a catalyst for advancing gender equality in society.

Keywords: *Gender Equality, Superiority Complex, Communicators, Feminism, Democracy, Empowerment, Women's Rights, Feminist Leadership, etc.*

Introduction:

"There is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish." – Michelle Obama.

Women work as a pillar of society. Women work as a shaper of the raw world. Human race history is filled with lots of actions against the opposite gender or the female gender. Society is recognised by its residents and dwellers' behaviour towards their neighbours. The most important thing in the world is Equality and fraternity. All over the world, all major countries followed the male-dominant rules. Even though on paper women got rights for their lives but still considered inferior to men. Women struggle for Equality paid them back, but that's not sufficient to live like men.

Women's empowerment plays a very prominent role in society building. Women have more capabilities to explore new things and create many new gifts for society. Every country has its own law and efforts to give liberty to women. A male-dominant society focused on the development and works of men only, but women development helps to grow both men and women. Women in the political sector can sense the pain, suffering, grief and injustice more than men.

Indian culture and heritage have a significant impact on the world. Indian sacraments and teachings of peace and freedom have been followed by ancient kings to modern rulers. The

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Indians' non-violent policy created a deep impact on the peace-loving people. As we know coin has two sides; in the same way, Indian society suffered from prejudice against women. In ancient times, many beliefs targeted Indian women. Liberty for women was just a nightmare for ancient and medieval women in India. As the new era begins in India, new laws and rights created to protect women. India, after the implementation of the Constitution, brought freedom and liberty for women in India.

Women's condition all over the world remained the same and were treated as inferior to men, but nowadays the active participation of women in politics helped them to fight for equality and equal respect in society. This paper is going to explore the past condition of women in men dominant society, present day condition of women and the future of women in society. And how politics created confidence in women to fight against the injustice and get equality in society.

History of Gender Inequality or the Weird Perspectives towards Women:

Newborn left to die:

Unfortunately, this is a sad reality even today, also followed by the people. In ancient time newborn girls were considered a burden, and the killing of baby girls was a common habit of the people. The most common dialogue of the baby girl's parents was ‘’ A daughter is too burdensome, and we just don’t have the money.

Menstruating women as a curse:

This was the most common practice of the men in the past that women of menstruating cycle considered as unhygienic and unholy. The Roman philosopher Pliny the Elder wrote, ‘’ On the approach of a woman in this state, milk will become sour’’.

Women used as toys for men:

Women were rated as toys for the men. Women's beauty and body were considered a pleasurable thing. In many culture women were used as slaves to enjoy with them and abandoned them later. In India Devadasi tradition was one of the brutal beliefs of society. Young girl left to worship god but later, men in society used them as slaves and prostitutes.

Social Restrictions:

Patriarchal society believes that all decisions should only be made by men. Men in the past and present were allowed to roam wherever they want but strict restrictions for women. Small talk with strangers and roaming in the market leads to torture and harassment for women. The most crucial treatment with women was in England, where they put quarrelsome women in the scold’s bridle, a metal mask with sharp teeth that had a bell attached, to make sure everyone came out and mocked the woman who dared complain.

Sati:

All over the world, women were tortured if they made any independent decision. But in India, one tradition was very brutal ‘’Sati’’. Child marriage was the common practice in India, but the tragic part of the marriage was the death of the young bride's husband. A young girl was forced to jump into the pyre of her husband with her senses.

Benefits of women's participation in politics:

In the present day, women are still trying to get respect and justice in a male-dominant society. The best way to get their rights is to become part of the system. Politics is controlling the world.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Politics could give or snatch the rights from a person. In 2023, ETV Bharat published an article on women in politics in different regions of the world.

- There are different benefits of women in Politics.
- Fight for equality
- Self-realisation
- Justice can't deny
- Freedom
- Strengthening Democracy
- Sensitivity for need one
- Break the chain
- Social Priorities
- Peacebuilding
- Women's interest in politics worked as the nectar for women to get their rights without begging. The voice of a single free person is louder than a group of slaves. Women's active participation in politics works as a way of a good life with respect and equality.

Challenges before Women politicians:

- **Gender Bias and Media Stereotyping**: Women leaders are often scrutinised more for their appearance or personal lives than for their policies.
- **Structural Barriers**: Patriarchal institutions, limited resources, and cultural expectations restrict their influence.
- **Balancing Roles**: Many women leaders face the dual burden of professional leadership and traditional family responsibilities.
- Example: In India, women leaders at the local panchayat level often struggle against entrenched patriarchal norms despite constitutional quotas.

Attempts to raise women's social status:

Women's attempts to get their rights ended with a few achievements which they never imagined before. The active participation in politics and voices against inequality resulted as world with more freedom and equal respect. The following are a few feats of women's fight for equality.

- **Gender Equality:**

In the late 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, voices were raised for equal treatment of women. Women were harassed and dominated by society, but the same work and the same payment became the identity for women to get equal to men. Employment rights allowed women to earn equally.

- **Women's Suffrage:**

Governments of any country rule not only men of the state but women of the state. Women in the 19th century fought for the right to vote. Helen Kendrick Johnson, in 1897, fought for equal rights for women in the election. New Zealand was the first country to allow women to vote in 1893.

- **Property right:**

Patriarchal society promotes males in the family as their heir. Women were used as servants in society. Women realised the discrimination in society and raised their voice for an equal share in property. Ernestine Rose, Paulina Right Davis, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Harriet Beecher Stowe in England raised their voices for property rights.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

- **Freedom of movement:**

Freedom to roam and visit our loved land is by birth right of any human being, but women were restricted by their male guardians. New laws and guidelines created by international instruments, including Article 15 (4) of CEDAW, to protect the rights of women. Still in Saudi Arabia male guardian is needed with women to roam in the market.

- **Discrimination;**

Discrimination in the workplace is the worst treatment for women. Male considered intellectual and more powerful than women, and it shows in their mentality. The worst thing is that women get less than they deserve. The United Nations Working Group on business and human rights (WGBHR) stated that patriarchy against women is stuck with male society. About the discrimination against women European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) defined the right to freedom from discrimination as including not only the obligation of states to treat in the same way persons who are in analogous situations, but also the obligation to treat in a different way persons who are in different situations.

- **Education for All (Right to Education):**

Before the nineteenth century, women's education and learning were considered a bad practice. Women are not allowed to get any formal education, not even allowed to go and attend the basic learning classes. The Convention Against Discrimination in Education described the discrimination in education as "any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, *sex*, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education". Women today are getting a formal education with men. Though many countries still need to implement laws for women's education. Afghanistan is a country that recently banned all kinds of formal education for women. So, education for all is still in progress.

- **Reproductive, Birth and abortion:**

Women created the world with pain and suffering. Pregnant women faced lots of challenges and problems before pregnancy. Patriarchal society always prefer boy over girls. The birth of a girl is considered a sin. But women somehow got a few laws to keep their children or reject the demand for children. Reproductive rights were endorsed by the twenty-year Cairo Programme of Action, which was adopted in 1994 at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, and by the Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. In the 1960s, reproductive rights activists promoted women's right to bodily autonomy, with these social movements leading to the gain of legal access to contraception and abortion during the next decades in many countries. Women needed full control over their bodies to make decisions. The new slogan ‘’ "control over our own bodies" became headlines in the 1960s, to get full authority of Birth control. Society, religion, and personal beliefs worked as obstacles for women to make their own decisions.

Present Condition of Women in India:

“A country's greatness lies in its undying ideals of love and sacrifice that inspire the mothers of the race.” – Sarojini Naidu.

Indian society considered women to be sacred or goddesses. But a few restrictions and taboo rules against women were also created by patriarchal Indian society. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Indian women began to realise their rights and place in society. They raised their voices

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

against injustice. The Constitution of India attempted to secure women from injustice, with many **articles and laws specially created for women.**

- Provision under the Constitution of India, Right to Equality (Article 14)
- Prohibition of Discrimination (Article 15)
- Equal Opportunities in Public Employment (Article 16)
- Right to Life and Personal Liberty (Article 21)
- Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 39)
- Article 42: Maternity Relief
- Article 51A(e): Fundamental Duties
- Article 243D & 243T: Political Representation

Famous Women political leaders:
Women leaders' active participation helped other oppressed women to fight for their justice and get their rights. The formation of a new era and new learning began with women's active participation in politics and social activities. The following are a few women politicians those who broke the rules of solo monopoly and became the inspiration and voice of other women.

Angela Merkel (Germany):
Angela Merkel, frequently referred to as the "de facto leader of the European Union," was Germany's Chancellor from 2005 to 2021.

Kamala Harris (United States):
Kamala Harris made history in 2021 as the first woman, Black, and South Asian Vice President of the United States. Her career as a prosecutor, followed by service as California's Attorney General and later as a United States Senator, illustrates her commitment to justice and equality.

Malala Yousafzai (Pakistan):
Malala Yousafzai's name has become synonymous with the battle for female education. At the age of 15, she survived a Taliban assassination attempt for advocating for education in Pakistan's Swat Valley. Her tenacity and unflinching dedication to her cause earned her the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, making her the youngest recipient.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Liberia):
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became Africa's first elected female head of state, leading Liberia from 2006 to 2018.

Margaret Thatcher (United Kingdom):
Margaret Thatcher, known as the "Iron Lady," was the United Kingdom's first woman Prime Minister, serving from 1979 to 1990.

Jacinda Ardern (New Zealand):
She was the Prime Minister of New Zealand (2017-23)

Tsai Ing-wen (Taiwan)
Tsai Ing-wen, Taiwan's first female president, has played a key role in redefining the country's global standing. Since taking office in 2016, she has rebuilt Taiwan's economy, increased its defence capabilities, and pushed for its sovereignty in the face of mounting pressure from China.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan):
Benazir Bhutto made history as the first woman to lead a Muslim-majority country, serving as Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1988 to 1990 and again from 1993 to 1996. Bhutto, a charismatic leader, pushed for women's rights, economic modernisation, and social changes.

Golda Meir (Israel):
Golda Meir was Israel's first and only female Prime Minister, serving from 1969 until 1974. Known as the "Iron Lady" of Israeli politics, she was instrumental in building the new nation during difficult times, including the Yom Kippur War. Meir's commitment to her country and honest approach to diplomacy gained her international recognition.

Indian influential women politicians:
Indira Gandhi:
Indira Gandhi was India's first and only female Prime Minister, serving from 1966 until 1977 and again from 1980 until her assassination in 1984. Her reign was characterised by transformative programs, such as the Green Revolution, which made India self-sufficient in food production. Gandhi's leadership throughout the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 demonstrated her strategic skill and determination.

Mamata Banerjee:
She leads the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), which she founded in 1998 after splitting from the Indian National Congress. Her landmark achievement came in 2011, ending 34 years of Communist rule in West Bengal to become the state's first female Chief Minister, a role she has held through landslide victories in 2016 and 2021. Key initiatives include Kanyashree, promoting girls' education, and returning 400 acres of land to Singur farmers.

Sushma Swaraj:
A Supreme Court lawyer by profession, Swaraj began her political journey with the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad in the 1970s, joining the BJP in 1980. She became Haryana's youngest cabinet minister at 25 in 1977, served as Delhi's first female Chief Minister in 1998, and was elected to Parliament seven times, notably winning Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh, by over 400,000 votes in 2014.

Sheila Dikshit:
Elected to the Lok Sabha from Kannauj in 1984, she gained prominence as Delhi's Chief Minister from 1998 to 2013, winning three consecutive terms. Her tenure transformed Delhi through infrastructure projects like the Delhi Metro, expanded bus fleets, and flyovers, alongside initiatives like Bhagidari for citizen governance. She served as Union Minister of State in the 1980s and later as Kerala Governor in 2014.

Jayalalithaa Jayaram:
A former Tamil film star with over 140 movies, she graduated from Stella Maris College, Chennai, before entering politics in 1982 under the mentorship of M.G. Ramachandran. She became AIADMK's propaganda secretary, won her first assembly election from Bodinayakkanur in 1984, and served as Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister six times (1991–1996, 2001, 2002–2006, 2011–2014, 2015–2016).

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Mayawati:
She rose as a four-time Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh (1995, 1997, 2002–2003, 2007–2012), becoming India's first Dalit woman Chief Minister. Her 2007 landslide victory, leveraging a Dalit-Brahmin coalition, reshaped UP's political dynamics. Key initiatives include Ambedkar Village Development for marginalised communities and infrastructure like the Noida Expressway.

Sucheta Kripalani:
She began her political career in 1939, organising relief during the Bengal Famine, and won her first election to the UP Legislative Assembly in 1952 from Kanpur. She made history as India's first female Chief Minister, leading Uttar Pradesh from 1963 to 1967, where she promoted industrial growth and adeptly managed the 1966 food crisis.

Mehbooba Mufti:
First female Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. She leads the Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and advocates for regional autonomy and reconciliation.

Conclusion:
Women achieved many impossible milestones with their strong will and hard work. Despite persistent challenges—ranging from gender bias and media stereotyping to structural barriers—women leaders continue to redefine leadership by integrating empathy, resilience, and vision into their communicative practices. Their ability to connect personal experiences with collective struggles makes them uniquely effective in advancing gender equality and encouraging civic engagement. History has many incidents where women were treated as inferior and powerless, but as soon as women gained power, they proved all assumptions wrong. The realisation of women about their rights worked as an inspiration to get the chance and achieve whatever they want. Still many challenges for women which needed to be solved.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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March 6th& 7th 2026

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

33

THE ETHICS OF SILENCE: THE CULTURAL AND COMMUNICATION BARRIERS IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *THAT LONG SILENCE*

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Abstract:
This paper explores the ethical dimensions of silence and communicative barriers in Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence. Through a close textual reading of the novel, the study investigates how patriarchal norms, cultural expectations, and internalized gender roles shape the communicative environment of the protagonist, Jaya. Drawing extensively on feminist and ethical communication theories—including Miranda Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice and socio-cultural models of silence—the analysis argues that silence in the novel is neither neutral nor simple absence of speech. Instead, it is a structured ethical phenomenon in which women's voices are systematically devalued, mistrusted, and erased. Jaya's long silence becomes a lens through which the reader sees the psychological cost of self-censorship, the cultural costs of enforced obedience, and the ethical implications of muteness in relationships, marriage, and selfhood. By the novel's end, silence transforms from imposed muteness to a reflective site of self-realization, suggesting ethical pathways toward agency without aggression.

Keywords: *Shashi Deshpande, That Long Silence, Silence, Communication Ethics, Epistemic Injustice, Patriarchy, Feminist Narrative, India, Testimonial Credibility, etc.*

Introduction:

In the canon of contemporary Indian literature, Shashi Deshpande emerges as one of the most compelling critics of middle-class Indian patriarchy. *That Long Silence* (1989) recounts the internal and external struggles of Jaya Kulkarni, a middle-class wife, writer, and mother whose life becomes defined by silence—both imposed and self-sought. At a surface level, silence may appear as withdrawal or resignation, but Deshpande's narrative reveals deeper ethical and cultural structures shaping why Jaya remains silent and what this silence costs her psychologically and relationally. Deshpande does not depict silence merely as a personal choice or speaker's block; instead, it functions as a socially enforced condition that embodies cultural expectations of stridharma, the moral code for women in Indian society (Jain 72). Much like patriarchy's double bind—where assertiveness leads to accusations of aggressiveness and passivity yields invisibility—Jaya finds her voice continually exhausted by conflicting cultural definitions of femininity.

This paper utilizes theoretical frameworks from feminist theory and communication ethics, particularly testimonial injustice as conceptualized by Miranda Fricker (2007), to explore how Jaya's silence is not simply linguistic absence but ethical erasure. In the context of a hierarchical marital relationship, professional undercutting, and cultural expectation of female resignation, the

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

narrative of silence in *That Long Silence* becomes a site of ethical crisis. Silence is thus both symptom and product of a wider communicative failure in marriage, society, and self-perception.

Silence as Ethical Constraint in Patriarchal Communication:

The very opening of the novel establishes silence as an existential weight rather than a rhetorical choice. Jaya's internal musings reveal her realization that "silence does not protect you; it only thins your blood" (Deshpande 7). Unlike speech, which creates dialogue, silence becomes a force that narrows possibilities, compresses internal identity, and limits outward action. This mode of silence is not apolitical. In her culturally situated context, Jaya is programmed by both society and family to be compliant. Her husband Mohan's pervasive assumption that a wife's role includes unquestioned emotional labor illustrates this: he believes that a wife must always remain "the sheltering tree," forgiving, nurturing, and tolerating (Deshpande 34). Yet the metaphor of the "sheltering tree" obscures whose shelter is prioritized. Here, the ethical issue becomes clear: Jaya's silence is culturally mandated as moral virtue, but it simultaneously limits her communicative agency.

Patriarchy's ethical expectation is not neutral reciprocity but performance of muted submission. The cultural logic implies that a wife's silence sustains peace; vocal disagreement disrupts it. Hence, silence becomes embedded in cultural logic as a moral obligation rather than a communicative choice. As feminist scholar Jasbir Jain contends, *That Long Silence* reveals "how women are coerced into accepting silence as moral good, even when it becomes a burden on selfhood and expression" (Jain 58). The result is a structural erasure of Jaya's voice. Her identity shifts from "an individual with desires, ambitions, and thoughts" to "a vessel shaped by social grammar." In communicative terms, her speech becomes conditional and regulated, not free.

Internalized Silence and Testimonial Injustice:

In the philosophical and ethical frame, silence in *That Long Silence* functions as what Miranda Fricker identifies as epistemic injustice—a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower (Fricker 1). Fricker distinguishes two forms: testimonial injustice, where prejudice leads to the deflation of a person's credibility, and hermeneutical injustice, where lack of shared conceptual resources inhibits articulation of experience. In Jaya's marital world, both kinds of injustice operate simultaneously. Despite being an educated writer, Jaya's professional credibility is discounted within her own household. Her words are rarely received as authoritative, and when she attempts assertiveness, Mohan often dismisses or mildly patronizes her concerns. The boundaries of credibility extend beyond personal relationship into cultural scripts that define women as polite, compliant, and non-argumentative. For Fricker, such devaluation of credibility is not merely interpersonal but structural: "Testimonial injustice occurs when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word" (Fricker 19). In the domestic sphere, Jaya internalizes this prejudice—anticipating disbelief and therefore silencing herself before speech even arises.

The internalization of silence is apparent when Jaya reflects on her writing career. Before marriage, she pursued fiction under her own name. After marriage, she confines her literary efforts to innocuous writing—restaurant reviews, social columns, and innocuous pieces that won't trouble anyone. She pre-censors herself because, as she reveals, "I knew what Mohan wanted. I knew what would make him uneasy. And I knew what it would cost me if I made him uneasy" (Deshpande, 61). Quite simply, Jaya's own self-evaluation becomes shaped by anticipatory external judgment.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

This anticipatory muteness echoes Fricker's notion of hermeneutical injustice: "when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage in making sense of their social experiences" (Fricker, 13). Jaya interprets her desire for expression as a threat to harmony rather than a valid communicative need. As a result, she reduces her speech to avoid conflict. Silence is not passive but strategic, yet morally coerced.

Marriage as Conversation Failure:

Deshpande's narrative structure highlights how silence is a communicative barrier in marriage itself. Jaya's interactions with Mohan are marked by repeated failures of reciprocal listening. Throughout the novel, speech flows asymmetrically: Mohan theorizes and analyzes, while Jaya listens and absorbs. He questions her with analytical curiosity, but rarely does he seek mutual understanding. At one point, during a domestic discussion, Mohan interrupts Jaya repeatedly: "He didn't wait for me to finish. He had already moved on to another point" (Deshpande 75). This pattern of interruption is more than rude—it signifies a communicative hierarchy in which Jaya's speech acts is less prioritized.

Communication ethics requires dialogue, not monologue. But in Jaya's marriage, conversation becomes an activity where one voice dominates. Jaya internalizes this domination so deeply that she questions the legitimacy of her own responses. The narrative voice of Deshpande uses free indirect discourse to show Jaya's internal self-erasure: "I paused… I thought I should say something, but nothing came" (Deshpande 102). Silence here is accidental only because speech has been culturally and privately devalued. Renowned feminist critic Usha Bande observes that *That Long Silence* exposes the "ethical bankruptcy of relationships where voice is contained, controlled, monitored, and regulated by cultural expectations" (Bande 112). Rather than seeing silence as personal detachment, Bande reframes it as relational breakdown—an ethical failure in communication that erases the subjectivity of women.

Silence and the Socio-Cultural Double Bind:

The cultural backdrop of the novel amplifies Jaya's communicative conflict. She is a product of both Western educational ideals and deeply rooted Indian traditions. This hybrid identity presents a double bind: the Western ideal praises self-assertion, while the Indian household tradition rewards silence and obedience. In practice, Jaya's attempt at self-assertion is often construed as aggression, indecision, or even ingratitude. As Jasbir Jain argues, Deshpande positions Jaya "between two worlds, neither of which fully recognizes her communicative authority" (Jain 85). When she attempts to talk back, she encounters social expectations that women should maintain peace, accommodate discomfort, and endure hardship. When she remains silent, she is labeled compliant but empty.

This double bind generates moral paradoxes. Self-expression leads to social backlash; silence leads to self-erasure. In *That Long Silence*, the social pressure against female speech is not a conscious conspiracy but the effect of normalized cultural expectation. The ethics implied here are paradoxically unjust: women are asked to speak, yet not heard; allowed to think, yet not believed.

Silence and Self-Realization:

Despite these structural and internalized pressures, *That Long Silence* does not end in immobility. Instead, Deshpande charts a narrative of ethical emergence. Throughout the novel, Jaya's silence shifts from enforced muteness to reflective introspection. Silence becomes the space where she

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

revisits memories, acknowledges discomfort, and reconstructs her identity. The pivotal moment is not a climactic outburst but a quiet realization: that her long silence was not merely circumstantial, but symbolic of unclaimed agency. Jaya's decision to think through her silence marks a rupture in her internalized epistemic injustice. She begins to recognize that silence, while significant, need not dictate her future communicative choices.

As Usha Bande writes, *That Long Silence* portrays "the journey from silent apathy to deliberate assertion, where voice becomes a choice rather than a cultural default" (Bande 156). Jaya's evolution suggests that ethical communication requires not only speaking but self-recognition—acknowledging one's own credibility as a knower and speaker. This movement aligns with Fricker's model of epistemic justice—the restoration of credibility and shared interpretive resources. By the novel's end, Jaya's silence becomes self-owned rather than socially imposed. She does not celebrate the absence of speech, but she redefines silence as a reflective tool rather than a barrier.

Conclusion:

In *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande intricately explores how cultural and communicative barriers shape women's voices. Silence is never just absence of sound; it is a structured ethical phenomenon embedded in social norms, gender roles, and relational hierarchies. Through textual evidence and critical frames like testimonial injustice, this paper has demonstrated that Jaya's silence is shaped by patriarchal communication ethics that devalue her credibility, curtail reciprocal dialogue, and construct her identity in ways that limit expression. Yet, the novel does not end in defeat. Instead, it reframes silence as reflective space, enabling reconsideration and ethical recuperation of voice. Through Jaya's trajectory, Deshpande suggests that overcoming communicative barriers requires not mere speech, but recognition of women as credible, autonomous knowers in both domestic and public spheres. By examining *That Long Silence* through feminist and ethical communication lenses, we see how Deshpande exposes not only the personal cost of silence but also its moral dimensions. Silence becomes both a symptom of cultural imprint and a site for ethical transformation—challenging readers to recognize how silence functions in their own lives and cultures.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

34

NAHOKO UEHASHI AS ECO-FEMINIST WRITER

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Abstract:
Every nation, nationality, country and community has great traditions in which it can find its best. Not a single civilization is devoid of a cultural heritage. Although the cultural ascendancy cannot be perceived throughout the existence of that civilization, it also experiences the ebb and flow in which at a certain point of time the people of that civilization present their best and in the same way their descendants may experience the relatively moderate or drastic downfall. No culture can claim the eternal consistent upward movement of their development graph. Its heritage and history provide multifarious ideas and innovations which are crucial for the development of their own people as well as the people who came into their contacts. Here most of its members contribute for the progress and amelioration of their refinements and cultivation. Here sex is immaterial as both males as well as females play significant role in the elevation and advancement of their respective societies. The gender contribution regarding their endowments may be less or more but most of them are part and parcel of their culture. In spite of it, the role played by women is somewhat unacknowledged or in some societies totally ignored because of the existing norms of patriarchal social order. Ignorance towards feminine contribution results in to the adverse effects on the female creativity and innovativeness. it is universal truth that male as well as female are well connected to each other by the nature itself so there is a strong and inalienable bond between all members of the humanity irrespective of its colour, caste, creed gender, nationality region and gender. Our beautiful planet is the most precious gift provided to us by the benevolent Almighty. So whatever the resources available on this earth are essential for the survival and sustenance of all the living beings and even for the nonliving entities. So the resources should be shared logically by all the entities on this beautiful Earth. This was not the issue before hundred years ago.

Keywords: *Environment, Feminism, Gender, Hegemony Domination, Nature & Patriarchy, Woman, etc.*

Introduction:

Ecofeminism is an offshoot of the feminism. It thoroughly explains and investigates the interconnections between the injustices and oppression of females and the unending plunder of nature in under the guise of progress. Eco feminists firmly believes the subjection of woman as well as that of the nature are done by the patriarchal social order and which is partial and dominated from the ages by males. It protects the male hegemony and always vocal in safeguarding the hierarchy that marginalises woman. The male dominated system is more organised and collaborative. The term was ecofeminism was coined in 1974 by French feminist

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March 6th& 7th 2026

Françoise d'Eaubonne in her well known feminist book Le Féminisme ou la Mort which is Feminism or Death. Eco-feminists firmly believe that the societal order and its values which facilitate female exploitation are equally responsible for causing the damage to the environment. They champion that woman and Earth are both living beings and they are firmly interconnected to one another.

As every creation on this earth live peacefully and amicably but the problem surfaces during the times of industrial revolution when human beings are claiming supremacy in utilising or in other way exploiting the natural resources. Human beings also try to establish the ownership on the available resources and ignore the equal claims of other living beings like plants, animals and microorganisms etc. He systematically ignores that he is also part of the nature of which the other living beings; although they lack the human intelligence in depleting the natures gifts. They also have equal and just claims on the resources provided by nature. The human being deliberately put asides the principle that the existence is in the interest of all living and non-living being and it is the only way that has the potential to avoid the future hazards. It is the peaceful coexistence of man and other beings ensure the long lasting existence and survival of all. It is essential for the perpetual flow of life on this beautiful planet. It is only through the harmonious relations between the living and non-living the human entity can enjoy the fruits of its development and progress. The human existence on this earth is only possible when there are large scale and perceivable efforts on the part of mankind in preserving the natural resources and ending all the attempts that aim at over exploitation of the resources for selfish ends.

The industrial revolution has transformed not only of human life but also brought drastic changes in the ecosystem. The scientific innovations, discoveries and research provide much comfort to the human beings. As human being is the only beneficiary of the scientific discoveries and whatever is done in the other fields is done only for wellbeing and satisfying the interests of human beings. The research in health and medical field enhanced the life expectancy of humans which ultimately result into the population explosion in major parts of the world. This explosion has generated tremendous pressure and created problems like feeding the ever growing population which ultimately result into over exploitation of the natural resources. This further aggravated the oft ignored issue i.e. environment. Because of the imprudent human activities which are largely driven for satisfying the greed for materialistic lifestyle awake the human being from the long slumber. The human beings now realise the future catastrophes because of his unnatural inroads and encroachments in ecosystem.

Man exploits the nature in the same way as he usually cashes in on woman. The feminists stresses the exploitive nature of patriarchal social order which always eclipses the harmonious relations between a male and female as both are the creations of the nature or he Almighty. Man always succeeds in establishing his dominance over female and never bothers about the aspirations of other. The social order also prefers the prioritization of male choices over that of the woman. The woman becomes a mere tool in the hands of men for materializing his hegemony. He not only uses them as means for his satisfaction but also creates obstacles by enchaining woman through different shibboleths and inhuman practices. It is the same human tendency which is perceived in his use of natural resources for his greed, ignoring the claims of other living beings like animals and plants.

Eco-feminism like feminism struggles for the equality and same access to all the rights and privileges which have been enjoyed by the males from the genesis of the life on this beautiful planet. It holds the masculinity responsible for the utter degeneration of the environment, disaster

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

and exploitation of nature as well as the woman. It sets connection between the patriarchal order and the new imperialism which only takes care of the interests of industrialist and factory owners who are responsible for the oft occurring natural calamities like droughts and famines. To quench the unending greed the human race moves away from the bond of nature although irrevocable is losing is strength. The Eco-feminists warn the whole human race and especially the males as most of the policy makers whose decisions affect the environment belong to this gender .The impending danger can be averted by taking sensible steps right now. We are the part and parcel of this universe and there is firm interconnectedness between living as well as non-living beings. It is in the interest of the existence of the whole human race to maintain a thorough balance between the nature and what we call development and progress.

Nahoko Uehashi is a well-known Japanese litterateur who expresses herself in Japanese. Born on 15 July 1962 in Japanese capital city Tokyo Uehashi an eminent scholar of ecology from the women's University in a Abiko. She is also recipient of many awards and recognitions like New face prize in 1996 Noma children's Litrature in 2004 and Hans Christian Anderson award 2014 etc. She is a well-known writer whose primary focus of literary expression is fantasy, children and the interrelation between different people. She critically analyses the relation between nature and living beings like human, plants and animals. She is also an eminent feminist whose works are studied through the feminist dimensions because of her persistent description of subversion of patriarchy and her depicting the robust strong female characters who move confidently through the political turmoil and geological terrains. The novelist herself comforts in attributing her own world-building as the literary background for works which she proudly calls 'cultural anthropology.' Nahoko Uehashi's narratives wholeheartedly question the age-old social gender roles that are imposed on the women particularly the women from Japan.

Nahoko Uehashi not only uses her anthropological viewpoints to explain and vindicate the male dominant myths but also presents the heroic adventures of her female folks. Her female characters never bother about the difficult journey. They always prefer love, kindness, benevolence care, preservation and intellectual agency over orthodox male-hegemony and intimidation that always strangulate the woman. Her works especially Moribito Series, the female protagonist Balsa, a thirty years old brave girl always dares to the male and never succumbs to their urgings. The writer presents Balsa a male warrior who is shown like a masculine personality with a spear, and overturns the demoiselle who is in difficult times. Her The Protective Warrior never follows the conventional path of attaining fame the way traditional heroes seek glory through ferocity and brutalities which is the oft trodden path of the conventional male leaders and heroes. The history pages are replete with these kinds of male atrocities under the guise of name and fame. The positive side of Balsa is perceived through her determination to expiate herself from the past wrongs when she vows to salvage and liberate the people who are in trouble. The writer moves away from the traditional notions of masculinity like dominance, subjugation and subjection to benevolence, liberation and mercy. Nahoko Uehashi in her Moribito series, depicts Balsa as a ferocious and implacable fighter and relentless warrior; a guardian, caretaker to the Prince Chagum. In this way she beautifully amalgamates the conventional martial skills which are solely associated to the males. Balsa is more than that as she possesses the motherly obligation and accountability. Her another female protagonist Elin in The Beast Player is a different kind of protagonist. Elin's reasoned thinking makes her an autonomous and independent thinker. She is not only robust physically but she is also Scientific tempered person. Her strength is in her moral authority. Elin is power in The Beast Player is not physical, but erudite and scholarly. Her

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March 6th& 7th 2026

scientific bent and modern attitude canbe seen when she out rightly rejects to follow the silent whistles which are traditionally used to superintend the savages and monsters. She instead chooses to communicate through the means like chords and notes which are in feminine in nature. It totally contrasts to the male tools for subjugation like force and violence. Elin travels in the world where animals are used for as tools and weaponry for war. She struggles for protecting her rights which will be only means that will help her in escaping for the male subjugation. It vindicates the feminist taking arms against all form of injustices that are

Conclusion:

In his way the Japanese eminent writer Nahoko Uehashi establishes a vibrant and robust connection between nature and sexand also stresses the need to acknowledge and appreciate woman's contribution in protecting and conservation of nature.She firmly believes that masculine notions canbe acquired by the females but those are of positive nature only. She supports the Eco feminists by showing her disgust against the unjust male exploitation which triangulates the progress and development of the female folks. Her primary focus is the relation between the living objects like human beings and other living beings. She succeeds in establishing a strong link between women and nature. She is more different from the conventional feminist writers who uphold the disjunction between man and woman. She never accepts the oft sighted antagonism between human beings and natural forces. She believes that there will not be divorce between human beings and nature. Most of her works reflect her view point. We witness harmony between her literary characters and the living and non-living beings. They stay in a very cordial way in the abode of nature. She never talks about the chasm between male and female. At large she provides a wider role for women as far as nature is concerned.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

35

MAYA ANGELOU: THE VOICE OF THE SUPPRESSED

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Abstract:
Maya Angelou emerged as a powerful literary voice articulating the pain, resilience, and dignity of marginalized communities. Through her autobiographies, poetry, and essays, she foregrounded themes of racial injustice, identity, gender, and survival in a segregated America. Her seminal work I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings symbolizes the struggle for freedom and self-expression among the oppressed. Angelou's writing blends personal narrative with collective history, transforming silence into strength. Her voice not only documents suffering but also celebrates endurance, empowerment, and the unbreakable spirit of suppressed individuals.

Keywords: *Marginalization, Identity, Racial Injustice, Resilience, Feminism, Autobiography, Empowerment, etc.*

Introduction:

Throughout history, women have often been positioned as secondary figures within society, defined in relation to men rather than as independent individuals. Social, cultural, political, and economic systems have traditionally reinforced male dominance, limiting women's access to education, property, leadership, and decision-making power. From patriarchal family structures to workplace inequalities, women have frequently been expected to prioritize domestic roles while men occupy positions of authority and public influence.

Angelou, an American author, poet and civil rights activist, rose to prominence with the publication of "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" in 1969. Angelou, who died in 2014 at the age of 86, was honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2010 by President Barack Obama. Maya Angelou stands as one of the most powerful literary and moral voices of the twentieth century. Through her poetry, autobiographies, essays, and speeches, she gave strength and dignity to those who had long been silenced by racism, sexism, poverty, and trauma. Her life itself was a testimony to resilience, and her words became a source of empowerment for oppressed communities across the world. Angelou did not merely write about suffering—she transformed suffering into strength, pain into poetry, and silence into song. For this reason, she is rightly called the voice of the suppressed.

The idea of "voice" is essential to comprehending the importance of Angelou. Fear, discrimination, or trauma force many oppressed people to remain silent. In her early years, Angelou encountered actual quiet, but she turned it into meaningful words. Finding one's voice requires opposition, as her story demonstrates. Regaining power becomes possible when one speaks the truth. She inspired people to share their stories without embarrassment by setting an example.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Her poetry further strengthened her role as a spokesperson for the suppressed. In her famous poem "Still I Rise," Angelou directly confronts historical oppression. The poem celebrates resilience in the face of racism and hatred. With bold and confident language, she challenges those who attempt to degrade or silence her. Lines that express rising above shame, pain, and injustice reflect not only her personal journey but also the collective experience of African Americans and women throughout history. The repeated declaration of rising again becomes a powerful anthem of hope and resistance.

The poetess Maya Angelou was African-American. She was a complex individual. She became the American Black community's voice. She took the initiative to encourage Black people. Among her several poems, "Still I Rise" holds a noteworthy position. In essence, the current poem is a protest against White people. Maya Angelou, the speaker, expresses her rage at white people and their colonized thinking. She represents the Black community. Black Americans gained freedom in America following a protracted era of slavery. Slavery was outlawed by law. However, it remained firmly entrenched in the White people's thoughts. That was part of the Blacks' everyday existence. In Still I Rise, Maya Angelou speaks out against the same. The poem emphasizes how the Whites' colonized mindset affects Black people.

Here, an alternative interpretation of the same poem is attempted, removing its original context. It is interpreted as the struggle between the two genders—male and female—instead of the White and Black war. The women have now awakened after spending ages together in a patriarchal world. Thus, these women speak out against the male colonial mindset. Through this poetry, a representative of the Females conveys her pain and rage. In many places of the world, women's conditions were similar to those of Black people. The current poetry is attempted to be viewed from this alternative perspective.

The speaker uses phrases like "twisted" and "bitter" at the beginning of the poem. History is the documentation of the past. It is frequently observed that it is not written objectively. History is governed by the dominant or governing class of a society. Women in society have been experiencing the same thing. According to the speaker, women have historically faced discrimination. They have always been denigrated and given a lower status. For the oppressors, the poet employs the pronoun you. It subtly draws attention to the men who long ruled the situation. The speaker believes she can rise again like dust, even when stepped on. Her language may come across as quite daring, almost as if she is challenging you. Those in power might assume she possesses great wealth, which fuels her boldness. However, in reality, she does not have oil wells in her living room or gold mines in her backyard. Instead, it is the pain in her mind and the cries of her fellow women that provide her with the confidence and courage to speak out.

The poetess uses the images like the sun and the moon, tides, and hope. Like these all, she regularly experiences the condition of rise and fall. What the oppressors want is to suppress and silent the raised voices. The poetess puts many questions before the oppressors. Her questions indirectly underline the expectations of them. The words like *broken*, *bowed head*, *lowered eyes* indicate the same notion. The image of *shoulders falling down like teardrops* due to weakness suggests the collapse of the body and the spirit. The merciless oppressor tortures emotionally, mentally, and physically. The poetess makes beautiful use of metaphors implying violence in the poem. She says that the oppressor *shoots* her with words, *cuts* her with his eyes, and *kills* her with his hatefulness. Even after all these actions, she will overcome and rise again. The speaker taunts the oppressor by asking him the question if her *sexiness* upsets him. She adds that she is a good

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

dancer too. The image of dancing stands for freedom of mind and spirit, as well as for beauty and sexuality.

The speaker shows her intention to rise *out of the huts of history's shame.* The history of the women is not pleasant. It is deeply rooted in agony. It exhibits the suppression and injustice done to them. The poetess says that she is the center of hope of all the *Blacks*. Symbolically, the color stands for the female gender which is counted inferior compared to its opposite one. She calls herself a *black ocean*- again representing the union of females. She wants to unite the females and create their power to stand against the oppressors. She adds that she has got some heritage from her ancestors. Leaving behind the *nights of terror and fear*, she declares to rise and work for the upliftment of the women. She is very optimistic and expects a new daybreak for the women. This new day will bring them a new life of freedom from the patriarchal society offering them equal status.

Angelou's autobiographical work 'I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings' became a landmark in American literature. In this book, she narrates her early life with honesty and courage, describing racism, trauma, and identity struggles without bitterness but with remarkable clarity. The metaphor of the "caged bird" symbolizes oppressed individuals who long for freedom but are confined by social injustice. The bird sings not because it is free, but because it hopes. Through this powerful imagery, Angelou spoke for millions whose voices were restricted by fear and inequality. The book was revolutionary because it openly discussed issues such as sexual abuse and racial discrimination at a time when such topics were rarely addressed in mainstream literature.

Similarly, in "Phenomenal Woman," challenges the Eurocentric beauty standards that had historically suppressed the self-esteem of Black women. Angelou challenges narrow definitions of beauty and worth imposed by society. She redefines female identity with confidence and pride, empowering women—especially Black women—to recognize their inherent value. At a time when media and social standards often marginalized women of color, Angelou's voice affirmed their beauty, strength, and uniqueness. Through such poems, she encouraged women to embrace themselves without apology.

Throughout the poem, Angelou emphasizes that the speaker's power comes from her inner strength and authenticity. Men are drawn to her not because of superficial qualities but because of her presence, passion, and confidence. She lists physical traits—such as the span of her hips, the curl of her lips, and the stride of her step—but these are symbols of her pride and self-acceptance rather than traditional beauty. The repeated refrain, "I'm a phenomenal woman," reinforces the central message of empowerment. The speaker celebrates herself without arrogance, showing that confidence does not require validation from others. Instead, it grows from knowing one's worth.

In conclusion, Maya Angelou is rightly regarded as the voice of the suppressed because she transformed personal suffering into universal empowerment. Through her autobiographies, poems, and public speeches, she spoke for those who were silenced by racism, sexism, and trauma. She did not simply describe oppression; she challenged it with dignity and hope. Her words continue to inspire individuals to rise above adversity and claim their own voices. In giving voice to the oppressed, Angelou ensured that silence would no longer be a prison but a beginning of strength.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

36

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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Abstract:
Feminist perspective to communication provides critical insights into how gender, power, and representation shape public discourse and social change. Human being is part of the society and the study of feminist perspectives on communication impacts through social change. The present research paper explores key feminist theories of communication, analyzes how mediated and interpersonal communication impacts and challenges gendered norms, and examines the role of feminist activism in driving social change. By combining different disciplines media studies, cultural theory, and social movements illustrates how feminist perspectives contribute to more equitable communication practices and empower marginalized voices.

Keywords: *Feminism, Communication, Social Change, Gender Equality, Media Representation, etc.*

Introduction:

Human being communicates through language and it is central to how societies construct meaning, influence power, and ratify change. However, traditional communication theories have often marginalized gender as a critical site of analysis. Feminist outlook stops this oversight by insisting that communication cannot be fully understood without examining how gender intersects with race, class, sexuality, and other angles of identity. Feminist communication scholarship not only critiques existing systems of representation and interaction but also highlights the changing potential of alternative communicative practices that amplify marginalized voices and challenge structural inequalities. This paper investigates how feminist perspectives reshape our understanding of communication processes and contribute to social change. This begins by outlining basic feminist theories relevant to communication, followed by analyses of media representation, interpersonal communication, and feminism. The paper concludes by discussing challenges and future perspectives.

Feminism and Communication:

Feminist communication doctrine emerged in the mid of the 20th century, drawing from various feminist movements that sought to reveal and dismantle patriarchal power structures. Gender is socially constructed and is based on three core concepts. Many of the feminist person put forth that gender is not inborn but constructed through cultural norms, language, and interaction. Communication acts as a primary level where gender meanings are produced and reproduced. Another attribute for the feminism and communication is power and representation.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

Power plays an important role in shaping who gets to speak, whose voices are heard, and how identities are described. Feminist communication theory criticizes power imbalances in media, institutions, and everyday activity. Intersectionality is Introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw and is emphasized how gender intersects with race, class, sexuality, and other basic identities. Feminist communication thus avoids universalizing experiences and highlights diverse perspectives. However, these concepts reinforce feminist approaches that analyze both communications sustain inequalities and how alternative communicative practices can stimulate empowerment and justice.

Theoretical Frameworks:

While studying it impact upon feminist approach it is necessary to study several frameworks influence communication. One of the theories is liberal feminism focusses equal access to communication platforms and media participation. Patriarchal structures are criticized by radical feminism that silent or dehumanize women. Another important theory is cultural feminism that values women's unique modes of expression and communication. Post modern structural feminism destabilizes binary categories of gender and highlights the fluidity of identity and discourse. These frameworks usually guide the analysis of media texts, institutional practices, and grassroots communication.

Feminist Perspectives on Media and Representation:

Feminist perspectives have been caused by media as a site of gendered power including mass media television, film, news, advertising and digital platforms play an important role in shaping public understanding of gender. Few of the media scholars argue that media do not simply reflect. Stereotypes and normative representation is a major factor that historically media have often depicted women in stereotypical roles, the passive housekeeper, the sexual object, the emotional caretaker. These portrayals reinforce restrictive norms that limit possibilities for women and other gender identities. For instance, news media frequently underrepresent women as experts or political actors, while entertainment media often emphasize narrow beauty standards. Feminist critics reveal how such representations Feminist critiques expose how such representations sustain power imbalances by regulate the range of acceptable gender identities. It is always dominated by male and subordinated by female. Another key factor influencing on communication is framing women's value primarily in terms of appearance or relationships.

Intersectional media analysis complicates how representation varies across class, race and sexuality complicates. It is observed that women of colour often face both racial and gendered stereotypes, depicted as hypersexualized or aggressive. Opinions of feminist scholars are not rigid; however, media must be analyzed with attention to how multiple identities interact to shape representation. Alternative media and counter narratives is another key factor studying in feministic communication. Feminist perspectives do not content themselves with critic along and they highlight creative and radical practices that challenge superior explanation. Alternative feminist media have become crucial spaces for marginalized voices through zines, independent podcasts, blogs, and social media campaigns. Three platforms including to produce counter narratives that resist stereotypes and to create community networks of support and exchange of knowledge. More ever issues like reproductive rights, gender violence and work place equity are mobilized by audience. While doing this, alternative feminist media show how communication can be a tool of resistance and social change.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Interpersonal Communication and Gendered Practices:
Feminist scholars investigate everyday communication practice consisting of how individuals talk, listen, negotiate conflict, and build relationships. In Conversation and power dynamics conversations are locations where power plays out through turn taking, interruptions, topic control, and nonverbal cues. However, early research in feminist communication identified patterns such as women are interrupted more often in mixed gender conversations. Male dominance in public forums and professional meetings is also studied. In early research it is found that feminist communication women are interrupted more often in mixed gender conversations. Major problems identified patters is men dominate public forums and professional meetings; women's speech styles may be judged as less authoritative. However, these patterns are not basically individual quirks but reflect broader cultural expectations about gender and authority.

Communication Styles: Critiques:
As concerned to communication some early feminist scholars categorized women's communication as 'rapport-oriented' and men's as 'report-oriented.' Critics argue that this binary strengthen stereotypes and ignores context. More ever recent work emphasizes that communication styles are shaped by socialization and institutional norms, not biological destiny. Another major problem consists of recognition of diverse communicative preference across cultures and identities.

Digital Communication and Identity Performance:
In recent years social media and digital platforms have transformed interpersonal communication skills and identity. Feminist scholars study how online interactions shape gendered expressions, from octothorpe activism to performative visibility. Digital spaces are important which offer opportunities for collective storytelling and solidarity, political mobilization and resource sharing. It also offers redefining norms around gender and sexuality in terms of communication skills. At the outset online platform can reproduce harassment, anti-feminism and exclusion, At the same time, online platforms can reproduce harassment, misogyny, and exclusion, pushing feminist interpose in platform design and community governance.

Feminist Activism and Social Change:
Communication is linked directly by feminist perspectives with social movements and political change. In a society role of women is continuously inferior as compared to male. So, social change directly affects feminist activism.

The Role of Oratory in Feminist Movements:
The role of oratory in feminist movements is important in women's communication. However, Communication is basic to activism framing issues, building alliance, articulating demands, and influencing public opinion. Feminist oratory challenges prominent narratives and introduces substantiate frames that alternative women's experiences and call for structured change.

The examples of feminist movements are consciousness raising groups in the 1960's and 70s used shared storytelling to disclose common experience of oppression. One of the major setbacks is hashtag activism which brough global attention to gender- based violence. He For She campaigns invite allies to participate in gender equity efforts, adorning how communication can

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

expand participant roles. These communicative acts not merely reshape public discourse and influence policy.

Media Activism and Public Engagement:
Many of Feminist activists use the range of media to educate, organize, and mobilize. This includes documentary filmmaking, social media campaigns, blogs, street art, and public demonstrations. More ever, key functions of feminist media activism visibility that include brining marginalized issues into public view, narrative contestation challenging dominant storylines that excuse or ignore injustice. Network building is the factor which creates global communities of support and action. As concerned to feminist media activism it is not Feminist media activism is not rigid, it varies by context and issue, but consistently centers lived experience and collective voice.

Institutional Advocacy and Policy Change:
Effective communication also works through institutional channels allegations before legislatures, legal advocacy, public service messaging, and corporate accountability campaigns. Feminist communicators influence for policies that address systemic inequality, including reproductive rights, equal pay, zero tolerance laws, and inclusive education. Strategic messaging is required for the efforts of women's communication that appeals to diverse stakeholders while maintain commitments to justice and equity.

Challenges:
While feminist communication has made significant contributions, it also faces challenges. So, tackle those for positive response is important.

Co-operation by Corporate and Political Interests:
Feminist movements and hashtag activism are sometime assumed by corporations and political groups. Feminist slogans may be used by companies for branding and marketing without honestly supporting gender justice, political activist may adopt feminist language to gain support while ignoring structural change. Such commercialization can weaken the radical and transformative goals of feminist communication.

Digital Inequality:
In those days access for women was not equal for women. There was socio-economic inequality including limited assess of internet, digital illiteracy, censorship, online harassment, surveillance, and algorithmic bias restrict participations. Particularly the women in the Global South and marginalized communities. As a result, many important voices remain unrivaled digital feminist discourse.

Internal Diversity and Conflict:
Feminist movements are different and include multiple point of view based on race, class, caste, sexuality, nationality and ideology. Variance in strategies, priorities, and representation can create internal tensions. While intersectional approaches aim to include different experiences and promote comprehensive dialogue, achieving unity and equitable communication remains challenging.

Conclusion:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

To conclude, gender power relations are brightened by Feminist perspectives both reproduced and contested through language, media, and interaction. By centering voices historically marginalized in public discourse, feminist communication scholarship and activism reveal the political stakes of everyday talk and moderate representation. Feminist approaches challenge us to rethink who gets to speak, how messages circulate, and how communication practices can foster justice and social change. From criticizing media stereotypes to mobilizing global digital movements, feminist communication show that communication is never neutral it is a site of struggle, creativity, and collective power. As communication techniques continue to evolve, feminist perspectives will remain vital in advocating for inclusion, equity, and meaningful social change.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

37

RUPI KAUR'S *MILK AND HONEY*: EMBRACING EMOTIONAL GROWTH AND INTERNAL STRENGTH

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Abstract:
The poetry collection "Milk and Honey" by Rupi Kaur explores a number of feminism-related topics, including gender inequality, the patriarchal social structure, and sociocultural issues pertaining to women. Her poetry embodies the development of strong, independent women. It depicts the expectations of a male-dominated society, norms, and the sexual exploitation of women within the household. Psychological trauma is caused by such early encounters. The stress, expectations, and repression that society places on women cause them to be tormented and stifled. The view of feminism in "milk and honey" represents the strong feminine individuality of the women.

Keywords: *Feminism, Womanhood, Patriarchy, Exploitation, etc.*

Poet Rupi Kaur, of Indian descent, immigrated to Canada at a very young age. She made a name for herself as a photographer, illustrator, and poet. In her adolescence, she became a poet. She posted her poems to Instagram, a well-known social media site. She caused a lot of uproar when she posted the images of the menstrual bloodstains on her clothes and bed linens to Instagram. Despite removing the photos from its site, Instagram ended up being a boon as her poems became popular. In 2014, she herself launched her first poetry collection, Milk & Honey. The same was republished by Andrew McMeel Publishing. Her subsequent collections were *Healing Through Words* (2022), *Home Body* (2020), and *The Sun and Her Flowers* (2017).

Rupi Kaur did not want to publish the poem; rather, she composed it as a way to express herself. Her poetry was widely successful commercially shortly after it was reprinted in book form. She is renowned for writing in an uncomplicated and clear manner. She frequently examines topics like gender, immigration-related issues, and the search for identity.

Rupi conveys her affiliation with the entire women's tribe while expressing her own experience. Her personal experience becomes universal. Her strong bond with feminine concern is what gives her uniqueness and deliverance. She discusses feminism's main focus—the female body—as part of the patriarchal inclination to determine its success. Love, sex, and rape are also used to illustrate the experiences of female sexuality.

> As the issues are still not being repaired and women are still being silenced in the hands of the patriarchal society, she has to continue this struggle. She is the warrior who goes to the field with her bare body and tortured soul. She is not different in mode but degree; her way of

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

> countering the mistreatments matters much. She has chosen the medium of writing as a means of protest and found poems as the healer of the battered soul (Santanu, 27).

Kaur explores her experiences from a female perspective in her debut collection of poems, *Milk and Honey*. She conveys her emotions of trauma, abuse, love, grief, healing, and femininity via her poetry. The book is broken up into four sections. 1. *The hurting*, 2. *The loving*, 3. *The breaking*, and 4. *The healing*. In her own words,

> It is split into four chapters; each chapter serves a different purpose, deals with a different pain, and heals a different heartache. Milk and Honey takes readers through a journey of the most bitter moments in life and finds sweetness everywhere if you're just willing to look (About the book).

The hurting is the title of the opening chapter of Milk and Honey, which makes it abundantly evident what terrible and unpleasant experiences the poet has had. The chapter focuses on the trauma, abuse, and molestation that occur in a culture where men predominate. The female body is simply viewed as something to be enjoyed, whether or not she agrees, in a society that is ruled by men. She talks about her sentiments and experience following her friend's first kiss:

He was the first boy
To teach me my body was
For giving to those that wanted
That I should feel anything
Less than whole
And my god
Did I feel as empty
As his mother at 4.25 a.m (Kaur, 12).

Rupi Kaur sheds light on how women's sexual activity is taken for granted. Instead of being treated as an equal, she is viewed as a sexual toy. Her main responsibility is to satisfy her male in bed. Her comment that "her father feasted on his mother at 4 a.m." (Kaur, 12) illustrates how the male counterpart is mistreating her body, shredding it for his own lust and assuming she is dead. Rape is what happens when a woman is physically abused without her consent.

Sex takes the consent of two
If one person is lying there not doing anything
Cause they are not ready
Or not in the mood
Or simply don’t want to
Yet the other is having sex
With their body it’s not love
It is rape (Kaur, 22).

In one of Rupi Kaur's poems, a woman's exposed legs are sketched. For males, the space between the spread legs is a "feast" (Kaur, 12). Her desires and feelings are not taken into account.

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

She has been instructed that those in need of a place to rest can use her legs as a pit stop. She tells the story of a girl who was abused by her family. A therapist is recommended for her. The girl lacks the emotional stability to tell the therapist about the humiliating experience and her inner pains. She is shocked when the therapist points a finger at a doll's location and asks her to describe her suffering. "Your uncles like touching," adds the therapist (Kaur, 15). Even a gentle touch from a loved one can shatter her into pieces due to the psychological effects of such tragic events: “I flinch when you touch me/I fear it is he” (Kaur, 41).

Rupi Kaur claims that the female voice is feared by the masculine community. For this reason, they use religion, culture, and tradition as justifications for their dominance over women. Because she might reveal the truth about the advanced society, they silence her voice. For those who did not want to keep her, she is that type of "rose." Such a world where women feel safe and unharmed is what Rupi Kaur envisions. For her own protection and security, a woman should learn to speak out against the hypocrisy of men. Rupi pledges her undivided support to rape victims. "Such incidents tear a woman in half, but they will not end her," she remarks. The woman ought to swear an oath to denounce any negative social attitudes. She should not keep quiet. "Half blade and half silk/difficult to forget and not easy for the mind to follow" (Kaur, 30) is how she ought to sound. She counsels women to respect themselves, appreciate their attractiveness, and refrain from judging their outward look.

The Loving is the title of the second segment. The woman's emotional anguish is covered in the first portion, while her early curiosity and the beauty of motherhood—a crucial stage of womanhood—are covered in the second. Her perspective on motherhood was altered by her discussion with her father about her mother's enlarged physique during pregnancy. According to her father, life originates in the woman's body. A mother bears a child, nurtures it with unending love and care, and has no expectations. Until she becomes a mother, the poet cannot comprehend the mother's unending love.

I struggle so deeply
to understand
how someone can
pour their entire soul
blood and energy
into someone
without wanting
anything in
return
-I will have to wait till i’m a mother (Kaur, 46)

The idea of unconditional love is incomprehensible to the poet. She is advised by her mother to value herself and pick a decent life mate. Kaur's presentation of women's psyche was exquisite. She knows exactly what she wants from her partner. She wants to be respected and treated as an individual by her potential lover. It should be love at first recall rather than love at first sight. She comments that every revolution starts and ends with lips. For her, her love is “every hope I’ve ever had in human form” (Kaur, 49). Her partner would be like a faint line between faith and blindly waiting. She feels safe and secure in his arms. A woman does not need any man to complete her; she herself is a complete world. She alone is capable enlighten the world.

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

I do not want to have you
to fill the empty parts of me
I want to be full on my own
I want to be so complete
I could light a whole city (Kaur, 59)

A man who can touch her without actually touching her is what the speaker wants. She wants a life mate who is compassionate and understanding, who will be there for her no matter what. "The type of person who gives / exactly what I need / before I even know I need it/ the type of lover who hears me / even when I do not speak / is the type of understanding / I demand" (Kaur, 74). She does not have blind faith in her lover. She wants unconditional support and will not be ready to accept salt for sugar. She hates a lover who speaks sweet words, but stings the girl when she gets closer. It's feminine psychology that whenever she feels lonely, she needs a companion to remove her loneliness. Rupi Kaur thinks that a woman has a world inside her and doesn't need anyone to remove her loneliness. A woman's self-respect is one of the core features of feminism.

According to Rupi Kaur, the woman offers her boyfriend everything without conditions, but as soon as she feels she has done enough, she turns into the abused and the abuser. For a relationship to remain pure, both men and women should contribute equally. A man should not be able to enter and exit the relationship whenever he pleases. With both parties' consent, a relationship can end. A miserable relationship's continuation hurts more. They are constantly breaking up with each other in that relationship where neither of them is content and neither wants to end it.

The internal conflict, emotional turmoil, and painful events in her life are discussed in the third section, "The Breaking." Kaur uses the concept and practice of self-adequacy to advance feminism. She discusses the masculine mindset that holds women accountable for transgressions they are unable to recall. "Do not bother holding on to/that thing that does not want you/you cannot make it stay" (Kaur, 149) is her advice for letting go of things that are beyond one's control. "Loneliness is a sign that you are in desperate need of yourself" (Kaur, 153), meaning that it is better to live life on her terms, ideally empty and alone. The female community is advised by Rupi Kaur to embrace their loneliness.

Since change is a natural occurrence, it should be welcomed. Rupi has experienced a lot of hardships and terrible things in her life. She can empathise with and comprehend a woman's pain from her perspective. She has hope that everything that hurts will get better. Pain is a part of the human experience, but in the end, people will change. Comments Rupi, "if hurt comes, so will happiness/be patient" (Kaur, 182) is a natural occurrence. A woman is born with the strength to ascend, yet she may have the weakness to fall. She will become pure gold as a result of the trials she endures. Kaur goes on to say that we will be treated just as we treat ourselves by others. Therefore, our behaviour should be full of love and respect for ourselves.

how you love yourself is
how you teach others
to love you (Kaur, 186)

Rupi's roots are in India, even though she moved to Canada. She aspires to have a strong cultural and traditional connection to India. She is extremely proud of her name, identity, faith,

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

and place of origin. She conveys her strong bond with and reverence for her origins. She claims that this name strengthens and grants her freedom. It gives her a sense of self and salvation.

> the name Kaur runs in my blood
> it was in me before the world itself existed
> it is my identity and my liberation
> -Kaur
> a woman of sikhi" (Kaur, 184)

By emphasising their strength and tenacity, Kaur extols women and womanhood. According to her, these women encourage other women to advance and go forward. According to her, women must acknowledge the potential of other women to grow, learn from, and value them. In addition to addressing the problems of migration and womanhood, Kaur also offers answers for the empowerment of women in a variety of situations. There are powerful, razor-sharp poems that express much more than a sheet of paper can contain, yet Kaur's poems are also exclusive, simple, and effortless, with words flowing like a river.

> Kaur tries to spread awareness about women's rights. Demonstrated in the last chapter, Kaur hopes women always move forward. She also convinces other women to be resilient in facing women's issues (Tarigan, 77).

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

38

THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:
Professional communication competence has emerged as a decisive factor in shaping women's participation, leadership, and advancement in contemporary workplaces. In India, higher education institutions function as crucial sites where young women negotiate identity, voice, confidence, and professional readiness. This paper critically examines how higher education contributes to the development of women's professional communication competence through curriculum design, pedagogical practices, institutional culture, digital exposure, mentorship, and experiential learning. Drawing upon Indian and global scholarship, policy frameworks, and employability studies, the paper explores structural barriers that women encounter, including gendered socialization, language hierarchies, and limited access to leadership opportunities. It also analyses how communication training, soft skills modules, internship programs, and digital platforms can empower women to participate effectively in professional spaces. The study situates the discussion within the Indian socio-cultural context while engaging with international research on gender and communication. It argues that higher education must move beyond skill transmission to foster critical awareness, confidence, and inclusive communicative agency among women. The paper concludes with policy recommendations for institutions aiming to strengthen women's professional communication competence in a rapidly transforming global economy.

Keywords: *Higher Education, Women Empowerment, Professional Communication, Employability, Gender and Language, etc.*

Introduction:

Communication competence shapes professional identity. It determines how individuals express ideas, negotiate roles, lead teams, and build networks. For women, communication often becomes more than a skill; it becomes a pathway to recognition and authority. In India, despite increasing enrolment in higher education, women continue to face barriers in employment, leadership, and public participation. According to All India Survey on Higher Education (2020–21), women's enrolment in higher education has crossed 49 percent. However, representation in senior corporate leadership and policy-making remains limited. The gap is not merely academic. It is communicative. Confidence in public speaking, negotiation, assertive writing, and professional interaction often determines career mobility.

This paper argues that higher education plays a transformative role in developing women's professional communication competence. It examines how curricular interventions, institutional culture, mentorship, and digital exposure contribute to this development in the Indian context.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Conceptual Framework: Understanding Professional Communication Competence:

Professional communication competence includes verbal clarity, written accuracy, critical listening, presentation skills, negotiation ability, digital literacy, and intercultural awareness. Dell Hymes (1972) introduced the concept of communicative competence as the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts. Later scholars expanded this to include professional settings.

In workplace environments, communication competence involves:

- ✓ Clarity of thought and expression
- ✓ Confidence in public speaking
- ✓ Professional writing skills
- ✓ Ability to collaborate across cultures
- ✓ Ethical and empathetic engagement

Research by UNESCO (2015) emphasizes that higher education must cultivate transferable skills, including communication and critical thinking, to ensure gender-inclusive growth. For women, communication competence also intersects with issues of self-perception, social conditioning, and access to public voice.

Indian Socio-Cultural Context and Gendered Communication:

Indian society historically associates assertiveness and leadership speech with masculinity. Girls are often socialized to be polite, restrained, and accommodating. These patterns influence classroom participation and later workplace behavior. National Policy on Education and the subsequent reforms stress equity and inclusion. Yet classroom practices often remain teacher-centered. Women students may hesitate to ask questions or challenge opinions. The University Grants Commission has introduced guidelines promoting gender sensitization cells and skill development programs. However, implementation varies across institutions. Language hierarchy also shapes competence. English remains the dominant language of professional mobility in India. Students from rural or vernacular-medium backgrounds often experience anxiety while communicating in English. Women from such backgrounds face double marginalization—linguistic and gender-based.

Curriculum and Communication Skill Development:

Higher education institutions in India increasingly incorporate communication skills courses. Engineering and management colleges offer modules such as “Professional Communication,” “Business Communication,” and “Soft Skills.” The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) advocates multidisciplinary education and emphasizes communication and critical thinking. It encourages experiential learning, internships, and skill-based training.

Communication curricula generally include:

- ✓ Group discussions
- ✓ Presentation skills
- ✓ Resume writing
- ✓ Interview techniques
- ✓ Corporate etiquette
- ✓ Email drafting

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

These modules help women students gain exposure to professional discourse. However, mere inclusion of a course is not sufficient. Pedagogical design matters. Interactive methods such as role-play, peer feedback, debates, and project presentations create safe spaces for women to practice voice and leadership.

Pedagogical Practices and Classroom Dynamics:

Pedagogy shapes participation. Teacher attitudes influence confidence levels. Research suggests that participatory classrooms enhance women's communicative confidence. Constructivist pedagogy encourages dialogue and collaboration. When teachers consciously ensure equal speaking opportunities, women students demonstrate greater engagement. Mentoring also plays a significant role. Studies by World Economic Forum (2022) highlight that mentorship improves women's leadership outcomes globally. In Indian colleges, female faculty often serve as role models. Their professional presence normalises women's authority in academic and corporate spaces.

Digital Communication and Emerging Platforms:

Digital communication has transformed professional landscapes. Email etiquette, LinkedIn profiles, virtual meetings, and online presentations have become essential. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital learning. Women students gained exposure to webinars, online conferences, and global classrooms. However, digital access remains uneven. The International Telecommunication Union (2021) reports a global gender gap in internet usage. In India, rural women face connectivity and device access challenges. Higher education institutions must bridge this divide by providing digital literacy training. Workshops on professional email writing, online branding, and virtual presentation skills enhance employability.

Employability and Industry Expectations:

Industry reports consistently emphasize communication as a top employability skill. The National Association of Software and Service Companies highlight communication and teamwork as essential competencies for graduates entering the IT sector. Similarly, corporate surveys by McKinsey & Company demonstrate that companies with gender-diverse leadership perform better. Communication competence strengthens women's visibility in such environments. Internships, industry interactions, mock interviews, and placement training cells provide structured opportunities for women to practise professional communication.

Barriers to Women's Communication Competence:

Despite institutional efforts, several barriers persist:

- **Language Anxiety:** Fear of making mistakes in English.
- **Stereotype Threat:** Fear of confirming negative gender stereotypes.
- **Limited Leadership Exposure:** Fewer opportunities to lead student bodies.
- **Socio-Economic Constraints:** Restricted mobility and networking.

Scholars such as Deborah Tannen (1990) argue that gendered communication norms influence workplace interactions. Women's speech is sometimes misinterpreted as less authoritative. Indian

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

women professionals often report interruptions in meetings and limited recognition of contributions. Higher education must prepare students to navigate such realities.

Experiential Learning and Confidence Building:

Experiential learning strengthens communication competence. Participation in debates, theatre, NSS activities, and entrepreneurship cells enhances public speaking. The Self-Employed Women's Association demonstrates how collective training improves negotiation skills among women. Similar models can inspire campus-based communication labs. Mock parliament sessions, research paper presentations, and international conference participation help women students build academic voice.

Intercultural and Global Competence:

Globalization demands intercultural communication skills. Indian graduates increasingly work in multinational companies. Exposure to international research and collaborative projects broadens perspective. UNESCO (2015) emphasizes global citizenship education. Student exchange programs, virtual collaborations, and multicultural campus events enhance confidence in cross-cultural communication.

Leadership Development and Institutional Support:

Leadership training workshops, women development cells, and gender sensitization programs foster confidence. The Ministry of Education encourages institutions to implement gender inclusion initiatives. When campuses celebrate women achievers and encourage research presentations by female scholars, they create symbolic empowerment. Communication competence grows when institutions cultivate inclusive cultures.

Policy Recommendations:

To strengthen women's professional communication competence, higher education institutions should:

- ✓ Integrate communication training across disciplines.
- ✓ Encourage participatory classrooms.
- ✓ Provide structured mentorship programs.
- ✓ Establish communication labs with digital tools.
- ✓ Promote leadership opportunities for women students.
- ✓ Bridge digital gender gaps through infrastructure support.
- ✓ Collaborate with industry for real-world exposure.

Conclusion:

Higher education is not merely a degree-granting mechanism. It is a transformative space. For women in India, it offers a platform to discover voice, confidence, and professional identity. Professional communication competence empowers women to participate in decision-making, leadership, and innovation. It enhances employability and strengthens democratic participation. Indian higher education must therefore adopt inclusive, skill-oriented, and gender-sensitive approaches. Communication competence should not remain an auxiliary subject. It must become central to curriculum design and institutional philosophy. When women speak with clarity and

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

confidence, they reshape workplaces and communities. Higher education holds the responsibility to nurture that voice.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

39

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA LITERACY FOR WOMEN IN 21st CENTUARY

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Abstract:
In today's digital world, where information is easily available to all within fractions of seconds, media literacy and digital literacy have become essential skills for individuals for effective communication throughout the world and for knowledge purpose. With the rapid growth of technology and the spread of online platforms, it is important to understand the significance of media literacy and digital literacy and its contribution to our ability to consume, evaluate, and critically analyze information. Media literacy is important for individuals in shaping public discussion, make informed decisions, and for best communication. In such a technologically advanced society, digital literacy is essential for empowering women because women today have access to every field of society like work, education, and financial independence. However, there is still digital gender gap, especially in developing nations like India where women's access to the internet is restricted; their ability to use technology is restrained by financial limitations, social norms, and a lack of digital training.

Keywords: *Digital Literacy, Empowerment Digital Training, Media Literacy, Gender Gap, etc.*

What is Digital Communication?

Digital Communication is the procedure of exchanging information, messages, and ideas via digital technologies and platforms. It involves the transmission and reception of data through electronic devices and networks. Digital Communication enables real-time interaction, instant messaging, video conferencing, and sharing of multimedia content across vast distances.

Why is Digital Communication Important?

The potential of Digital Communication came to light during the pandemic time. Businesses without a Digital Communication strategy failed to survive during that time. Video conferences became the channel of communication, emails became the new normal way of conveying messages. Digital Communication is also important for various other reasons as well which are given below:

1) Better engagement of workers 2) Comfortable and convenient experience 3) Universally acceptable 4) Transparency within the organization 5) Saves time, energy and money

Examples of Digital Communication:

1. Instant Messaging: Platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger,
2. Video Conferencing: Tools like Google Meet, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams \
3. Social Media Platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn connect people globally,.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

4. Email: It remains a widely used example of Digital Communication method,
5. Collaborative Tools and Cloud Storage: Platforms such as Google Drive and Dropbox
6. Social Networking Platforms: Twitter and LinkedIn offer avenues for professional networking.
7. Online Learning Platforms: E-learning platforms and tools enable students and educators to communicate, access resources, and participate in virtual classrooms.
8. Online Customer Support: Many companies provide customer support through live chat and chatbots on their websites, offering prompt assistance.

These examples highlight the multiple ways in which Digital Communication has transformed our personal and professional interactions. By leveraging these tools and platforms, we can easily connect, collaborate, and share information, irrespective of physical distance.

Definition of Media Literacy:

Media literacy refers to the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in various forms. It involves understanding the messages conveyed through different media channels, including television, radio, print, and the Internet. Media literacy empowers individuals to question and critically assess the information they encounter, identify potential biases, and differentiate between credible and unreliable sources. UNESCO (2021) defines "Digital literacy is the ability to use digital tools effectively, enabling individuals to communicate, access information, and participate fully in the digital economy and society. Digital literacy is essential in a society where the internet is a primary source of information, communication, and entertainment. It is also necessity of today's world that women also be aware about digital and media literacy in 21st century.

Relationship between Media Literacy and Digital Literacy:

Media literacy and digital literacy are closely intertwined and complement each other. Digital platforms have become the primary medium through which media is disseminated, and being digitally literate is important for engaging with media effectively. Conversely, media literacy is essential for understanding and critically evaluating the information encountered in digital spaces.

Importance of Digital literacy for Women:

"Digital literacy is the ability of individuals and communities to understand and use digital technologies for meaningful actions within life situations. The principle of gender equality and equal opportunity for women is given in the Indian Constitution which not only guarantees women the right to equal opportunities but also empowers the state to implement affirmative actions aimed at uplifting women and address gender inequalities. These provisions allow to ensure that women are given the necessary support and opportunities to overcome historical disadvantages and achieve true equality in all spheres of life. For progressive society, increasing awareness among women is essential also it will be beneficial for stronger economy and a reduction in various forms of violence. This goal can be achieved by digital literacy. In today's fast-evolving world, where technology plays important role in every aspect of life, empowering women with digital skills is not just an option it's a necessity. Digital literacy is the key that can unlock countless opportunities for women, providing them with the tools they need to enhance their personal and professional lives. Beyond merely knowing how to use a computer or smartphone, digital literacy involves the ability to navigate and engage with information and communication

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

technology in a way that is effective, safe, and purposeful. This skill set is essential for in 21st century.

In India, where women make up a significant portion of the rural population, it is crucial to raise their awareness about the broader world and their own country. This can be achieved by equipping them with essential information on topics like government assistance programs, educational opportunities, and the laws and regulations addressing domestic violence and sexual harassment. For progress of women, it is important to provide training on the safe use of mobile phones, navigating search engines, accessing information about educational institutions, generating income, and managing finances all through the application of digital skills. Such training can open doors to a wealth of opportunities, helping women make informed decisions, improve their livelihoods, and gain greater independence.

Barriers in the way of Digital Literacy for Women:

There are several barriers for women for achieving full digital literacy present in our society itself.

Affordability: Many women, particularly in rural or economically disadvantaged areas, cannot afford digital devices like smartphones, laptops, or tablets, nor can they maintain a stable internet connection. Without access to these tools, it's difficult for women to engage with digital learning platforms or acquire the necessary skills. If available it is costly not affordable for low income women.

Family Responsibilities: Women often bear the bulk of household and caregiving responsibilities, which leaves them with limited time to engage in digital learning or skills development. The demands of managing family life can often take precedence over personal development, including improving digital literacy.. This lack of support can discourage women from seeking out digital training or self-directed learning

Socio-Cultural Norms: Socio-cultural norms often discourage women from using technology, with some viewing digital skills as unnecessary or inappropriate for women, especially in rural or conservative settings. Women may face cultural biases that undermine their confidence in using technology. This can manifest in the form of discouragement from male family members, educators, or peers, who may believe that digital tools are better suited for men or more appropriate for boys to learn.

Cyber security and Digital Safety Concern: Many women, especially those in regions with high levels of online abuse, are hesitant to engage fully with digital platforms due to concerns about cyberbullying, harassment, or privacy violations. The fear of being targeted online can prevent women from embracing digital tools and technologies. Women may lack knowledge about online safety protocols, such as how to secure their devices or avoid phishing scams, which can lead to security breaches and exploitation.

Financial Independence and Economic Constraints: Women, mainly in patriarchal societies, may have limited financial independence, meaning they rely on male family members for access to digital tools. This dependency can limit their ability to freely engage with technology and learn digital skills.

Lack of Role Models and Mentorship: Women may lack visible role models who demonstrate the value of digital literacy and careers in technology. Without mentors or peers to encourage them, women might feel disconnected from the digital world and less motivated to pursue digital

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

literacy. In many areas, technology and digital spaces are predominantly male-dominated, which can create a sense of exclusion for women.

Technological Illiteracy among Educators: Many educators themselves lack the digital skills required to teach students, including adult learners, how to use technology effectively. This creates a cycle where women do not have access to instructors who can help them develop digital literacy skills in a supportive and structured manner.

Language Barrier: Many digital learning resources, platforms, and apps are designed primarily in global languages like English, making it difficult for women who are not fluent in these languages to access valuable content and training. This language barrier often excludes women from rural or non-English speaking backgrounds from fully participating in digital literacy opportunities.

Perceived Irrelevance of Digital Skills: In certain cultures, there may be a perception that digital skills are not essential for women, particularly if they are expected to focus on traditional roles within the household. This perception can discourage women from investing time and energy into developing digital literacy.

Initiatives Taken for Digital Literacy of Women:

Several initiatives have been introduced to promote digital literacy among women, empowering them with the skills and knowledge to navigate the digital world and provide new opportunities for personal and community growth.

PMGDISHA: Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digitally Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA), launched by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, aims to promote digital literacy, especially among women in rural areas. The initiative focuses on empowering rural women by providing them with the skills to use computers and digital devices effectively. By enhancing their digital capabilities, the scheme helps bridge the digital divide and opens up opportunities for education, employment, and social participation in the digital world. The program is exclusively targeted at rural regions across the country.

National Digital Literacy Mission: NDLM has been designed to offer digital training to ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, and authorized ration dealers. The key objective is to enhance digital literacy among rural populations, with a special emphasis on empowering women in these communities.

Digital DIDI: Digital Didi is a program aimed at raising awareness about sanitary health and hygiene, promoting women's inclusion in the digital economy, and encouraging women entrepreneurship. It also focuses on creating online platforms to support and connect women entrepreneurs.

GOAL: The "Going Online as Leaders" (GOAL) program was launched by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in collaboration with Facebook on May 15, 2020. The initiative focuses on empowering tribal girls by providing them with digital skills training to help them become young digital leaders. The program connects underprivileged tribal women with experienced mentors in fields such as business, art, fashion, and more, offering them the opportunity to learn valuable digital skills and gain guidance from experts.

Internet Saathi: Launched in 2015 by TATA Trusts in partnership with Google, this program empowers women to become change agents by leading efforts to promote digital literacy within their rural communities. These women, known as Internet Saathis, share essential information like

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

weather updates and disaster relief measures. Acting as a crucial link between the rural communities and the Trust, they also play a key role in providing valuable insights into internet usage patterns in the areas they serve.

Examples of Use of Digital Literacy By Women:

Laxmi Agarwal, an acid attack survivor, gained national attention through social media, using platforms to advocate for stricter laws against acid attacks and inspire other survivors. Movements like 'MeTooIndia' and ‘PinjraTod’ have shown how social media can bring attention to genderbased violence and discrimination. Many women have also used digital platforms to start businesses, promote their work, and reach customers beyond their local communities. In politics and journalism, social media has helped women engage directly with the public, challenge stereotypes, and shape important conversations. For instance, journalist Rana Ayyub, despite facing online threats, has continued to use Twitter to expose social injustices and hold those in power accountable. Similarly, politician Smriti Irani has effectively used social media to connect with voters, share policy updates, and counter misinformation.

Conclusion:

This media literacy and digital communication has given Indian women a platform to express themselves for gender equality, and achieve financial independence. But women also facing challenges, including online abuse, misinformation, and digital access barriers for this purpose there is requirement of proper laws, better digital education, and active efforts by social media companies to protect women users. Some efforts are being made to make digital spaces safer and more accessible for women. Organizations and governments are introducing initiatives to improve digital literacy and create stronger legal protections against online harassment. For example, the Digital India initiative has launched programs to increase internet accessibility in rural areas, and online safety campaigns such as the ‘We Think Digital’ initiative by Facebook have focused on educating women about cyber security. Despite all these initiatives for progressive country it is necessary for safe access to digital technology for women in 21st century up to rural level.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

40

COMMUNICATION AS A SOCIAL CAPITAL: IT'S INFLUENCE ON WOMEN'S CAREER MOBILITY

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Abstract:
Communication plays a vital role in the development of social capital, which significantly influences career opportunities and professional growth. Social capital refers to the networks, relationships, and connections that provide individuals with access to information, resources, and support. For women, communication-based social capital is particularly important because it helps overcome structural barriers such as gender inequality, limited access to professional networks, and workplace discrimination. This research paper examines how communication functions as social capital and its impact on women's career advancement. It also explores different forms of social capital, challenges faced by women in building professional networks, and the role of communication in promoting career success, leadership opportunities, and entrepreneurship. The study concludes that effective communication and networking are essential tools for empowering women and improving their participation and success in the workforce. Communication is a fundamental aspect of social capital, and it plays a crucial role in women's career development. Effective communication within social networks can lead to increased visibility, support, and opportunities for career advancement. Women's ability to communicate effectively and engage in social capital activities can enhance their employability and empower them in their career paths.

Keywords: *Asset Ownership, Household Decision-Making, Inter-Spouse Communication, Mobility, Social Capital, Women Empowerment, Women's Entrepreneurship Initiatives, Virtual Networking, Work-Life Balance, Gender Bias, Workplace Discrimination, Conflict Resolution, Strategic Thinking, Negotiation Skills, etc.*

Introduction:

In modern society, communication is not only a means of sharing information but also a key factor in building social relationships and professional networks. These networks create what sociologists call social capital, which refers to the value gained from interactions, trust, and cooperation among individuals and groups. According to Pierre Bourdieu, social capital consists of resources linked to durable networks of relationships (Bourdieu, 1986).

Women's careers are often influenced by access to resources, mentorship, and networks, which are largely built through communication. Historically, women have faced limitations in accessing influential professional networks due to cultural norms, gender stereotypes, and organizational barriers. As a result, communication becomes a powerful tool that allows women to develop relationships, gain information, and increase their career prospects.

Research has shown that strong social networks significantly improve career outcomes, employment opportunities, and professional growth (Lin, 2001). When women effectively use

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

communication to build social capital, they can enhance their employability, leadership opportunities, and entrepreneurial success.

Online communities, webinars, and virtual networking events allow women to connect with mentors and industry leaders without geographical limitations. Communication is a vital aspect of social capital, as it facilitates the exchange of information, ideas, and resources within networks. In the context of women's careers, communication can be seen as a means of sharing knowledge, experiences, and career opportunities. It plays a crucial role in building and maintaining relationships, which are essential for career advancement.

Women's communication skills can be leveraged to create and maintain professional relationships, which can lead to job opportunities, mentorship, and career advancement. Additionally, communication can help women navigate the professional landscape, addressing barriers to career progression and fostering a supportive environment.

The importance of communication as social capital is underscored by the findings of various studies that highlight its impact on women's career success. These studies suggest that women with strong communication skills and the ability to engage in meaningful conversations are more likely to build and maintain strong professional networks, which can lead to career advancement and increased job satisfaction.

In summary, communication is a key component of social capital that can significantly influence women's careers. By enhancing their communication skills, women can create and maintain valuable professional relationships that support their career development and success. Leadership is a dynamic process that requires constant growth and adaptability. By honing essential skills as well as adopting the right mindset, you can inspire others and achieve impactful results.

Females often face challenges like gender bias, lack of mentorship, and unequal access to opportunities. These issues can create barriers to career advancement and confidence. By addressing these challenges through support networks and advocacy, women can thrive in leadership roles.

Crucial Leadership Skills for Women:

Effective Communication: Effective communication helps leaders clearly express their ideas, listen to others, and build strong relationships within a team. It ensures that everyone understands goals and works together smoothly.

Decision-Making: Decision-making is the ability to analyze situations and choose the best option. A good leader makes thoughtful and timely decisions that help achieve success.

Adaptability: Adaptability means adjusting to new situations and changes quickly. Leaders who are adaptable can handle challenges and guide their team through difficult times.

Mentorship: Mentorship involves guiding and supporting others to improve their skills and confidence. A leader acts as a mentor by encouraging growth and sharing knowledge.

Conflict Resolution: Conflict resolution is the skill of solving disagreements peacefully and fairly. Good leaders listen to all sides and find solutions that maintain harmony.

Strategic Thinking: Strategic thinking helps leaders plan for the future and make decisions that support long-term goals. It involves analyzing problems and finding effective solutions.

Time Management: Time management is the ability to organize tasks and use time efficiently. It helps leaders complete work on time and increase productivity.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Confidence: Confidence allows leaders to believe in their abilities and make decisions without hesitation. It inspires trust and motivates others to follow them.
Negotiation Skills: Negotiation skills help leaders reach agreements that benefit everyone involved. It requires good communication and understanding different viewpoints.
Risk Taking: Risk taking means being willing to try new ideas or methods. Leaders who take calculated risks can achieve innovation and progress.
Creativity: Creativity helps leaders think of new ideas and solve problems in unique ways. It encourages innovation and improves overall performance.

Social Capital and Women's Empowerment:
The concept of social capital has been widely studied in sociology, economics, and organizational studies. Scholars describe social capital as the benefits individuals receive from their relationships and social networks. These benefits may include information, opportunities, emotional support, and access to resources.

Social capital is also closely linked to women's empowerment and economic development. Research suggests that women who participate in networks and community groups gain access to resources that improve their livelihoods and professional opportunities.

Studies on self-help groups in rural areas show that participation in these networks increases women's confidence, decision-making abilities, and economic independence.
These networks provide women with opportunities to share experiences, learn new skills, and collaborate with others.

Additionally, social capital strengthens collective action, enabling women to advocate for their rights and professional advancement.

Social Capital is Generally Divided into three Main Types:
Structural Social Capital:
Structural social capital refers to the network of relationships that individuals maintain with others. This includes professional contacts, colleagues, mentors, and industry connections. Effective communication helps individuals build and maintain these networks. For women, structural social capital can help them connect with influential professionals, gain career advice, and access job opportunities that might otherwise be unavailable (Lin, 2001).

Relational Social Capital:
Relational social capital focuses on trust, mutual respect, and emotional bonds between individuals. Strong communication skills help develop positive relationships that support collaboration and teamwork. Women who build strong relational social capital often receive more support from colleagues and mentors, which contributes to career stability and growth (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001).

Cognitive Social Capital:
Cognitive social capital refers to shared understanding, values, and communication among members of a network. When individuals share common goals and knowledge, collaboration becomes more effective. For women professionals, cognitive social capital helps create supportive work environments and encourages knowledge sharing within organizations.

Communication as a Form of Social Capital:

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Communication plays a central role in creating and strengthening social capital. It enables individuals to establish relationships, exchange ideas, and build trust within professional environments. Through communication, people can form networks that provide valuable career opportunities.

According to Robert D. Putnam, social capital is built through social interactions, communication, and civic engagement (Putnam, 2000).

There are several ways in which communication contributes to social capital:

- *Information Sharing:* Communication helps individuals exchange knowledge about job opportunities, career development, and industry trends.
- *Networking:* Professional networking events, online platforms, and workplace interactions allow individuals to expand their connections.
- *Collaboration***:** Communication facilitates teamwork and partnerships that lead to professional growth.
- *Mentorship:* Communication between mentors and mentees helps individuals develop skills and gain career guidance.

In the case of women, communication can help bridge the gap between limited opportunities and professional success.

Role of Communication in Women's Career Advancement:

Networking and Professional Growth:

Networking is one of the most important aspects of career development. Through networking, individuals can establish relationships with professionals who provide guidance, support, and opportunities.

Studies show that individuals with strong professional networks experience better career outcomes and promotions (Seibert et al., 2001). Women who actively participate in networking activities often experience:

Greater career mobility
Increased visibility in organizations
Better access to leadership opportunities
Higher chances of promotion

Communication skills such as interpersonal communication, public speaking, and digital communication are essential for building strong professional networks.

Access to Career Opportunities:

Many job opportunities are not publicly advertised and are instead shared within professional networks. Research indicates that a large percentage of employment opportunities are found through social connections (Granovetter, 1973). Communication allows women to gain access to these hidden opportunities through: Informal discussions, Professional events, Online networking, Mentorship relationships Thus, communication helps women remain competitive in the job market.

Mentorship and Professional Development:

Mentorship plays a significant role in women's career success. Mentors provide guidance, support, and advice that help women navigate workplace challenges.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Research suggests that mentorship improves career advancement, job satisfaction, and leadership development (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

Through communication, mentors can:
Share professional experiences, Provide career advice, Help build confidence, Encourage leadership development.

Types of Social Capital Influencing Women's Careers:
Bonding Social Capital:
Bonding social capital refers to relationships within close groups such as family members, friends, or women's networks. These relationships provide emotional support and encouragement. Women's professional associations often help members support each other's career development.

Bridging Social Capital:
Bridging social capital refers to connections with people from different industries or backgrounds. These connections provide access to new opportunities and resources. For women, bridging social capital expands professional networks and increases career mobility.

Linking Social Capital:
Linking social capital involves relationships with individuals in positions of authority such as managers, executives, and policymakers. These connections help women access leadership roles and promotions.

Challenges Faced by Women in Building Social Capital:
Despite the importance of communication and networking, women often face several challenges in building social capital.
Gender Bias in the Workplace:
Gender discrimination may limit women's participation in professional networks and decision-making roles.
Limited Access to Leadership Networks:
Many leadership networks are dominated by men, which reduces women's opportunities to connect with influential professionals.
Work-Life Balance Issues:
Family responsibilities and social expectations can reduce women's time for networking activities and professional development.
Lack of Mentorship Opportunities:
Women may have fewer chances to interact with mentors who can guide their career growth. These challenges highlight the need for inclusive workplace policies.

Impact of Social Capital on Women's Career Outcomes:
Career Success:
Women with strong communication networks are more likely to achieve career success because social capital provides access to resources and professional opportunities.
Entrepreneurship:
Social capital plays an important role in women's entrepreneurship by providing:
Financial resources, Business information, Partnerships, Market opportunities

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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March 6th& 7th 2026

Research shows that networks significantly influence entrepreneurial success

Role of Digital Communication in Building Social Capital:
In the digital era, communication has expanded beyond face-to-face interactions. Online platforms and professional networking websites allow individuals to build global connections.

Digital Communication enables Women to:
Join professional communities, Participate in webinars and conferences, Share professional achievements, & Access career opportunities worldwide Studies indicate that digital networking has become a key factor in career development.

Strategies to Strengthen Communication-Based Social Capital for Women:
To improve women's career opportunities, several strategies can be implemented:

- ✓ Encouraging participation in professional networks.
- ✓ Providing mentorship and leadership programs.
- ✓ Promoting gender equality in organizations.
- ✓ Supporting women's entrepreneurship initiatives.
- ✓ Developing communication and networking skills through education and training.

Educational institutions and organizations should focus on empowering women through communication development programs.

Conclusion:
Communication as social capital plays a crucial role in shaping women's careers. Through networking, mentorship, and collaboration, women can gain access to resources and opportunities that support professional growth. Social capital helps women overcome workplace barriers and achieve career success. However, challenges such as gender bias, limited access to networks, and work-life balance issues still affect women's ability to build social capital. Therefore, organizations, policymakers, and educational institutions must create inclusive environments that support women's communication and networking opportunities. Strengthening communication-based social capital will not only empower women but also contribute to economic development and gender equality in society.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

41

GENDER POLITICS IN MAHESH DATTANI'S *TARA*

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Abstract:
Gender Politics in India are deep rooted follows patriarchal tradition. On one side Indian society worships Goddess Kali, Saraswati and Durga Mata on the other side it shows gender discrimination. The situation is same even in well-educated families. Mahesh Dattani is the first Indian playwright writing in English to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi award for his contribution to drama. His Play Tara explores the theme of gender bias, emphasising on the deliberate, unethical separation of Siamese twins of Chandan and Tara, where the female twin is forced to sacrifice for the male in the Indian Patriarchal system. Indian Patriarchal system primarily follows the law of Manu in which female is denied of equal rights and equal education. Tara influenced by patriarchal pressure, has to give her third leg to her brother Chandan actually it was more suitable for her only. The play deals with emotional separation of two conjoined twins by the manipulation of their mother and grandfather favour for male child. The present paper explores the injustice done by the patriarchal society on the name of male preference and suppression of Indian female child by patriarchal norms. The Play highlights the deep-rooted Indian cultural Preference for male children than female children and treated the children of same womb in two different ways.

Keywords: *Gender Discrimination, Inequality, Patriarchal And Cultural Preferences, etc.*

Despite the progress the gender politics remain rigid, often enforcing obedience from women and forcing them to bend towards males. Indian Patriarchal society expects men to work outside and women manage house hold work and bearing children. They believe male children only carry the family name. The play *Tara (*1990) is a story about the courage and spirit of handicapped Siamese twins who could have survived but the decision taken by her mother by giving the extra leg to her twin brother ruined the life of Tara. It is a story of a boy and girl Children who are joined together at the hip and has to be separated surgically, an operation which will mean the death of the one of the two. Through the play *Tara* Mahesh Dattani picks up an issue which is glaring in our society that the preference of a boy child over a girl child forms the infrastructure of the play. It provides a bitter commentary upon gender discrimination and forces of social apathy towards injustice done to even a girl baby under the cloak of gender dichotomy. It presents how women are marginalized to the extent of distorting herself. The Play *Tara* is not just the story of the protagonist of the play Tara, but it is the story of every girl child born in the Indian family. The situation is aggravated if the girl is physically challenged or there is any physical or mental deformity in her. It is a bitter example of child abuse present in the Indian Societies. Every girl child born in Indian family does suffer some kind of exploitation and if there is a boy child in the

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

family, then the exploitation is very much visible as the privileges are consciously or unconsciously provided to the son. The following dialogues show how a father wants his son to become.

Chandan : All I'm doing is helping mummy to…
Patel : From now on you are coming to the office with me. I can't see you rotting at home!
Chandan : I don't want to go to the office!
Patel : You will come with me to the office until your college starts (Dattani, CP, 351).

The play is, in broader sense, a gruesome tale of injustice done to a woman by the patriarchal society. Despite the civilization and development in the human field, we are same at the root of our mind. The play shows how the devil of gender discrimination kills all other bond of familial relationship and how socio-cultural myths and conventions control and construct the course of the human life.

Bharati have no freedom to support her female child in a male patriarchal society. In a helpless condition she has to give her support to her father in attaching the leg to Chandan. Her love for Tara is pure and unceasing, but her maternal love is marginalized as a woman and her subulternity compels her to sacrifice her maternal love to cope up with social expectations. The patriarchal code pushes mother-daughter relationship on the periphery. Adrienne Rich aptly observes: "Dattani establishes that mother and daughter relationship is ultimately subordinate to the directives of patriarchy. It makes obvious that women's lives are organized and manipulated by the patriarchy in all ages, all culture and all countries by establishing values, roles, gender perception and prescribe unequal means to achieve the 'wholeness' for women" (Agarwal, 90).

Datani shows Tara's mother Bharati is responsible for Tara's fate and Bharati becomes hysterical for carrying the sense of guilt within her and how she dies after a prolonged suffering. Her husband proclaims that he cannot allow her to get the satisfaction of confessing her aid to her daughter is another side male supremacy exposed in the play. A patriarchal society is perfectly presented in *Tara* where the important family decisions are taken by its male members. In a patriarchal society a woman's identity is defined by others in terms of her relationship with men. Patel, the representative of the patriarchal authority in the play, clearly differentiate the role of his son from that of his daughter certain gendered roles are accepted in the society as natural and hardly does anyone bother to go beyond those accepted norms. "Though motherhood is the experience of women, the institution of motherhood is under male control and the physical situation of becoming a mother is disciplined by males. This glorious motherhood is imposed on women, conditions her entire life" (Rich, 45).

Dattani's *Tara* gives us a picture of the helplessness of woman in our society. The play explores the typical Indian mind-set, which has from times preferred a boy child to a girl child. It looks at the triumphs and failures of an Indian family, comprising of a father (Patel), mother (Bharati) and their two children coping with the trauma of disability. Though, Patel and Bharati are educated parents and the step taken by them is lamentable. Bharati's father, a resourceful person, is also considered to be one of the factors in this mishap. But it is the ultimate decision of the parents which is effective in the life of their children. Having proved wrong in her decision on the fateful 'leg', Bharati tries to shed her burden of guilt by showing maternal love and concern for her daughter and to assert her moral superiority over her husband she also tries to expiate by

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

the act of donating kidney to her daughter which was ultimately futile. Patel on the other hand has no compunction for being party to the wrong decision. He tries to accommodate his son Chandan and plans out his education and career for him.

Patel : Chandana is going to study further and he will go abroad for his higher studies (Dattani, CP: 352).

The play also indicates that the patriarchal social set up also deprives women from gaining economic stability. Along with the tragic tale of gender discrimination, an unpleasant document of material discrimination against the woman folk is also woven in the fabric of the text of the play. Since, Bharati was the only child of her father; he has bequeathed Tara and Chandan with house in Bangalore. However, Tara is excluded from the bequest of money by the grandfather. Chandan inherits a lot of money. Thus there is discrimination between male and female by the society. It is intolerable for Patel to bear with the scene that Chandan is helping Bharati to sort out her mistake in her knitting.

Patel : Let Tara do it
Chandana : It's okay
Patel : Give it to her
Chandana : Why?

And Patel reacts angrily and says,

Patel : Chandana, leave that damn thing alone !..
Patel (to Bharathi) : How dare you do this to him ?
You can think of turning him into a sissy teaching him to hit (Dattani, CP: 351).

To conclude, the structure of an Indian family is patriarchal. Be it a daughter, wife, daughter-in-law or mistress all are dependent on man for financial and physical security. We are not living in the Stone Age. In the world of globalization our prevalent norms should be changed. Mahesh Dattani shows how the women are gasping under the evil clutch of patriarchy and gender bias. To build premise of strong and unshakable nation, sound construction of family is very necessary as it is like the brick in the premise of the nation. Moreover, family is our first society. If this first community or society exists on falsehood of prejudice and conventions, the nation, the larger society, cannot survive longer, cannot flourish and progress. But as the name Tara rightfully suggests a star, the girl was a bright and shining star which was a source of cheerfulness and happiness of the family. Tara is not merely an individual character she is an archetype, an icon of the post-colonial Indian women. The Play serves as a condemnation of pervasive misogyny in Indian culture. It delivers a message about the destructive social values prevailed in the society. Despite legal equality female often face restriction on their freedom, education and employment. Through the play Dattani questions the society with these outdated and valueless norms could our country's true progress made. Besides, Dattani tried to show the corruption in the society among the godly profession persons also. It shows how human values are degrading in the lust of earning which is meanness.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

42

GENDER INEQUALITY IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S *SAKHARAM BINDER*

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Abstract:
Vijay Tendulkar, one of India's most influential modern playwrights, is renowned for his bold, realistic portrayal of social issues, particularly gender inequality, patriarchal oppression, violence against women, and the exploitation of female sexuality in Indian society. His plays often expose the deep-rooted misogyny, power imbalances, and dehumanization of women in both domestic and public spheres. The key work that powerfully illustrates these themes is Sakharam Binder (1972). In Sakharam Binder, Tendulkar examines gender inequality through the lens of exploitative, informal "live-in" relationships in a patriarchal, working-class Indian context.

Keywords: *Gender, Inequality, Misogyny, Hypocrisy, Patriarchy, Commodification, etc.*

Sakharam Binder is the most controversial and sensational play by Vijay Tendulkar. The play Sakharam Binder is translated by Kumud Mehta and Shanta Gokhale. The very depiction of violence and sex on the stage had sent shivers down the spines of the contemporary audience. This play also deals with Tendulkar's favourite theme autonomy of individual against the rigid conventions of society. A noted critic Prof. N.S. Dharan says, ''Vijay Tendulkar's Sakharam Binder is an exposition of the hypocrisy, jealousy, masochism and lust of middle-class male.'' (Dharan, 67) But such an analysis hides the importance of the hatred, anger and lust of Sakharam. The protagonist, Sakharam Binder, is a lower-middle-class man who openly keeps women as temporary live-in partners without marriage, treating them as sexual and domestic servants in exchange for basic shelter and protection. When he brings Laxmi, he declares to her the terms on which she will live in the house. During his declarations Sakharam reveals his life style, life philosophy and all his rage against the very institution of marriage. His utterance, 'I'm not scared of God or of God's father!" (Tendulkar, 126) is a sort of assurance to the woman but she is shocked and stiffened. In one of the scenes, Laxmi is talking to someone. Sakharam has returned and listens to Laxmi's talk. This creates doubt in his mind but it gets cleared when she tells him that she was talking to a black ant. Now Sakharam loses his temper and scolds her for such nonsense. Yet he is seen using respectful language while talking to her. He offers her tea from his cup but when denied he gets furious. Such situations slowly show that he has been making advances to her for gratifying his lust.

In another scene Laxmi gets a burn on her foot but at night he forces her to laugh like the way she did a few days before. She is unable due to pain but Sakharam forces her. This is a clear hint of Sakharam's physical and sexual harassment of her. Some days pass and we meet a bit changed Sakharam. When Laxmi denies Dawood's participation in Ganapati aarti he trashes her. Later, he questions Laxmi whether he has changed to a greater extent or not. He has minimised consumption of alcohol, ganja. He has started offering daily prayer and lives like a family man. This all has happened under Laxmi's influence. He repeats, "I had six before you. I disowned my

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

own father; I wouldn't let anyone boss over me. But I did listen to you, didn't I? Didn't I?" (Tendulkar, 148) Laxmi also reacts sternly telling him what she got in return- beating mental and physical torture. Sakharam throws her out but she re-enters after the door is reopened for Dawood. Sakharam again rages and abuses but she silently continues her work. Next, he sends Laxmi out of his house and the first act ends.

The opening scene of the second act is almost same as that of act one, just a bit of change in words of Sakharam. In the first act he yells at the children " I'll shine your bottoms for you" and now he yells "I'll skin your backs." Remaining all the dialogue of Sakharam is almost same but the women and her reactions are different. Champa- his eighth woman- is with Sakharam. He reiterates the rules and conventions of living in his house but Champa's reactions are different. Champa is younger as compared to Laxmi and more sensual to look at. She directly looks into his eyes so he is bit surprised. He starts realising that she is different and may be difficult to handle. When she calls Dawood "nice" his jealousy arises and he senses the danger in allowing Dawood's free entry in his house. Champa's openly changing clothes doesn't fit in Sakharam imagination, he gets restless. While she is asleep, he puts hand on her. She wakes up with a loud and weird shout. She cautions him not to make such advances to her. This deeply mortifies Sakharam and he hurriedly goes out. Next Champ's husband Fouzdar Shinde enters the scene and looking at him, she gets furious. The clash between the two doesn't remain verbal but goes physical. She beats him with chappal and kicks him out. Both Sakharam and Dawood are wonder struck at Champa's fury. Her fury is resultant of her life story, part of which is already narrated in the beginning of the second act.

Sakharam is unable to control his hunger and the tries to touch sleeping Champa. She reacts sternly saying, "I don't like it-all that man woman stuff." (Tendulkar, 168) He reminds her of the 'deal', "there were seven and not one said no." Both are not ready for adjustment and it leads to further clash. Sakharam drinks and abuses her. He goes to the outer room and sits drinking. Inside, Champa is still. Then, as if she has decided something, she comes into the outer room and grabs his hand and demands bottle to drink herself. Scene III ends with Champa's words, "just a few minutes more. Then you can take me. Do what you like with me---." (Tendulkar, 169). In the next scene, Champa is seen eating in the kitchen. He wants the last night's 'fun' again. She denies but he insists. Angry Sakharam comes to the outer room and curses her saying if he throws her out, then she will understand. She will have to sleep with anyone and everyone. Inside Champa stops eating and hurls the plate on the ground. Gets up collects the food and plate, keeps it at the washing place. She asks him for bottle, drinks and forces him to drink. Now she is ready to give 'fun' to him, to anyone, to dog, to the corpse and to Dawood who is standing at the door.

Action continues and Sakharam is engrossed in Champa. In the later scene, Laxmi enters the action. She tells Sakharam that she will live and die in this house. Thunder struck, Sakharam throws her out and closes the door. Act III of the play bring face to face Sakharam's seventh and eight women. Considering Laxmi as a beggar Champa tries to shoo her away. Laxmi reveals that she was one what Champa is today, living is the house of Sakharam. Its hurts Champa a bit but she informs her that 'her Sakharam' has gone to the press. They both take tea and during the conversation Laxmi understands that Sakharam has again become his previous self- drunkard and lecherous. Both talk of their past life. Laxmi proposes to stay in the house and do the house hold chores. Champa agrees saying. ''Stay, you look after the house, I look after him. Anyway, I can't cope with both. You stay alive and I'll stay alive, too." (Tendulkar, 181) Sakharam enters

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

grudging against the employers. Angrily he scolds Laxmi and starts beating her when she says, "……. I don't ask for anything just a roof over my head and to die in your lap." (Tendulkar, 182) Champa intervenes least Sakharam kill her and go to jail. Then she had a fear of getting torn by several beasts. She somehow manages Laxmi's stay in the house.

A few scenes later, Laxmi comes to know about Champa- Dawood affair and she curses Champa for cheating on Sakharam. In another scene Sakharam wants Champa to come in the outer room and sleep. She purposely lingers around in the kitchen. When she comes in the outer room the wants her to lie down, but she doesn't. He forces her but she says, "My body can't take it, not anymore.'' (Tendulkar, 193) Then comes the real jerk. She boldly says, "yeah, can't take it any more-not even with all that drink inside me. If you can't make it, go and lie down quietly. Haven't been able to make it these last few days. A sound from the kitchen and you go cold. That's true or not?" (Tendulkar, 193) She questions his being 'man' any more. Sakharam gets furies and force her to drink. Champa has hurt his ego and the reason for his loss of manliness is Laxmi.

The penultimate scene of the play depicts the hurt Sakharam. He enters and asks Laxmi to leave his house. It is she because of whom Champa called him 'ninny'. Laxmi is seen trembling. He asks her to leave at that very minute. Finding no way out she starts to collect her belongings. She tries to touch his feet. Before leaving she wants to tell him something for his own good. Sakharam is not willing to hear a single word but to send her out he listens. Then Laxmi reveals, "She –she goes to that Muslim- every day" (Tendulkar, 195). This information shocks him and he pounces on her like a tiger and beats her. But Laxmi reiterates, "It's true, it's the truth- these lips have never spoken a lie yet-She is unfaithful to you- Yes –with Dawood. She goes with him every afternoon- when you are at the press. I've seen them – seen them with my own eyes." (Tendulkar, 196).

Sakharam has lost his control. He enters, finds Laxmi sitting against the wall. He kicks her once. Then he reaches the drunkenly slept Champa. He sits down and reaches for her neck, presses. There are grants and later Champa becomes motionless. Sakharam realises that he has murdered Champa. Laxmi hushes him and convinces him that she was a sinner, so she will go to hell but not him. She proposes to bury Champa in the kitchen.

Laxmi herself accepts her subordination in Sakharam's house saying, "why did I go?----- where does she go every afternoon? I went for his sake. My misfortune, I couldn't keep the man I married. For me this one was my husband. I worshipped him. Even when I was away, I'd worshipped him in silence every day…. It is a mangalsutra of sorts. Look at this. I wore this in his name. I belong to him. If I have to be kicked, let him kick me; if I have to die, let me die on his lap- in full glory like a married woman." (Tendulkar, 187) Her utterance, after she has seen Champa with Dawood, is a sort of claim she has an Sakharam.

As for patriarchy Champa's life story reveals it. When she beats Fouzdar Shinde (her husband) she is seen busting with anger due to the torture from her husband. She belonged to a family of illegal liquor seller. Fouzdar Shinde raided the place once and he found Champa during the raid. He forced marriage on her in her teens. He exploited the young Champa sexually. Later he tried to force her to be a whore. When she ran away, he made her caught again and as a punishment stuffed chili powder in her private parts. All such horrible past with husband she has suffered.

Sakharam views the women as disposable objects to fulfill his needs—sexual gratification, household labour, and ego reinforcement—while denying them autonomy, respect, or emotional

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

equality. He imposes strict patriarchal control, including physical violence and humiliation, to maintain dominance.

Tendulkar highlights several facets of gender inequality here: Women are commodified and reduced to their bodies and labour. Patriarchal double standards allow men sexual freedom while judging and punishing women harshly for similar behaviour. Domestic violence and emotional abuse serve as tools to enforce male authority. Society's indifference or complicity normalizes such exploitation of marginalized women.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

43

IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS

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Abstract:
Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the global employment landscape by automating routine tasks, augmenting decision-making, and redefining skill requirements across industries. While AI presents opportunities for economic growth and innovation, it also raises concerns regarding employment displacement, particularly for women who are disproportionately represented in routine and administrative roles. This research paper examines the impact of artificial intelligence on women's employment prospects, highlighting both challenges and opportunities. It explores sectoral shifts, skill gaps, digital divides, remote work expansion, entrepreneurship, and policy implications. The study emphasizes the importance of reskilling, digital literacy, inclusive AI development, and gender-responsive policies to ensure equitable workforce participation. By analysing trends in technology adoption and labour market transformation, the paper argues that AI can either widen gender inequality or serve as a catalyst for empowerment depending on institutional frameworks and access to resources. The findings suggest that strategic intervention in education, training, and workplace reforms is essential to promote sustainable and inclusive employment growth for women in the AI-driven economy.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Women Employment, Gender Inequality, Digital Skills, Workforce Transformation, etc.*

Introduction:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most transformative technologies of the 21st century. From automation in manufacturing to predictive analytics in finance and personalized services in healthcare, AI is reshaping industries and redefining the nature of work. As organizations adopt AI-driven systems to enhance efficiency and reduce costs, the structure of employment is undergoing significant change.

Women constitute a substantial proportion of the global workforce, particularly in sectors such as education, healthcare, administration, retail, and customer service. Many of these roles involve repetitive and routine tasks, which are increasingly susceptible to automation. This development has sparked debates regarding whether AI will disproportionately affect women's employment prospects.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

As organizations adopt AI-driven systems to enhance efficiency and reduce costs, the structure of employment is undergoing significant change.
Women constitute a substantial proportion of the global workforce, particularly in sectors such as education, healthcare, administration, retail, and customer service. Many of these roles involve repetitive and routine tasks, which are increasingly susceptible to automation. This development has sparked debates regarding whether AI will disproportionately affect women's employment prospects.

Conceptual Framework: AI and Employment Transformation:
Artificial Intelligence refers to computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision- making. AI technologies include machine learning, natural language processing, robotics, and automation systems. Employment transformation due to AI occurs in three major ways:

- **Automation of Tasks** – Replacement of repetitive or predictable jobs.
- **Augmentation of Work** – Enhancement of human capabilities through AI tools.
- **Creation of New Roles** – Emergence of technology-driven employment sectors.

Women's employment prospects are influenced by how these three mechanisms interact with existing gender disparities in education, income, and digital access.

Vulnerability of Women to Job Automation:
Concentration in Routine Occupations:
Research indicates that women are overrepresented in clerical, administrative, and service-oriented occupations. These jobs often involve standardized procedures that can be automated using AI-powered systems. For example:

- Data entry and bookkeeping
- Call center operations
- Retail cashier services
- Basic accounting

Automation of such roles can lead to workforce displacement unless workers transition into higher-skilled positions.

Informal Sector Employment:
In developing countries, a large percentage of women work in the informal economy. AI-driven automation in agriculture, manufacturing, and retail supply chains can disrupt traditional employment patterns without providing adequate social protection.

Digital Gender Divide:
Limited access to digital education and technological training restricts women's participation in AI-related careers. Socio-cultural barriers, early marriage, and caregiving responsibilities further reduce opportunities for skill enhancement.

Opportunities Created by Artificial Intelligence:

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Despite challenges, AI also presents substantial opportunities for women's economic empowerment.

Remote and Flexible Work:

AI-powered digital platforms enable remote work opportunities in content creation, data annotation, online education, digital marketing, and consulting. This flexibility benefits women who balance professional responsibilities with caregiving roles.

Entrepreneurship and Start-ups:

AI tools have reduced entry barriers for entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurs can leverage AI for:

- Market analysis
- Customer relationship management
- Financial forecasting
- E-commerce operations

Technology-based enterprises provide income diversification and financial independence.

Emerging Career Fields:

AI has created demand for new roles such as:

- Data analysts
- AI trainers
- Machine learning engineers
- AI ethics specialists
- Cybersecurity analysts

With proper education and training, women can actively participate in these high-growth sectors.

Healthcare and Education Innovation:

AI supports personalized learning platforms and telemedicine services, expanding employment in digital education and health technology. Women, traditionally active in these sectors, can benefit from technological augmentation rather than displacement.

Skill Development and Reskilling Imperatives:

The impact of AI on women's employment depends significantly on access to skill development initiatives.

STEM Education:

Encouraging women's participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields is essential. Scholarships, mentorship programs, and inclusive educational policies can bridge gender gaps.

Digital Literacy Programs:

Basic digital literacy, coding skills, and AI awareness must be integrated into formal and informal education systems. Vocational training tailored to women in rural and urban areas can reduce inequality.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
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March 6th& 7th 2026

Lifelong Learning:

Continuous learning is necessary in the AI-driven economy. Governments and institutions must promote affordable online courses, certification programs, and workplace training.

Workplace Transformation and Gender Inclusion:
Algorithmic Bias:
AI systems may replicate existing gender biases if developed using biased datasets. For instance, AI-driven recruitment tools may unintentionally disadvantage women if historical hiring data reflects gender imbalance. Inclusive AI development practices, diverse technical teams, and transparent algorithms are necessary to prevent discrimination.

Leadership Representation:
Women remain underrepresented in leadership positions within technology companies. Increasing female participation in AI design and decision-making processes ensures equitable outcomes.

Work-Life Balance:
AI-enabled automation can reduce workload intensity, allowing better work-life integration. Flexible scheduling supported by digital tools enhances participation of women in the workforce.

Socio-Economic Implications
Income Inequality:
If women are displaced from routine jobs without access to new opportunities, income inequality may widen. Conversely, successful integration into AI-driven sectors can improve wage levels.

Economic Growth:
Women's participation in AI sectors contributes to national productivity. Inclusive labour markets maximize human capital utilization.

Social Empowerment:
Financial independence strengthens decision-making power within households and communities. AI-driven entrepreneurship can promote social transformation.

Policy Recommendations:
To ensure that AI supports rather than hinders women's employment prospects, the following measures are recommended:

- **Gender-Responsive Education Policies** – Promote STEM participation among girls and women.
- **Subsidized Skill Training** – Provide affordable AI and digital training programs.
- **Social Protection Mechanisms** – Support displaced workers through unemployment benefits and transition programs.
- **Inclusive AI Governance** – Establish ethical frameworks to reduce algorithmic bias.
- **Support for Women Entrepreneurs** – Provide funding, mentorship, and digital infrastructure.
- **Workplace Diversity Mandates** – Encourage gender diversity in AI development teams.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
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March 6th& 7th 2026

Challenges in Implementation:

Despite policy initiatives, several challenges persist:

- Cultural norms limiting women's mobility and education
- Limited financial resources for training programs
- Unequal access to internet and digital devices
- Resistance to technological adoption in rural regions

Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts among governments, educational institutions, private sectors, and civil society organizations.

Future Outlook:

Artificial Intelligence will continue to evolve, influencing nearly every economic sector. The future of women's employment in an AI-driven world depends on proactive measures taken today. Emerging trends such as ethical AI, green technology, digital finance, and smart infrastructure present vast employment possibilities. If inclusivity remains central to AI policies, women can transition from vulnerable job positions to leadership roles in technological innovation. The focus should shift from job replacement to job transformation and capability enhancement.

Conclusion:

Artificial Intelligence is both a disruptive and transformative force in the labour market. While women face higher risks of displacement due to concentration in routine occupations and limited digital access, AI simultaneously opens new avenues for flexible employment, entrepreneurship, and high-skilled careers. The impact of AI on women's employment prospects is not predetermined; it is shaped by education systems, policy frameworks, technological design, and social norms. Strategic investments in skill development, inclusive governance, and gender-responsive reforms are essential to harness AI as a tool for empowerment rather than inequality.

Ultimately, achieving equitable participation in the AI economy requires collective responsibility and sustained commitment toward bridging the digital gender divide. With proper intervention, artificial intelligence can become a catalyst for women's economic independence, leadership, and long-term socio-economic advancement.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

44

GENDER DISPARITIES IN THE FIELD OF ENGINEERING: A SYSTEMATIC STUDY

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Abstract:
Engineering has historically functioned not only as a technical profession but also as a culturally constructed, gendered space shaped by institutional practices, educational narratives, and professional norms. This paper presents a literary and analytical survey of gender equality and inequality within the engineering field, examining how historical accounts, educational structures, workplace cultures, and representational narratives contribute to both exclusion and progress. Rather than focusing exclusively on statistical disparities, the study interrogates the symbolic and discursive frameworks that have framed engineering as a masculine domain since the Industrial Revolution. The survey traces the evolution of women's participation in engineering, highlighting persistent underrepresentation alongside gradual increases in workforce participation over recent decades. It critically analyzes educational environments, professional identity formation, leadership disparities, implicit bias, and intersectional barriers that shape women's experiences in engineering education and practice. Additionally, the paper explores the role of literary and cultural representation in challenging stereotypes and expanding perceptions of belonging in technical fields. By synthesizing interdisciplinary scholarship, the study demonstrates that gender inequality in engineering is sustained not only through structural barriers but also through enduring cultural narratives. While measurable progress has been achieved through policy reforms and diversity initiatives, substantive gender equality requires deeper transformation of institutional cultures, evaluative standards, and societal perceptions of technical competence.

Keywords: *Gender Equality, Engineering, Gender Inequality, Literary Representation, STEM, Inclusion, etc.*

Introduction:

Engineering has long been framed as the backbone of technological progress and economic development. Bridges, machines, algorithms, and infrastructures are celebrated as triumphs of human ingenuity. Yet, behind these achievements lies a field historically shaped by gender inequality. The underrepresentation of women in engineering is not merely a statistical concern

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

but a cultural and narrative one, reinforced through language, education systems, professional norms, and social expectations.

This survey article adopts a literary and analytical approach to explore how gender equality and inequality are represented within the engineering field. Rather than focusing solely on numerical disparities, the paper examines how stories, metaphors, institutional narratives, and lived experiences construct engineering as a gendered space. Through this lens, gender inequality appears not only as a structural issue but as a deeply embedded cultural narrative that continues to influence participation and recognition.

Historical Context: Engineering as a Gendered Narrative:

The historical evolution of engineering as a profession reveals a deeply gendered narrative shaped by social, educational, and industrial structures. During the Industrial Revolution in Europe and North America, engineering emerged as a formalized discipline closely associated with military service, heavy industry, and mechanized labor—domains culturally constructed as masculine (R. Oldenziel). Professional institutions such as the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Institution of Civil Engineers formalized credentialing processes in the nineteenth century, reinforcing male-dominated networks that restricted women's access to technical education and professional recognition. Although pioneering figures like Emily Warren Roebling and Lillian Moller Gilbreth made substantial contributions, their roles were often minimized or framed as exceptional rather than transformative. The exclusion was further institutionalized through educational barriers in leading technical universities, including Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which initially limited women's participation in engineering programs. Feminist historiography argues that engineering identity became intertwined with ideals of rationality, objectivity, and technical mastery—traits socially coded as masculine—thereby constructing the profession as a gendered space (S. Jasanoff). Consequently, the historical narrative of engineering not only reflects systemic gender inequality but also demonstrates how institutional practices and cultural ideologies co-produced professional boundaries that marginalized women and reinforced occupational segregation well into the twentieth century (M. Wajcman).

Sr. No	Decade	% Women in Engineering
1	1970	~3%
2	2000	~11%
3	2010	~10.5%
4	2019	~14–15%
5	2021	~16.5%
6	2023	~15%

Table 1.Women in Engineering (% of total engineering workforce)

Educational Narratives and Gender Inequality:

Educational narratives surrounding engineering have historically reinforced gender inequality by constructing technical competence as inherently masculine and aligning scientific aptitude with male identity. From early schooling onward, curricular content, pedagogical practices, and teacher expectations have subtly reproduced gendered assumptions about mathematical and spatial ability, discouraging girls from pursuing engineering pathways (J. Margolis). Research demonstrates that

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

stereotype threat and implicit bias significantly affect female students' performance and persistence in STEM disciplines, thereby shaping academic self-concept and career aspirations (C. M. Steele). Institutional cultures within engineering programs further contribute to attrition through competitive, individualistic learning environments that privilege traditionally masculine norms of assertiveness and technical confidence (E. Seymour). Even in contemporary contexts, disparities in enrollment and retention reflect broader socio-cultural narratives that frame engineering as a male-dominated domain, despite policy interventions promoting inclusion. Scholars argue that educational reform must therefore address not only access but also epistemological assumptions embedded within engineering curricula, including whose knowledge is validated and whose contributions are historically acknowledged. By interrogating these educational narratives, the literature underscores how systemic inequities are reproduced within academic institutions, shaping the professional landscape of engineering long before workforce entry (L. Faulkner).

Workplace Representation and Professional Identity:

Workplace representation and professional identity in engineering remain deeply influenced by historically embedded gender norms that shape organizational culture, advancement opportunities, and perceptions of competence. Despite increased participation of women in engineering education, their representation in technical leadership, senior management, and decision-making roles continues to lag behind that of men, reflecting structural and cultural barriers within professional environments (S. J. Ceci). Studies indicate that women engineers frequently encounter implicit bias, exclusion from informal professional networks, and evaluation standards that align leadership with traditionally masculine traits, thereby affecting career progression and professional self-concept (J. C. Williams). The persistence of the "ideal engineer" archetype—characterized by uninterrupted career trajectories, long working hours, and technical dominance—often conflicts with socially constructed expectations of caregiving roles, further complicating women's workplace experiences (E. Faulkner). Research in organizational sociology and gender studies highlights that professional identity in engineering is not merely skill-based but socially negotiated, shaped by peer recognition, mentorship access, and institutional validation (M. Wajcman). Consequently, achieving substantive gender equality in engineering workplaces requires not only numerical representation but also transformation of cultural narratives and evaluative frameworks that define legitimacy, authority, and success within the profession.

Progress toward Gender Equality in Engineering:

Recent literature indicates that while gender equality in engineering remains an ongoing challenge, measurable progress has been made through institutional reforms, policy initiatives, and targeted diversity programs that aim to increase women's representation in both educational pipelines and professional environments. Systematic mapping studies show a growing body of research since 2015 focusing on women's participation in engineering education, retention, and leadership, thereby highlighting patterns of engagement and areas requiring further intervention (M. Quezada-Espinoza). Globally, gender inclusion initiatives such as mentoring programs, flexible work policies, and professional networks contribute to enhanced visibility and support for women engineers, though their effectiveness varies by context and organizational culture. For example, recent analyses emphasize the need to move beyond single-policy approaches and adopt integrated frameworks that simultaneously address recruitment, retention, and workplace inclusion

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

to strengthen women's representation across hierarchical levels within technical professions (R. Islam). Quantitative trends also indicate that female enrollment and graduation rates in engineering have improved modestly over the past decade, but significant gaps persist in senior roles and research leadership, underscoring the importance of sustained equity-focused strategies. Additionally, interdisciplinary research continues to highlight structural barriers—such as implicit bias and cultural stereotypes—that temper the pace of change, suggesting that progress toward gender equality in engineering is incremental and contingent on broader systemic reforms.

Persistent Inequality and Subtle Bias:

Persistent inequality and subtle bias in the engineering field remain significant challenges despite increasing awareness and policy attention, with recent research highlighting how implicit and structural biases continue to shape professional experiences for women and other underrepresented genders. Empirical studies in software development and engineering environments demonstrate that gendered perceptions of competence and role suitability persist, often manifesting through implicit cognitive associations and workplace practices that disadvantage women and reinforce traditional gender norms (F. Beroíza-Valenzuela). These biases operate subtly, influencing evaluations, task assignments, and career advancement decisions even when overt discriminatory practices are formally prohibited. Research on organizational gender inequities reveals that such biases accumulate over time and across workplace processes, contributing to disparities in performance assessments, leadership opportunities, and career outcomes, and are compounded by intersectional factors such as race and socioeconomic status (L. S. Son Hing). Moreover, implicit gender stereotypes, measured through reaction-time-based cognitive assessments, correlate with differential experiences and self-perceptions among STEM participants, affecting both persistence and identity in engineering careers (E. Pitka). These findings illustrate that persistent inequality in engineering is not merely a matter of representation but is deeply embedded in everyday interactions and decision-making, requiring both structural and cultural change to address subtle bias effectively.

The Role of Literary Representation in Advancing Equality:

Literary representation plays a significant, though often under-studied, role in shaping perceptions of gender and advancing equality within engineering and related STEM fields by influencing how individuals conceive of who "belongs" in these domains. Recent research on engineering-focused children's literature underscores that narratives and images presented in picturebooks can serve as both mirrors**,** allowing children—especially girls—to see themselves reflected in engineering roles, and windows**,** offering insights into diverse identities and practices within engineering, thereby challenging traditional gendered stereotypes at early educational stages (A. Eckhoff). Similarly, studies examining role models in STEM contexts suggest that narratives about successful women engineers and scientists—whether through biographies, classroom materials, or storytelling—enhance self-efficacy, positive perceptions of engineering careers, and aspirations among underrepresented genders, highlighting the motivational influence of represented identities (M. Tal). Such narrative interventions align with broader educational and cultural strategies aimed at broadening participation by counteracting entrenched gender norms and facilitating inclusive professional identities. The literature therefore positions representation not merely as descriptive content, but as a pedagogical and psychosocial mechanism that can contribute to advancing gender

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

equality by reshaping societal imaginaries of engineering and empowering future generations to envision equitable participation (Y. Lin).

Conclusion:

This literary survey demonstrates that gender inequality in engineering is embedded within historical traditions, educational systems, workplace structures, and cultural representations that collectively shape the profession's identity. Although numerical participation of women in engineering has improved over the past decades, representation alone does not signify full equality. Subtle biases, exclusionary professional norms, and gendered constructions of competence continue to influence access to leadership, recognition, and career advancement.

The analysis reveals that engineering's identity has long been intertwined with culturally masculine ideals of rationality, authority, and technical mastery, reinforcing systemic barriers for women and other underrepresented genders. Educational institutions often reproduce these narratives through curricular assumptions and competitive environments, while workplaces sustain them through implicit bias and rigid definitions of the "ideal engineer." At the same time, the growing body of research, policy initiatives, mentoring frameworks, and inclusive representation in literature and media signal meaningful—though incremental—progress toward equity.

Ultimately, achieving sustainable gender equality in engineering requires more than increased enrollment or hiring; it demands structural reform, cultural redefinition of professional identity, and conscious transformation of the narratives that shape belonging and legitimacy within the field. Future research should continue to adopt interdisciplinary and intersectional approaches, examining how policy, pedagogy, organizational practice, and representation interact to either reinforce or dismantle inequality. Only through such comprehensive and sustained efforts can engineering evolve into a profession defined not by inherited gendered boundaries, but by inclusive excellence and equitable opportunity

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

45

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AND THE POWER OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION: BUILDING LEADERSHIP, GROWTH, AND SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISES

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Abstract:
Women entrepreneurship has emerged as a transformative force in contemporary economies, contributing significantly to employment generation, innovation, and inclusive development. Despite increasing participation, women entrepreneurs frequently encounter structural barriers such as limited access to finance, gender bias, and restricted professional networks. In this context, business communication has become a critical strategic tool that enables women to lead effectively, negotiate confidently, and build sustainable enterprises. This paper examines how communication competencies—including verbal, written, interpersonal, and digital communication—support leadership development, stakeholder engagement, and business growth among women entrepreneurs. Drawing upon recent scholarly literature and institutional reports, the study emphasizes that communication is not merely a soft skill but a core managerial capability that strengthens credibility, market presence, and organizational performance. The paper also highlights the role of digital platforms and networking strategies in expanding opportunities for women-led ventures. The findings suggest that enhancing communication skills through training, mentorship, and technology adoption can significantly empower women entrepreneurs and improve enterprise sustainability. The study concludes that effective business communication acts as a catalyst for economic participation, confidence building, and long-term success for women in entrepreneurship.

Keywords: *Women Entrepreneurship, Business Communication, Leadership, Networking, Enterprise Growth, etc.*

Introduction:

Entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged as a major driver of economic development and innovation. Across the world, women are increasingly participating in entrepreneurial activities,

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

creating new ventures that contribute to employment generation and social welfare. Women-owned enterprises are now visible in diverse sectors such as retail, education, technology, food processing, and digital services. According to the World Bank (2023) and UN Women (2022), promoting women entrepreneurship is essential for inclusive growth and poverty reduction.

However, women entrepreneurs continue to face unique challenges, including limited access to capital, cultural restrictions, lower mobility, and lack of professional networks. While financial resources and technical expertise are important, the ability to communicate effectively often determines whether an enterprise succeeds or fails. Business communication enables entrepreneurs to present ideas clearly, persuade stakeholders, manage teams, and build customer trust.

This paper argues that communication functions as a strategic resource for women entrepreneurs. It explores how communication strengthens leadership capabilities, supports negotiations, enhances networking, and enables market expansion. By reviewing existing literature and institutional findings, the study demonstrates that communication competence is central to sustainable business success.

Literature Review:

Research on women entrepreneurship highlights the influence of social and structural contexts on business outcomes. Brush, de Bruin, and Welter (2019) propose a gender-aware framework suggesting that women entrepreneurs operate within different social expectations and resource constraints compared to men. These constraints affect their access to information, networks, and opportunities. The authors emphasize the importance of relational and communication skills in overcoming such limitations.

Similarly, Gupta, Turban, and Bhawe (2008) discuss how gender stereotypes influence entrepreneurial confidence and intentions. Their findings indicate that effective self-presentation and persuasive communication can help women challenge stereotypical perceptions and establish credibility in professional settings.

From a management perspective, Guffey and Loewy (2022) describe business communication as the foundation of organizational success, highlighting clarity, conciseness, and professionalism as key attributes. They argue that leaders who communicate effectively enhance teamwork, trust, and productivity.

Institutional reports further support these findings. The OECD (2023) notes that networking and communication competencies are strongly linked to the growth and survival of women-owned small and medium enterprises. Moreover, digital communication tools have expanded opportunities for women to reach customers beyond local markets. These studies collectively indicate that communication is integral to women's entrepreneurial success and must be treated as a strategic skill rather than a secondary attribute.

Concept of Women Entrepreneurship:

Women entrepreneurship refers to businesses initiated, owned, and managed by women with the aim of generating profit and social value. These enterprises range from micro-businesses to large organizations. Beyond economic benefits, women-led ventures often prioritize community development, family welfare, and sustainable practices.

Despite their contributions, women entrepreneurs often operate under constraints related to funding, mobility, and decision-making power. Consequently, they must rely heavily on interpersonal abilities and communication skills to build trust and secure opportunities. Effective

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

communication allows them to compensate for resource gaps by strengthening relationships with customers, suppliers, and investors.

Understanding Business Communication:

Business communication encompasses the transmission of information within and outside an organization to achieve specific goals. According to Guffey and Loewy (2022), it includes verbal discussions, written documents, presentations, non-verbal cues, and digital interactions.

In entrepreneurship, communication performs multiple functions:

- ✓ Explaining business ideas
- ✓ Coordinating employees
- ✓ Marketing products
- ✓ Negotiating contracts
- ✓ Maintaining customer relationships

Therefore, communication becomes a core managerial competency rather than merely a supportive skill.

Role of Communication in Women Entrepreneurship:

Leadership and Team Management:

Effective leadership depends on clear and empathetic communication. Women entrepreneurs must guide employees, assign tasks, and motivate teams toward shared goals. Transparent communication fosters trust and reduce misunderstandings.

Studies suggest that participatory communication styles often associated with women leaders enhance collaboration and employee satisfaction. By encouraging dialogue and feedback, women entrepreneurs create inclusive work environments that improve productivity and innovation.

Negotiation and Access to Finance:

Access to finance remains one of the most significant barriers for women entrepreneurs. Convincing banks or investors requires persuasive presentations and well-structured proposals. As noted by the OECD (2023), strong negotiation and communication skills increase the likelihood of securing funding.

Women entrepreneurs who articulate their vision clearly and confidently are better positioned to negotiate favourable terms with suppliers and financial institutions. Thus, communication directly influences financial sustainability.

Networking and Social Capital:

Professional networks provide access to information, mentorship, and opportunities. Brush et al. (2019) emphasize that women often face restricted networks due to social roles and expectations. Communication skills help bridge this gap by enabling relationship building.

Participation in conferences, business associations, and online communities allows women to share ideas and establish partnerships. Effective networking communication enhances visibility and credibility within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Marketing and Customer Relations:

Marketing relies heavily on persuasive communication. Entrepreneurs must explain product features, benefits, and values in ways that attract customers. Storytelling, emotional appeal, and

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

authenticity often strengthen brand loyalty. Digital platforms such as social media and e-commerce websites have transformed marketing strategies. According to the World Bank (2023), women entrepreneurs increasingly use online communication tools to promote products and expand their reach globally.

Digital Communication and Technology:
Technology has revolutionized business operations. Tools such as email, video conferencing, and messaging applications enable entrepreneurs to manage businesses efficiently. Digital communication reduces costs and provides flexibility, particularly beneficial for women balancing professional and domestic responsibilities.

The UN Women (2022) report highlights that digital literacy significantly improves women's entrepreneurial participation. Online platforms allow them to overcome geographical and social barriers, thereby increasing economic independence.

Challenges in Business Communication:
Despite its importance, many women entrepreneurs face communication-related barriers:

- ✓ Limited formal training
- ✓ Language difficulties
- ✓ Lack of confidence in public speaking
- ✓ Cultural constraints
- ✓ Minimal exposure to professional settings

Gupta et al. (2008) note that internalized stereotypes may reduce women's confidence in self-presentation, affecting negotiations and leadership effectiveness. Addressing these challenges requires systematic training and institutional support.

Strategies to Enhance Communication Competence:
Improving communication skills can substantially enhance entrepreneurial success. Recommended strategies include:

- ✓ Participation in communication workshops
- ✓ Public speaking practice
- ✓ Business writing training
- ✓ Networking events
- ✓ Digital literacy programs
- ✓ Mentorship and coaching

Educational institutions and government agencies should integrate communication training into entrepreneurship development programs. Such initiatives can empower women to manage enterprises more effectively.

Discussion:
The literature clearly indicates that communication plays a transformative role in women entrepreneurship. Guffey and Loewy (2022) establish that communication determines organizational effectiveness, while Brush et al. (2019) demonstrate its importance in overcoming gender-specific barriers. Reports from the OECD (2023), UN Women (2022), and the World Bank

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

(2023) further confirm that networking and digital communication expand business opportunities for women.

Therefore, communication should be regarded as a strategic capability equivalent to financial or technical expertise. Women entrepreneurs who master communication are better equipped to lead teams, secure funding, and sustain growth.

Conclusion:

Women entrepreneurship is a powerful instrument for economic and social transformation. However, the sustainability of women-led enterprises depends greatly on effective business communication. Communication enables women to lead confidently, negotiate successfully, build networks, and engage customers. This study demonstrates that communication competence enhances credibility, resilience, and competitiveness. Training programs that strengthen verbal, written, and digital communication can significantly empower women entrepreneurs. Policymakers and institutions must recognize communication as a critical entrepreneurial skill and provide systematic support. Ultimately, the power of business communication transforms women entrepreneurs into influential leaders capable of driving sustainable economic development.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

46

INDIAN WOMEN AS THE VOICE OF THE INDIAN CORPORATE WORLD

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Abstract:
Indian women have emerged as influential leaders reshaping corporate governance, workplace culture, and innovation ecosystems. Over the past decade, India has witnessed measurable progress in women's workforce participation and leadership representation, though structural barriers persist. Recent reports indicate that women constitute around 26% of India's workforce and only about 8% of CEOs, highlighting the gap between participation and leadership representation. (India Today) This study explores the evolving role of Indian women as strategic voices within corporate India by analysing leadership trends, institutional policies, and socio-cultural factors. Drawing upon recent industry reports and scholarly literature, the paper examines how women leaders contribute to inclusive decision-making, ethical governance, and organizational resilience. It also evaluates persistent challenges such as gender bias, career interruptions, and underrepresentation in senior roles. The findings suggest that Indian women are not only increasing in number but also influencing corporate priorities such as sustainability, diversity, and employee well-being. The paper concludes that strengthening policy frameworks, mentorship ecosystems, and flexible workplace structures will be critical to amplifying women's voices in India's corporate future.

Keywords: *Women Leadership, Corporate India, Gender Diversity, Inclusive Governance, Workplace Equality, etc.*

Introduction:

The transformation of India's corporate landscape has been accompanied by a gradual but significant rise in women's participation and leadership. Liberalization, globalization, and digitalization have created new professional opportunities, enabling women to transition from peripheral roles to strategic decision-makers. Despite progress, gender disparity remains evident. Women account for roughly one-quarter of the workforce and a much smaller share of top leadership roles, indicating a structural "leadership pipeline" challenge. (India Today)

This paper aims to analyse the evolution, impact, and future trajectory of Indian women as influential voices within corporate ecosystems.

Literature Review:

Recent scholarship and industry reports highlight three major themes:

Growth in Representation:

Studies using professional network data show that women's share in leadership hiring reached about 23.2% in 2024, reflecting steady progress over the past decade (The Times of India).

2.2 Leadership Gap

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Research indicates that women hold roughly 20% of leadership roles in Indian companies, demonstrating improvement but still revealing a significant gender gap (NewsBytes).

Organizational Impact:
Reports emphasize that companies with gender-diverse leadership tend to show better governance, employee engagement, and innovation outcomes, reinforcing the strategic importance of women leaders.

Research Methodology:
This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design based on secondary data sources.
Data Sources:
- ✓ Industry reports (LinkedIn, Great Place to Work, AIMA-KPMG)
- ✓ Academic publications on gender and leadership
- ✓ Corporate case studies

Method:
Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns related to leadership representation, challenges, and organizational impact.

Scope:
The research focuses on corporate India from 2016 to 2025 to capture recent trends.

Historical Context:
Historically, women's participation in India's workforce was constrained by socio-cultural norms and limited access to education and employment. Post-1991 economic reforms significantly expanded opportunities, especially in services, IT, and finance sectors. Over time, policy initiatives and corporate diversity programs contributed to gradual increases in women's representation across professional hierarchies.

Women Leadership in Indian Corporates:
Representation and Rise:
Women's participation in leadership roles has steadily increased, with reports noting a rise from around 16–17% in 2016 to nearly 18–20% in recent years (The Times of India).

Strategic Influence:
Women leaders contribute significantly to:
- ✓ Inclusive decision-making
- ✓ Ethical governance
- ✓ Employee well-being initiatives
- ✓ Sustainability practices

Role Models:
Prominent leaders such as Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and Falguni Nayar exemplify how Indian women have shaped global business narratives through innovation and entrepreneurship.

Challenges Faced by Indian Women:
- ✓ **Societal Expectations:** Balancing professional and family responsibilities
- ✓ **Gender Bias:** Pay disparities and limited promotion opportunities

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

- ✓ **Policy Gaps:** Inadequate childcare and flexible work systems
- ✓ **Leadership Pipeline Issues:** Low representation in executive roles

For instance, only about 50% of women leaders report pay parity, indicating persistent structural inequities (aima.in).

Indian Women as the Voice of Corporate India:
Advocating Inclusive Policies:
Women leaders actively promote diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Ethical Governance:
They emphasize transparency and socially responsible business practices.

Innovation and Organizational Culture:
Research shows that gender-diverse leadership teams foster higher engagement and innovation outcomes.

Global Representation:
Indian women are increasingly visible in global corporate leadership and entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Case Studies:
HCL Technologies:
Diversity programs at HCL demonstrate how inclusive policies improve retention and organizational culture.

Biocon:
Biocon's growth under women leadership illustrates the link between innovation and inclusive governance.

Future Directions:
To strengthen women's voice in corporate leadership:

- ✓ Establish measurable diversity targets
- ✓ Expand leadership training programs
- ✓ Promote flexible work and childcare support
- ✓ Build mentorship and sponsorship networks

Conclusion:
Indian women have evolved into powerful contributors shaping corporate India's strategic direction. Their leadership enhances organizational resilience, ethical governance, and innovation capacity. While representation gaps remain, continued policy reforms, cultural shifts, and institutional support can accelerate progress. The rise of Indian women leaders signals a transformative shift not only for the national economy but also for global corporate leadership paradigms.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

47

WOMEN'S VOICES IN CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS: A STUDY OF COMMUNICATION ETHICS

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Abstract:
Women's voices are often limited because of cultural norms, social traditions, and unequal power structures. These restrictions establish serious ethical challenges in communication, leading to silencing also misrepresentation, and exclusion in both private and public spaces. This paper examines how family structures and social practices affect women's ability to express themselves. It also analyzes the role of religious norms and restrictions on public space. It also explores the ethical issues arising from inequitable communication practices and highlights the need for comprehensive and respectful communication frameworks. The study maintains that ethical communication is essential for empowering women's voices and promoting social equality.

Keywords: *Communication Ethics, Women's Voices, Cultural Constraints, Gender Inequality, Patriarchal Structures, Social Justice, etc.*

Introduction:

Communication shows a crucial role in shaping identity, participation, and social visibility. Yet, women's voices across many cultures continue to face limitations due to thoroughly rooted traditions, patriarchal rules, and unparalleled dominating structures. These cultural powers often limit women's ability to express opinions, access public conversation, and enter into decision-making processes. Such limitations raise serious ethical concerns related to equality and representation and also communicative justice. This study considers the ethical angles of communication barriers faced by women and highlights how cultural norms influence voice, silence, and force. Focusing on communication ethics, the paper seeks to emphasize the need for inclusive, respectful, and equitable communication practices that empower women and promote social transformation.

Preceding studies have widely investigated the relationship between gender, culture, and communication practices. Feminist scholars argue that patriarchal social structures systematically marginalize women's voices by controlling discourse within families, institutions, and public spaces (Tannen 24; Spender, 12). Cultural theorists highlight how traditional norms and social expectations regulate women's speech, often labeling assertive communication as inappropriate or disrespectful (Butler, 45). Media studies further reveal that women are frequently misrepresented or stereotyped, reinforcing gendered communication inequalities (Gill, 73). Recent digital communication research also shows that online harassment and algorithmic bias create new ethical challenges for women's participation in virtual spaces (Noble, 64). Despite growing scholarship on gender and communication, limited research integrates cultural constraints with ethical

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

communication frameworks in a comprehensive manner. This gap highlights the need for further analysis of how communication ethics can address structural silence and promote inclusive dialogue for women across diverse cultural contexts.

Cultural systems play a significant role in shaping communication practices and determining who is allowed to speak, when, and in what manner. Women's voices are often regulated through social institutions that reinforce gender hierarchies and limit communicative agency. These constraints operate at multiple levels, including family structures, social traditions, religious norms, and access to public spaces. The family is one of the primary sites where communication patterns are formed and built up. In many patriarchal households, decision-making power is concentrated in male authority figures, which often limits women's participation in meaningful dialogue. Women are frequently expected to adopt passive communication roles, prioritize harmony over self-expression, and remain silent in matters related to finance, education, or marriage. As scholars have noted, "Patriarchal family structures operate as primary sites of women's communicative subordination, where gendered silence is learned and normalized from childhood" (Kramarae, 156). This silencing within domestic spaces not only affects personal confidence but also shapes women's engagement in broader social interactions.

Social traditions strongly influence acceptable forms of speech and behavior for women. Cultural expectations often associate femininity with modesty, restraint, and emotional control, discouraging assertive or public expression. Practices such as gender segregation, honor-based social codes, and rigid gender roles further restrict women's mobility and communication freedom. Women who challenge these norms may face social stigma, exclusion, or character judgment. As a result, many women adopt self-censorship as a survival strategy, limiting their participation in debates, leadership roles, and community decision-making processes. Religious interpretations often shape moral standards and social conduct, including communication practices. In some situation, conservative interpretations of religious texts reinforce gender hierarchies and justify restrictions on women's public speech. Women may be discouraged from participating in religious leadership, public preaching, or institutional decision-making. While religion itself is not inherently oppressive, selective and patriarchal interpretations can be used to legitimize silence and submission. This ethical concern highlights how spiritual authority can be misused to regulate women's voices and restrict their communicative autonomy.

Access to public spaces such as political forums, educational institutions, workplaces, and media platforms is crucial for social participation. However, women often face barriers such as harassment, safety concerns, unequal representation, and exclusion from leadership positions. These restrictions discourage women from engaging in public discourse and expressing opinions openly. Fear of social backlash, online abuse, and character attacks further limits women's visibility in public communication. Therefore, public spaces that should promote democratic participation often reproduce gender-based inequalities. The combined effect of family control, social traditions, religious authority, and public exclusion creates a culture of silence that restricts women's communicative agency. These constraints not only limit individual expression but also weaken democratic dialogue and ethical communication practices. When women's voices are systematically excluded, societies lose diverse perspectives and reinforce unequal power relations. Addressing these cultural barriers is therefore essential for promoting ethical communication and social justice.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Ethical communication is based on principles such as fairness, respect, inclusivity, and equal participation. However, women often face systematic ethical violations that limit their communicative rights and reinforce social inequality. These challenges arise in interpersonal interactions, institutional practices, media representation, and digital communication environments. The ethical barriers not only silence women's voices but also undermine democratic communication and social justice. One of the most significant ethical challenges faced by women is silencing, which occurs when individuals or groups are deliberately ignored, interrupted, or excluded from discussions. In many social and professional settings, women's opinions are dismissed or undervalued, while male voices are given greater authority. This exclusion violates ethical principles of equal participation and communicative justice. Research confirms that "women's contributions in professional settings are systematically interrupted and devalued, reflecting deeper patterns of epistemic injustice" (Tannen, 203). Silencing also operates subtly through social norms that discourage women from speaking openly, creating an environment where self-censorship becomes common.

Stereotyping remains a major ethical concern in communication practices. Women are often portrayed through limited and biased representations that reinforce traditional gender roles. Media narratives frequently depict women as emotional, dependent, or secondary to male characters, reducing the complexity of women's identities. Such misrepresentation shapes public perception and contributes to discriminatory attitudes. Ethically, this practice is problematic because it distorts reality and denies women fair and accurate representation. Communication is deeply influenced by power relations. Institutional hierarchies in workplaces, educational settings, and political structures often prioritize male voices while marginalizing women. These power imbalances result in unequal access to platforms, leadership roles, and decision-making spaces. From an ethical perspective, this inequality violates the principle of equal opportunity and reinforces systemic injustice. When communication systems privilege certain voices over others, they fail to uphold ethical standards of inclusivity and accountability. Harassment, both offline and online, represents a serious ethical violation in communication environments. Women frequently experience verbal abuse, character attacks, threats, and gender-based hate speech. Such behavior creates hostile communication spaces and discourages participation. Ethical communication requires safety, dignity, and mutual respect, all of which are compromised when harassment is normalized or ignored. The lack of effective institutional responses further intensifies this challenge.

The rise of digital platforms has created new opportunities for expression but has also introduced complex ethical challenges. Online anonymity often enables misogynistic behavior, cyberbullying, and targeted harassment. Algorithmic bias and content moderation practices may also disadvantage women's voices by amplifying dominant narratives while suppressing marginalized perspectives. Scholars observe that "digital platforms reproduce gendered power structures through algorithmic amplification of dominant voices while marginalizing women's perspectives" (Noble, 82). These digital inequalities raise ethical concerns regarding transparency, fairness, and responsibility in communication technologies. In many societies, unethical communication practices are normalized through cultural traditions and social conditioning. Interrupting women, ignoring their opinions, or limiting their participation is often viewed as socially acceptable behavior. This normalization makes ethical violations less visible and more difficult to challenge. When discrimination becomes culturally embedded, it creates long-term barriers to communication justice and gender equality. The ethical challenges faced by women

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

have serious social and psychological consequences. Persistent silencing and marginalization can lead to reduced self-confidence, limited professional growth, and decreased civic participation. On a broader level, societies lose diverse perspectives, innovative ideas, and inclusive dialogue. Ethical communication is therefore not only a moral responsibility but also a social necessity for sustainable development and democratic engagement.

Conclusion:

This study highlights how cultural constraints and ethical communication barriers continue to restrict women's voices across social, institutional, and digital spaces. Family hierarchies, social traditions, religious interpretations, and public space limitations collectively reinforce patterns of silence and exclusion. These structural barriers create ethical challenges that undermine fairness, representation, and equal participation in communication processes. The findings emphasize that ethical communication is not merely about individual behavior but also about transforming systems that sustain inequality. Promoting inclusive dialogue requires cultural sensitivity, institutional accountability, and gender-responsive communication policies. Media organizations, educational institutions, and digital platforms must adopt ethical frameworks that ensure safety, respect, and equal access to expression.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

48

ROLE OF WOMEN IN SKILLING COMMUNICATION & GENDER EQUALITY

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Abstract:
Women play a transformative role in shaping communication skills within families, educational institutions, workplaces, and broader society. Communication is a powerful tool for empowerment, leadership, and social change, and women's participation in developing communicative competence significantly contributes to gender equality. This paper explores the role of women in fostering communication skills, enhancing leadership capacity, and promoting inclusive dialogue across social and professional domains. Through theoretical perspectives and contemporary research, the study examines how women contribute to skilling communication, break stereotypes, and advocate for equal opportunities. The paper concludes that strengthening women's access to education, leadership training, and digital communication platforms is essential for sustainable gender equality.

Keywords: *Women's Empowerment, Communication Skills, Gender Equality, Leadership Development, Digital Literacy, Inclusive Education, Social Transformation, Policy Advocacy, Sustainable Development, Feminist Discourse, etc.*

Introduction:

Communication is central to personal development, professional success, and social transformation. It shapes how individuals' express ideas, negotiate power, build relationships, and influence change. Women have historically played a significant yet often under recognized role in shaping communication within families, communities, and institutions. In contemporary society, women are increasingly emerging as educators, leaders, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and digital influencers—roles that require strong communicative competence. Despite progress, gender disparities persist in access to education, leadership opportunities, and public voice. Gender equality is not only about equal representation but also about equal participation in dialogue, decision-making, and knowledge production. Enhancing women's communication skills and ensuring their voices are heard are fundamental steps toward achieving social and economic equality. This research paper examines the role of women in developing communication skills (skilling communication) and their contribution to advancing gender equality across educational, social, and professional contexts.

Conceptual Framework:

Communication as a Skill for Empowerment:

Communication is not merely the exchange of information; it is a strategic life skill that shapes identity, agency, and social participation. It includes verbal, non-verbal, written, interpersonal, and

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

digital competencies, all of which contribute to an individual's capacity to express ideas effectively and influence others. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), life skills such as communication enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life ("Life Skills Education"). Thus, communication becomes a foundational tool for empowerment, particularly for women in patriarchal societies. Scholars in communication studies emphasize that competence in communication enhances confidence, leadership, critical thinking, and negotiation skills. In *Communicating for Results: A Guide for Business and the Professions*, Cheryl Hamilton argues that effective communication strengthens self-confidence and professional credibility, which are essential for leadership roles (Hamilton, 12). Similarly, Dale Carnegie in *How to Win Friends and Influence People* asserts that the ability to express oneself clearly and persuasively is key to influence and success (Carnegie, 45).

From a gender perspective, communication is deeply connected to structures of power and representation. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler explains that gender identities are constructed and reinforced through repeated acts of language and discourse (Butler 25). When women gain communicative competence, they challenge dominant narratives and assert their identities beyond socially imposed roles. Likewise, bell hooks in *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* emphasizes that "talking back" is an act of resistance and empowerment, enabling marginalized voices to claim agency (Hooks, 5).The relationship between communication and empowerment is also supported by development studies. Naila Kabeer defines empowerment as the expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices in contexts where this ability was previously denied (Kabeer, 437). Communication skills enable women to articulate their needs, participate in decision-making processes, and negotiate within familial and professional spaces. Without communicative competence, access to opportunities remains limited.

Academic research further supports this view. In an article published in *Gender and Development*, Andrea Cornwall highlights that women's participation in public discourse transforms social norms and promotes gender equity (Cornwall, 349). Effective communication allows women to move from silence to visibility, from marginalization to leadership. Moreover, in the digital era, communication extends to online platforms. Manuel Castells in *The Rise of the Network Society* observes that digital communication reshapes power dynamics by creating spaces for new voices and social movements (Castells, 78). Women's engagement in digital communication enhances their visibility, access to information, and socio-economic participation. Therefore, communication functions as both a personal development tool and a socio-political instrument. It fosters self-expression, builds confidence, and strengthens leadership abilities. More importantly, it equips women to challenge patriarchal structures, assert their rights, and contribute to social transformation. As Paulo Freire states in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, "Dialogue is the encounter between men [and women], mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (Freire, 88). Through dialogue and communicative action, women not only name their realities but also reshape them. In conclusion, communication as a skill for empowerment transcends linguistic ability; it represents agency, autonomy, and access to power. By mastering verbal, non-verbal, written, interpersonal, and digital communication, women gain the tools necessary to redefine societal norms and actively participate in transformative processes.

Gender Equality and Sustainable Development:

Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of individuals regardless of gender. It implies that the interests, needs, and priorities of both women and men are

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

taken into consideration in social, political, and economic spheres. The United Nations recognizes gender equality as a fundamental human right and a core objective of sustainable development under Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Goal, 5: *Achieve Gender Equality*). Sustainable development cannot be achieved without ensuring women's equal participation in decision-making processes. In *Gender and Development*, Janet Momsen argues that gender equality is essential for inclusive economic growth and long-term sustainability (Momsen, 3). Similarly, Amartya Sen emphasizes that development should be viewed as the expansion of freedoms, including gender justice and equal opportunities (Sen, 36).

Equality in communication plays a significant role in achieving gender equality. When women have equal platforms to express ideas, participate in policy discussions, and shape social narratives, they challenge traditional hierarchies and promote inclusive governance. Nancy Fraser highlights that participatory parity in public discourse is crucial for social justice (Fraser 36). Without equal communicative spaces, gender inequality persists in both private and public domains. Moreover, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) stresses that empowering women through education, leadership opportunities, and access to information contributes directly to poverty reduction and social progress (*Gender Equality Strategy* 2022–2025). Communication skills enhance women's visibility, representation, and influence in sustainable development initiatives. Thus, gender equality and sustainable development are interconnected. Ensuring equal communicative opportunities enables women to contribute actively to economic development, environmental sustainability, and social transformation. As Sen affirms, "The agency of women is one of the central mediators of economic and social change" (189).

Role of Women in Skilling Communication:

Women as Primary Educators:

Women have traditionally functioned as primary educators within families, shaping early patterns of language, behaviour, and emotional expression. Early childhood studies confirm that maternal interaction significantly influences linguistic and cognitive development. According to Catherine Snow, children exposed to rich verbal interaction at home demonstrate stronger vocabulary and communicative competence (Snow, 12). Similarly, Lev Vygotsky emphasizes that social interaction forms the foundation of cognitive and language development (Vygotsky, 57). Supportive communicative environments created by mothers and female caregivers nurture empathy, listening skills, and emotional intelligence. Daniel Goleman argues that emotional communication in early childhood builds social competence and interpersonal effectiveness (Goleman, 43). Thus, women's communicative role within families directly contributes to the development of confident and articulate individuals. In educational institutions, female teachers and professors further extend this role. bell hooks highlights that inclusive pedagogy encourages dialogue and critical engagement in classrooms (Hooks, *teaching to Transgress* 21). Through mentorship and collaborative learning practices, women educators foster participatory communication, empowering both girls and boys to articulate ideas confidently and engage in constructive discourse.

Women in Professional Communication and Leadership:

In professional environments, women significantly contribute to organizational communication, conflict resolution, and collaborative teamwork. Deborah Tannen observes that gendered communication styles influence workplace interaction, with women often emphasizing

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

cooperation and relational dialogue (Tannen, 45). Such communicative approaches enhance team cohesion and mutual understanding. Transformational leadership theory also underscores the importance of empathy, transparency, and inspiration. Bernard Bass explains that transformational leaders motivate followers through communication that fosters trust and shared vision (Bass, 20). Women leaders frequently adopt participatory communication models that promote inclusivity and collective problem-solving.By occupying leadership positions, women reshape communication cultures within organizations. Sheryl Sandberg argues that when women assume leadership roles, they not only break structural barriers but also redefine norms of authority and dialogue (Sandberg, 110). Their presence promotes diversity, equity, and inclusive decision-making processes.

Digital Communication and Women's Empowerment:

The rise of digital platforms has significantly amplified women's voices across the globe. Manuel Castells notes that networked communication technologies enable marginalized groups to participate actively in public discourse (Castells, 78). Social media, online education, and digital entrepreneurship provide women with new opportunities for expression, knowledge-sharing, and advocacy. Digital literacy initiatives further enhance women's communicative and economic empowerment. The United Nations emphasizes that access to digital technology strengthens women's participation in economic and social development (*Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Digital Age*). Through online platforms, women engage in awareness campaigns, community building, and global networking. Moreover, digital spaces function as arenas for gender advocacy and educational outreach. As Amartya Sen affirms, expanding women's agency contributes significantly to social progress (Sen, 189). Digital communication thus becomes not merely a technical skill but a transformative instrument for equality and empowerment.

Communication as a Tool for Gender Equality:

Communication plays a transformative role in promoting gender equality. It is not merely a medium of expression but a powerful instrument of empowerment, resistance, and social transformation. Scholars argue that communication enables marginalized voices to enter public discourse and challenge dominant power structures (Hooks, 110). Through dialogue, education, and advocacy, communication becomes central to achieving social justice and gender parity.

Breaking Stereotypes Through Dialogue:

Gender stereotypes often restrict women's participation in public discourse by reinforcing traditional roles and silencing alternative narratives. According to Judith Butler, gender is socially constructed through repeated performances shaped by cultural expectations (Butler, 25). Communication provides women with the opportunity to question and reconstruct these performances.

Dialogue acts as a democratic space where stereotypes can be examined and dismantled. Paulo Freire emphasizes that dialogue is "the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (Freire, 88). Through public speaking, debate participation, academic writing, and media engagement, women actively "name" and redefine their experiences, challenging discriminatory narratives.

Research in *Gender & Society* suggests that inclusive communication practices reduce gender bias and encourage equal participation in institutional settings (Ridgeway, 145). Media

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

platforms, social networks, and public forums have also become spaces where women resist stereotypical portrayals and advocate inclusive language practices. bell hooks asserts that "language is also a place of struggle" (Hooks, 146), emphasizing that communication itself can become a site of feminist resistance. Thus, effective communication enables women not only to participate but to reshape public discourse, fostering a more equitable social environment.

Education and Skill Development:

Access to quality education significantly enhances women's communicative competence and leadership capacity. Education empowers women with both knowledge and the confidence to articulate their perspectives. According to Amartya Sen, education expands individual capabilities and freedoms, which are essential for development (Sen, 94). Communication skills form a critical component of these capabilities. Educational institutions that prioritize debate clubs, seminars, presentation training, and leadership workshops cultivate assertiveness and critical thinking. A UNESCO report highlights that communication-based education strengthens women's participation in civic and professional life (*Global Education Monitoring Report*, 67). Furthermore, vocational training programs integrating communication skill development increase employability and workplace confidence.

Research published in the *Journal of Gender Studies* indicates that communication training enhances women's workplace negotiation skills and leadership presence (Baxter, 212). Women equipped with effective interpersonal and public communication skills are more likely to assume leadership roles and advocate workplace equality.As Dale Carnegie notes in *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, "Effective communication is 20% what you know and 80% how you feel about what you know" (Carnegie, 37). Confidence in expression is therefore as crucial as knowledge itself. By strengthening communicative competence, education becomes a foundation for gender empowerment.

Policy Advocacy and Social Change:

Communication functions as a strategic tool in policy advocacy and social transformation. Women activists, scholars, and policymakers use persuasive communication to influence legislation and promote gender-sensitive policies. Nancy Fraser argues that participatory parity requires inclusive public spheres where marginalized voices can deliberate equally (Fraser, 82). Grassroots campaigns, public forums, and international platforms such as the United Nations enable women to raise awareness about issues including equal pay, workplace rights, access to education, and safety. The UN Women report emphasizes that strategic communication campaigns significantly influence public opinion and policy reforms (*Turning Promises into Action*, 115).

Social movements such as #MeToo demonstrate how digital communication amplifies women's voices globally. According to research in *New Media & Society*, online platforms have democratized activism and expanded feminist discourse (Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller 240). These communication networks build solidarity, create awareness, and pressure institutions to implement reforms. Effective advocacy requires clarity, persuasion, and credibility. As Aristotle states in *Rhetoric*, persuasion depends upon ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (reason) (Aristotle, 1356a). Women leaders who skilfully employ these rhetorical strategies strengthen their campaigns and foster societal support for equality initiatives. Therefore, communication not only expresses demands for equality but actively shapes policy outcomes and social consciousness.

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Challenges in Skilling Communication for Women:

Despite significant progress in education and professional participation, women continue to face multiple barriers in developing and exercising effective communication skills. These challenges are deeply rooted in socio-cultural structures, economic inequalities, and institutional biases. One of the major barriers is limited access to education, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged regions. According to the UNESCO, millions of girls worldwide still face restricted access to quality education, which directly affects their ability to develop confidence and communication competence ("Global Education Monitoring Report" 45). Without foundational education, opportunities for developing public speaking, negotiation, and leadership communication skills remain limited.

Another critical challenge is the influence of cultural norms that restrict women's public speech and expression. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler argues that gender roles are socially constructed and repeatedly reinforced through cultural practices (25). Such constructions often expect women to remain submissive or silent, limiting their visibility in public discourse. Similarly, Dale Spender in *Man Made Language* explains how language systems themselves reflect patriarchal dominance, marginalizing women's voices (Spender 3). Women also encounter gender bias in workplaces, which directly impacts their communication opportunities and leadership presence. In *Lean In*, Sheryl Sandberg highlights how women are often interrupted, underestimated, or judged more harshly for assertive communication compared to men (Sandberg, 39). Research published in the Harvard Business Review indicates that women leaders frequently face a "double bind"—being perceived as either too soft or too aggressive when they speak up (*Women and the Double Bind*, 2). This bias discourages confident communication and limits professional growth.

The digital divide and lack of technological access further restrict women's communication development in the modern era. According to the International Telecommunication Union, women are less likely than men to have access to the internet in many developing countries (*Measuring Digital Development*, 67). Since digital literacy is now essential for professional communication, networking, and leadership, this gap significantly affects women's opportunities to enhance their communication skills. Moreover, women remain underrepresented in decision-making platforms and leadership roles, limiting their participation in influential communication spaces. Bell hooks in *Feminism Is for Everybody* emphasizes that feminist struggle includes the right to speak, to be heard, and to participate equally in shaping public discourse (Hooks, 19). When women are excluded from boards, policy forums, and institutional leadership, their communicative power is structurally reduced.

Addressing these challenges requires institutional support, inclusive policies, gender-sensitive education systems, digital empowerment initiatives, and sustained awareness efforts. As Amartya Sen argues in *Development as Freedom*, true development involves expanding people's capabilities and freedoms (Sen, 87). Empowering women with communication skills is not merely a professional need but a fundamental aspect of social justice and human development.

In conclusion, while progress has been made, systemic barriers continue to hinder women's communication empowerment. Overcoming these challenges demands collaborative efforts from educational institutions, policymakers, workplaces, and society at large to ensure that women's voices are not only developed but also valued and heard.

Strategies for Enhancing Women's Communication Skills:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Inclusive Education Policies:
Ensuring equal access to quality education is the foundation for developing strong communication skills among women. Educational institutions must adopt inclusive policies that eliminate gender discrimination and provide equal opportunities in classrooms, training programs, and academic activities. When girls and women receive consistent access to education, they build language proficiency, critical thinking ability, and self-confidence. Scholarships, community awareness programs, and gender-sensitive curricula further strengthen participation and encourage active engagement in discussions, debates, and presentations.

Leadership and Public Speaking Training:
Organizing leadership development programs and public speaking workshops plays a crucial role in building confidence and assertiveness. Structured training sessions help women overcome stage fear, improve articulation, and develop persuasive communication techniques. Through seminars, debates, group discussions, and presentation platforms, women gain practical exposure that enhances both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Such initiatives also prepare them for leadership roles in academic, corporate, and social settings.

Digital Literacy Programs:
In the modern era, digital communication is essential for professional growth and social participation. Providing women with access to technology, internet facilities, and digital training programs helps bridge the digital divide. Digital literacy enables women to use online platforms for networking, learning, entrepreneurship, and advocacy. Training in email etiquette, virtual presentations, content creation, and online collaboration ensures that women can confidently participate in the global communication landscape.

Mentorship Networks:
Mentorship and peer-support networks create opportunities for learning, guidance, and professional growth. Experienced mentors can help women refine their communication styles, develop leadership presence, and navigate workplace challenges. Peer learning groups also encourage idea-sharing, constructive feedback, and collaborative growth. Such networks foster confidence, reduce isolation, and provide practical strategies for effective communication in diverse environments.

Safe Communication Spaces:
Creating safe and supportive environments is essential for enabling women to express their ideas freely. Educational institutions and workplaces must promote respectful dialogue and zero tolerance for harassment or discrimination. When women feel secure and valued, they are more likely to participate actively in discussions, voice opinions, and contribute innovative ideas. Safe communication spaces strengthen self-expression, mutual respect, and inclusive decision-making processes.

Conclusion:
This research paper examined the role of women in skilling communication and highlighted how communication competence functions as a tool of empowerment, leadership, and social participation. The study explored women's contributions across education, workplaces, and digital platforms while also identifying key barriers such as limited access to education, gender bias,

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

cultural restrictions, and the digital divide. The findings suggest that strengthening women's communication skills enhances confidence, professional growth, and active participation in decision-making processes. At the same time, addressing structural challenges through inclusive policies, institutional support, and digital empowerment is essential to ensure equal communicative opportunities. In conclusion, empowering women through communication skilling is not only a matter of individual development but also a critical step toward achieving gender equality and sustainable social progress.

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ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

49

COMMUNICATION SKILLING IN THE DIGITAL SCENARIO: LEVERAGING ENGLISH-LANGUAGE VOCATIONS TO BRIDGE THE GENDER LEADERSHIP GAP

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Abstract:
In the digital era, communication skill has developed as a crucial factor of professional progress and leadership access. In spite of significant progress in digital inclusion, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions across sectors, indicating the persistence of the gender leadership gap. This study examines the role of digital communication skills and English proficiency as strategic pathways for reducing this gap. Grounded in communicative competence and human capital theories, the research investigates how proficiency in English and digital communication platforms enhances women's professional visibility, confidence, and leadership readiness. Employing a mixed-method research design, the study combines quantitative survey data collected from women professionals and students with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal that strong English communication skills, when integrated with digital competencies, significantly improve women's participation in decision-making roles and leadership networks. However, structural, socio-cultural, and institutional barriers continue to moderate the impact of these skills. The study highlights the need for targeted communication-skilling initiatives within digital vocational education to foster gender-inclusive leadership development.

Keywords: *Digital Communication Skills, Gender Leadership Gap, English Proficiency, Women Empowerment, Digital Vocational Education, etc.*

Introduction:

The gender leadership gap remains a widely acknowledged global concern. While women's participation in education and the workforce has increased substantially, their representation in senior leadership positions remains disproportionately low. Studies consistently indicate that women face obstacles such as gender stereotypes, limited mentorship, and unequal access to professional networks, and communicative bias in leadership evaluation. In digital environments, these challenges manifest in subtle yet powerful ways, including reduced participation in online discussions, limited visibility in digital professional spaces, and undervaluation of women's communicative contributions. These factors collectively reinforce existing gender hierarchies, even within technologically advanced contexts.

This study seeks to examine how digital communication skills and English proficiency function as pathways toward reducing the gender leadership gap. Drawing on communicative competence and human capital perspectives, the research explores the ways in which communication skilling enhances women's leadership readiness, professional agency, and participation in decision-making processes. At the same time, the study critically examines the socio-cultural and institutional factors that continue to limit the transformative impact of these

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

skills. By adopting a mixed-method approach, the research captures both measurable trends and lived experiences, providing a nuanced understanding of communication skilling in women's leadership development.

The significance of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, bridging communication studies, gender research, and digital education. It contributes to existing scholarship by positioning communication skills as central to leadership equity in the digital age and by highlighting the role of English proficiency in shaping leadership access. Furthermore, the study offers practical implications for educators, policymakers, and skill-development institutions by emphasizing the need for targeted, gender-responsive communication training within digital vocational frameworks. In doing so, it responds to global calls for inclusive leadership development and equitable participation in digital economies.

In conclusion, as leadership increasingly unfolds within digital and linguistically mediated spaces, addressing the gender leadership gap requires more than technological access or policy commitments. It demands a focused investment in communication skilling that empowers women to navigate, negotiate, and lead within digital environments. By exploring digital communication skills and English proficiency as interconnected pathways to leadership equity, this study aims to advance both theoretical understanding and practical strategies for reducing gender disparities in leadership in the digital era.

Review of Literature:

Gender and Leadership: Persistent Inequalities:

Scholarly research across disciplines consistently highlights the persistent underrepresentation of women in leadership positions despite advances in education and workforce participation. Leadership studies indicate that gender disparities are not merely the result of individual capability gaps but are deeply embedded in organizational cultures, societal norms, and evaluative practices. Women leaders are often assessed through gendered expectations that associate leadership with traditionally masculine traits such as assertiveness, dominance, and authoritative speech, thereby marginalizing alternative leadership styles. These entrenched norms contribute to what is commonly described as the *gender leadership gap*, a phenomenon observable across both developed and developing economies.

Critical gender scholarship argues that leadership is socially constructed through discourse and interaction rather than solely determined by formal authority. As a result, communicative behavior plays a decisive role in how leadership potential is recognized and legitimized. Women's leadership competence is frequently undervalued due to communicative bias, interruption in professional discourse, and restricted access to influential networks. While policy initiatives promoting gender equality have improved numerical representation in some sectors, qualitative dimensions of leadership access—such as voice, visibility, and influence—remain unevenly distributed.

Digital Communication Skills in the Contemporary Workplace:

The digital transformation of workplaces has redefined communication practices and leadership performance. Digital communication skills; such as virtual presentation, professional email writing, online collaboration, and digital networking—have become essential competencies in contemporary organizations. Research on digital leadership suggests that leaders are increasingly required to manage distributed teams, participate in virtual decision-making processes, and maintain professional visibility across digital platforms.

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

While digitalization has expanded access to professional spaces, scholars caution that it has also introduced new forms of exclusion. Women may experience reduced participation in online meetings, limited recognition in digital forums, and unequal access to informal digital networks where leadership opportunities are often negotiated. Furthermore, digital environments can amplify communicative confidence gaps, particularly when visibility and voice are mediated by language proficiency and technological familiarity. Thus, digital communication skills emerge as both an opportunity and a challenge for women's leadership advancement.

Digital Vocational Education and Women's Skill Development:

Digital vocational education has gained prominence as a flexible and accessible mode of skill development. Online courses, professional communication training programs, and language-learning platforms offer women opportunities to enhance their skills while navigating socio-economic and domestic constraints. Research suggests that such initiatives can improve employability, confidence, and professional adaptability.

Nevertheless, scholars caution against assuming that access to digital training automatically translates into empowerment. Without gender-sensitive pedagogical design and institutional support, vocational programs may reinforce existing inequalities by focusing narrowly on technical skills while neglecting leadership-oriented communication and confidence-building. Furthermore, the absence of mentoring, peer interaction, and leadership-focused outcomes limits the transformative potential of digital skilling initiatives for women.

Integrating Gender, Communication, and Digital Skills: A Research Gap:

A critical review of existing literature reveals a fragmented research landscape. Gender and leadership studies emphasize structural inequality but often underplay the role of communication skills. Digital literacy research prioritizes technical competence while overlooking gendered leadership outcomes. Similarly, English language studies focus on employability and academic success rather than leadership access and authority.

There is a clear lack of integrative research examining how digital communication skills and English proficiency jointly influence women's leadership development. Few empirical studies investigate communication skilling as a strategic pathway for reducing the gender leadership gap, particularly within digitally mediated professional contexts. This gap is especially pronounced in emerging economies, where digital expansion coexists with deep-rooted gender norms.

Positioning the Present Study:

In response to these gaps, the present study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that brings together gender studies, communication theory, and digital education. By examining digital communication skills and English proficiency as interconnected resources, the study moves beyond isolated skill-based or structural explanations of leadership inequality. It seeks to contribute to scholarship by foregrounding communication as a central mechanism through which leadership access is negotiated and contested in the digital age.

Research Methodology:

Research Design:

The present study adopts a mixed-method research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the role of digital communication skills and English proficiency in reducing the gender leadership gap. A mixed-method design is particularly suitable for this

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

research as it enables the combination of measurable trends with in-depth experiential insights, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. While the quantitative component identifies patterns and relationships between communication skills and leadership outcomes, the qualitative component explores women's lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges in digital professional environments.

This integrative approach aligns with the interdisciplinary nature of the study, which intersects communication studies, gender research, and digital education.

Research Population and Sample:

The research population comprises women professionals, postgraduate students, and early-career employees engaged in digitally mediated academic or professional environments. These participants were selected due to their active interaction with digital communication platforms and English-mediated professional discourse.

Quantitative Sample:

A total of **200 respondents** was selected using purposive sampling. The sample included women from diverse educational and professional backgrounds to ensure representativeness andvariability in communication experience.

Qualitative Sample:

15–20 participants were selected for semi-structured interviews using criterion-based purposive sampling. Participants included women professionals, digital communication trainers, and educators with experience in leadership or leadership training contexts.

Data Collection Tools:

Quantitative Instrument: Questionnaire:

A structured questionnaire was developed to assess:

- Digital communication skills
- English language proficiency
- Leadership confidence and participation
- Perceived barriers to leadership advancement

The questionnaire employed a **five-point Likert scale** ranging from *Strongly Disagree (1)* to *Strongly Agree (5)*. The instrument consisted of four sections:

1. Demographic information
2. Digital communication competence
3. English proficiency and professional confidence
4. Leadership participation and perception

The questionnaire was reviewed by subject experts to ensure **content validity** and was pilot-tested to refine clarity and reliability.

Qualitative Instrument: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into participants' experiences with digital communication and leadership. The interview schedule included open-ended questions focusing on:

- Experiences with digital communication in professional settings
- Role of English proficiency in leadership participation

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

- Challenges faced in asserting leadership in digital spaces
- Perceptions of digital skill-training programs

This flexible format allowed participants to articulate personal narratives while maintaining thematic consistency.

Data Collection Procedure:
Quantitative data were collected through online survey forms distributed via email and professional networking platforms. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Qualitative interviews were conducted through virtual meeting platforms and were audio-recorded with participants' permission. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured throughout the data collection process.

Data Analysis Techniques:
Quantitative Data Analysis:
Quantitative data were analysed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, and standard deviation were used to summarize respondents' communication skills and leadership perceptions. Correlational analysis was employed to examine the relationship between digital communication skills, English proficiency, and leadership participation.

Qualitative Data Analysis:
Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts were coded to identify recurring patterns and themes related to communication competence, leadership identity, and gendered barriers. The analysis followed a systematic process of familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation, ensuring analytical rigor and coherence.

Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness:
To ensure the rigor of the study, multiple strategies were employed:

- **Content validity** was established through expert review of research instruments.
- **Reliability** of the questionnaire was tested using internal consistency measures.
- **Credibility** in qualitative analysis was ensured through participant validation and reflective coding.
- **Triangulation** of quantitative and qualitative findings enhanced the overall trustworthiness of the study.

Ethical Considerations:
The study adhered to established ethical research guidelines. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Respondents were assured of anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any stage of the research. Data were used solely for academic purposes.

Limitations of the Methodology:
While the mixed-method approach strengthens the study, certain limitations remain. The use of purposive sampling may limit generalizability. Additionally, self-reported data may be influenced by subjective perceptions. However, the integration of qualitative insights helps mitigate these limitations by providing contextual depth.

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Data Analysis and Discussion:

Quantitative Data Analysis:
The quantitative data collected from 200 respondents were analyzed to examine the relationship between digital communication skills, English proficiency, and women's leadership participation. Descriptive and correlational analyses were employed to identify dominant patterns and associations.

Digital Communication Skills and Professional Participation:
The analysis revealed that a majority of respondents reported moderate to high levels of engagement with digital communication platforms, including virtual meetings, professional emails, online collaboration tools, and social networking platforms. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents agreed that digital communication skills enhanced their professional visibility and participation in workplace interactions. Respondents with higher self-rated digital communication competence demonstrated greater confidence in contributing to online discussions and collaborative decision-making processes. These findings suggest that digital communication skills function as an enabling resource that allows women to overcome physical and spatial barriers traditionally associated with professional participation.

English Proficiency and Leadership Confidence:
English proficiency emerged as a significant factor influencing leadership confidence and participation. A substantial proportion of respondents indicated that fluency in English enhanced their ability to articulate ideas, participate in formal discussions, and engage with senior professionals. Statistical analysis showed a positive correlation between English proficiency and self-perceived leadership readiness.

Women with higher levels of English proficiency reported greater ease in public speaking, professional writing, and virtual presentations—skills closely associated with leadership roles. This finding reinforces the view that English proficiency operates as a form of linguistic and social capital within professional and leadership contexts.

Relationship between Communication Skills and Leadership Participation:
Correlational analysis revealed a positive association between digital communication skills, English proficiency, and leadership participation indicators such as decision-making involvement, initiative-taking, and leadership aspirations. Respondents who scored higher on both communication dimensions were more likely to report active engagement in leadership-related tasks and professional networking activities.

However, the relationship was moderated by contextual factors, including organizational culture, gender norms, and access to mentorship. This indicates that while communication skills are critical, they interact with broader socio-cultural and institutional structures that shape leadership outcomes.

Qualitative Data Analysis:
English Proficiency and Negotiation of Leadership Identity:
English proficiency was frequently described as central to negotiating leadership identity, particularly in formal and digital professional spaces. Participants reported that fluency in English allowed them to engage confidently with global colleagues, senior management, and professional

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

networks. In contrast, limited proficiency often resulted in self-censorship, reduced participation, and anxiety in leadership-related contexts.
These narratives highlight the symbolic power of language in leadership construction and underscore how linguistic competence shapes access to influence and authority.

Gendered Barriers in Digital Professional Spaces:
Despite possessing digital and linguistic skills, participants reported persistent gendered barriers. These included being interrupted during virtual meetings, having ideas overlooked, and facing skepticism regarding leadership competence. Some participants noted that assertive communication was negatively evaluated, reflecting enduring gender biases in leadership assessment. This finding suggests that while communication skilling enhances leadership readiness, it does not automatically dismantle gendered power structures embedded within professional cultures.

Role of Digital Skilling Programs in Empowerment:
Participants expressed mixed views regarding digital vocational training programs. While such programs were acknowledged as valuable for skill enhancement, several participants felt that they lacked leadership-oriented and confidence-building components. Training initiatives were often described as technically focused, with insufficient attention to strategic communication, negotiation skills, and leadership identity formation. This highlights the need for more gender-responsive communication skilling programs that explicitly link digital competence and English proficiency to leadership development.

Integrated Discussion:
The findings align with communicative competence and human capital theories, which emphasize the role of skills in enhancing professional mobility. However, the study extends these frameworks by illustrating how communication skills function within gendered power relations. Communication competence emerges not merely as a technical asset but as a strategic resource through which women negotiate visibility, authority, and leadership legitimacy in digital environments.

At the same time, the persistence of gendered barriers indicates that skill development alone is insufficient. Organizational cultures, evaluative biases, and socio-cultural expectations continue to mediate the impact of communication skills on leadership outcomes. Therefore, reducing the gender leadership gap requires an integrated approach that combines communication skilling with institutional and cultural transformation.

Findings:
Based on the integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, the study identifies the following key findings:

- ✓ **Digital Communication Skills Enhance Leadership Participation:**
  The study finds that proficiency in digital communication significantly enhances women's participation in professional interactions and leadership-related activities. Women with strong digital communication skills demonstrate greater confidence in virtual meetings, online collaboration, and professional networking, which are essential components of contemporary leadership roles.
- ✓ **English Proficiency Functions as a Critical Leadership Enabler:**

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

English language proficiency emerges as a decisive factor influencing leadership confidence, professional credibility, and access to decision-making spaces. Women with higher English proficiency report increased visibility and greater willingness to express opinions in formal and digital professional contexts. Conversely, limited proficiency restricts participation, even among technically competent individuals.

- ✓ **Communication Skills and Leadership Aspirations Are Positively Correlated:**
  The findings indicate a positive relationship between communication competence and leadership aspirations. Women who possess both digital communication skills and English proficiency are more likely to perceive themselves as potential leaders and to engage actively in leadership-oriented tasks.
- ✓ **Gendered Barriers Persist Despite Skill Acquisition:**
  Despite enhanced communication skills, women continue to face gendered barriers in digital professional environments. These include communicative bias, differential evaluation of assertiveness, limited recognition of contributions, and exclusion from informal leadership networks. This finding underscores that skill development alone cannot fully eliminate structural and cultural inequalities.

Conclusion:

The present study examined the role of digital communication skills and English proficiency as pathways toward reducing the gender leadership gap in the digital era. The findings affirm that communication competence is a critical determinant of leadership access, visibility, and professional authority in digitally mediated environments. As leadership increasingly unfolds through online platforms and English-dominated discourse, the ability to communicate effectively emerges as a form of social and symbolic capital.

In conclusion, reducing the gender leadership gap in the digital age requires a holistic approach that combines communication skilling with institutional reform and cultural change. By strengthening women's capacity to communicate, lead, and influence within digital environments, societies can move closer to achieving inclusive and equitable leadership outcomes.

Implications and Recommendations:

The findings of the present study carry significant implications for educational institutions, policymakers, organizations, and digital skill-development agencies seeking to reduce the gender leadership gap in the digital era. By foregrounding digital communication skills and English proficiency as leadership-enabling resources, the study underscores the need for a shift from access-based models of skill development to empowerment-oriented frameworks.

Educational Implications:

Educational institutions play a pivotal role in shaping leadership competencies and communicative confidence among women. The study highlights the need to integrate digital communication and English proficiency training into higher education and professional curricula, not merely as employability skills but as leadership-development tools. Courses should emphasize public speaking, professional writing, virtual collaboration, and strategic digital self-representation within English-mediated contexts.

Implications for Digital Vocational and Skill-Development Programs:

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Digital vocational education and online skill-training initiatives should adopt a more holistic and leadership-oriented approach. The findings indicate that many existing programs prioritize technical competence while overlooking the communicative and confidence-building dimensions of leadership. Training modules should therefore explicitly link digital communication skills and English proficiency with leadership practices such as negotiation, decision-making, and professional networking.

Organizational and Workplace Implications:

Organizations must recognize that communication competence is central to leadership performance and evaluation. The study suggests that workplace cultures often reproduce gendered communicative biases, particularly in digital environments such as virtual meetings and online collaboration spaces. Providing women with access to leadership-oriented communication training, mentorship, and visibility-enhancing opportunities can contribute to more equitable leadership pipelines. Additionally, organizations should critically examine how leadership potential is assessed in digital contexts to ensure fairness and inclusivity.

Policy Implications:

Policymakers should support initiatives that promote English proficiency and digital communication skills among women, particularly in emerging economies where linguistic and technological barriers intersect with gender norms. Policies that encourage gender-responsive digital education, funding for leadership-focused communication programs, and collaboration between educational institutions and industry can contribute to sustainable reductions in the gender leadership gap.

Recommendations for Future Practice:

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

- Design gender-responsive communication skilling programs that integrate digital skills, English proficiency, and leadership development.
- Embed leadership-oriented communication training within higher education and vocational curricula.
- Promote mentorship and peer-learning opportunities in digital training environments.
- Encourage organizations to adopt inclusive communication and leadership evaluation practices.
- Align digital skill-development policies with gender equity and leadership inclusion goals.

Limitations and Scope for Future Research:

Limitations of the Study:

While the present study provides valuable insights into the role of digital communication skills and English proficiency in reducing the gender leadership gap, certain limitations must be acknowledged.

First, the study employed purposive sampling, which, although appropriate for exploratory and mixed-method research, may limit the generalizability of the findings.

Second, the study relied partially on self-reported data, which may be influenced by subjective perceptions, social desirability bias, or individual confidence levels.

Third, the cross-sectional nature of the study restricts the ability to draw causal conclusions about the long-term impact of digital communication skills and English proficiency on leadership

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

outcomes. Leadership development is a dynamic process influenced by evolving professional contexts, organizational cultures, and life-course factors that cannot be fully captured within a single time frame.

Scope for Future Research:

The limitations identified above open several avenues for future research. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how digital communication skills and English proficiency influence women's leadership trajectories over time. Tracking participants across career stages would enable researchers to examine the sustained impact of communication skilling on leadership mobility and professional advancement.

Future research could also adopt comparative or cross-cultural approaches to explore how linguistic, cultural, and organizational contexts mediate the relationship between communication skills and leadership. Comparative studies across sectors, countries, or socio-economic groups would enrich understanding of the intersection between gender, language, and digital leadership.

Finally, experimental or intervention-based research examining the effectiveness of gender-responsive digital communication and English-language training programs could provide practical evidence for policy and curriculum design.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
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March 6th& 7th 2026

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

50

NEGOTIATING GENDER EQUALITY AND STRUCTURAL INEQUITY IN ARUNDHATI ROY's *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

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Abstract:
Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things (1997) presents a profoundly layered exploration of gender equality and structural inequity within the socio-cultural matrix of postcolonial Kerala. Through the tragic narrative of Ammu, Rahel, Baby Kochamma, and other women situated within intersecting hierarchies of caste, class, religion, and sexuality, Roy interrogates the systemic mechanisms that sustain patriarchal control. This paper examines how gender is regulated through what the novel terms the "Love Laws," how female desire becomes criminalized within caste society, and how structural inequity is internalized and reproduced within domestic and social spaces. Drawing on postcolonial feminist theory and close textual analysis, the study argues that Roy's narrative form itself becomes a resistant strategy—disrupting chronological order to reveal how inequality is socially manufactured rather than naturally ordained. By foregrounding female agency amid repression, Roy negotiates a fragile space between victimhood and resistance, thereby reconfiguring literary representations of gender justice in contemporary Indian English fiction.

Keywords: *Gender Equality, Patriarchy, Structural Inequity, Postcolonial Feminism, Caste, Agency, Love Laws, etc.*

Introduction:

Published in 1997, *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy emerges as one of the most significant postcolonial novels interrogating the intersections of caste, gender, and power. Set in Ayemenem, Kerala, the novel dismantles the illusion of social harmony by exposing what it calls the "Love Laws. That lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much" (Roy, 33). These laws are not abstract moral codes; they function as structural apparatuses that regulate intimacy, sexuality, and social mobility. While caste hierarchy remains central to the novel, gender inequality operates as a parallel and often interwoven system of oppression. The tragedy of Ammu, a divorced woman who dares to transgress sexual and caste boundaries, demonstrates how patriarchal society punishes female autonomy. Roy writes, "Ammu had no Locusts Stand I" (Roy, 57), a metaphor that captures the absence of property rights and institutional belonging for women. This deprivation is not merely economic but existential. This paper examines how Roy negotiates gender equality and structural inequity by analyzing domestic patriarchy, sexual regulation through the Love Laws, and narrative form as feminist resistance.

Objective:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

The primary objective of this study is to examine how *The God of Small* Things represents gender equality as an unrealized aspiration within a rigidly patriarchal and caste-bound social structure. It seeks to:

1. Analyze the mechanisms of structural inequity embedded in family, law, and social custom.
2. Examine the representation of female agency within oppressive systems.
3. Explore how Roy's narrative strategy contributes to feminist discourse.

Research Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in close textual analysis. Primary evidence is drawn directly from The God of Small Things. The analysis is supplemented by postcolonial feminist theoretical frameworks, particularly those that address intersectionality, subaltern agency, and embodied resistance. Rather than treating gender inequity as an isolated theme, this research situates it within the broader matrix of caste and class. The methodology foregrounds textual quotations to demonstrate how inequality is linguistically encoded within the narrative.

Theme of *The God of Small Things*:

In *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, the theme of negotiating gender equality and structural inequity unfolds through the intimate tragedies of a family bound by caste, patriarchy, and social convention. The novel reveals that gender inequality is not merely a matter of individual prejudice but a deeply embedded structural condition sustained by law, religion, property, and social morality. Women in the narrative—particularly Ammu, Mammachi, and Baby Kochamma—inhabit a world where their identities are defined relationally rather than autonomously. Ammu's position as a divorced daughter without property rights underscores how economic dependence reinforces patriarchal control. Her lack of inheritance and legal authority over her children exposes the institutional foundations of gender inequity.

The concept of the "Love Laws" in the novel becomes a central metaphor for the regulation of female desire. These laws dictate "who should be loved, and how, and how much," transforming intimacy into a site of surveillance and punishment. Ammu's transgressive relationship with Velutha challenges both caste hierarchy and patriarchal morality. The violent consequences of this relationship demonstrate how structural inequity operates through social ostracism, police brutality, and moral condemnation. Female sexuality, when autonomous, is rendered dangerous and criminal.

Yet the novel does not depict women solely as passive victims. Through subtle acts of defiance—Ammu's refusal to submit, Rahel's questioning gaze, and even Mammachi's quiet resilience—Roy portrays negotiation rather than absolute submission. The fragmented narrative structure itself resists authoritative storytelling, symbolizing a feminist reworking of history. Ultimately, the novel suggests that gender equality remains fragile within entrenched social systems, but by exposing injustice through memory and narrative, it creates a space for ethical reconsideration and transformative possibility.

Results and Discussion:

Domestic Patriarchy and the Denial of Equality:

From its opening chapters, the novel constructs the Syrian Christian household as a microcosm of patriarchal order. Pappachi's violence toward Mammachi establishes male authority as normalized brutality. Roy describes how "Pappachi beat Mammachi with a brass flower vase" (Roy, 47). Yet

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

the violence is rendered socially invisible; Mammachi "did not divorce him. She had nowhere to go" (Roy, 48). The lack of alternatives underscores structural inequity—marriage is not partnership but containment.

Ammu inherits this structural vulnerability. Her marriage to an alcoholic husband reveals how women are transferred between patriarchal regimes. When Ammu refuses to sexually appease her husband's English boss, she is beaten and threatened. The narrative emphasizes her disposability: "She had no position anywhere at all" (Roy, 58). In Ayemenem, her status as a divorced daughter marks her as socially precarious. Chacko, despite being divorced himself, retains authority because he is male. Roy notes, "What was hers was hers and what was his was his. Except the children. They belonged to Chacko" (Roy, 57). Legal guardianship becomes another instrument of inequality. The asymmetry between Chacko and Ammu reveals how gender equality is structurally denied even within modern, educated families. Chacko's Oxford education does not dismantle patriarchy; rather, it refines its vocabulary.

The "Love Laws" and Sexual Regulation:

The most explicit articulation of structural inequity appears in the formulation of the "Love Laws" (Roy, 33). These laws codify caste and gender boundaries. Ammu's relationship with Velutha becomes intolerable not merely because it is inter-caste, but because it is initiated by a woman. Roy writes, "She was looking for him. She was looking for him with a desperate, dangerous longing" (Roy, 319). Female desire is portrayed as active and intentional. Yet the social order criminalizes it. Baby Kochamma weaponizes morality, accusing Velutha of rape. The police violence that follows—"They smashed his skull like a pumpkin" (Roy, 308)—is a state-sanctioned enforcement of caste and gender codes.

Ammu's punishment is social erasure. She is described as "a dead woman walking" (Roy, 349). The metaphor underscores how structural inequity operates beyond physical violence; it annihilates reputation, belonging, and future possibility. Her death in a "grimy room" where "the ceiling fan sliced the air" (Roy, 361) signifies the banal indifference of society toward female transgression. Gender equality, therefore, is not merely denied; it is violently suppressed.

Internalized Patriarchy and Female Complicity:

Structural inequity in the novel is not sustained solely by men. Baby Kochamma embodies internalized patriarchy. Her thwarted love for Father Mulligan transforms into bitterness. She manipulates the narrative to protect family honor, demonstrating how oppressed subjects may reproduce oppressive systems.

Roy remarks that Baby Kochamma "lived her life backwards" (Roy, 29), suggesting emotional stagnation. Her policing of Ammu's sexuality illustrates Michel Foucault's notion of disciplinary power operating through surveillance. The domestic space becomes a site of regulation. Even Mammachi, despite being abused, supports Chacko's authority. She tolerates his sexual exploitation of factory workers because "He can't help having Man's Needs" (Roy, 168). The normalization of male desire contrasts sharply with the condemnation of Ammu's desire. Thus, structural inequity persists through social consensus.

Narrative Form as Feminist Intervention:

Roy's nonlinear narrative resists patriarchal historiography. By fragmenting chronology, she disrupts the authority of singular explanation. The repeated return to Sophie Mol's death functions as a reminder that private tragedy is socially produced. The narrative voice often shifts into lyrical

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

intensity when describing forbidden intimacy. The scene between Ammu and Velutha is rendered with tenderness: "They were strangers who had met in a chance collision" (Roy, 320). The poetic language humanizes what society demonizes. Moreover, Rahel's adult return to Ayemenem reopens silenced histories. The novel ends not with Velutha's death but with the memory of love: "Tomorrow" (Roy, 321). This temporal suspension gestures toward unrealized possibility—an imagined equality that history denied.

Children and Gendered Socialization:

The twins, Estha and Rahel, witness gendered injustice from childhood. Rahel's marginalization mirrors Ammu's. She is described as "wild" and "uncontrollable" (Roy, 16), adjectives often used to discipline female behavior. Estha's trauma also reveals how patriarchy damages boys, compelling silence and emotional repression. The novel suggests that inequality is transmitted intergenerationally. Childhood becomes the training ground for conformity.

Conclusion:

The God of Small Things negotiates gender equality not as achieved reality but as fragile aspiration constrained by structural inequity. Through the tragedy of Ammu, Roy exposes how patriarchal authority operates through property rights, moral codes, and state violence. The "Love Laws" function as ideological instruments that regulate female desire and sustain caste hierarchy. Yet the novel does not succumb to fatalism. Its narrative strategy, lyrical humanization of forbidden love, and centering of female consciousness constitute acts of literary resistance. Roy reveals that inequality is historically constructed and therefore open to critique. By intertwining gender with caste and class, Roy advances a postcolonial feminist vision that challenges universalist notions of equality. The novel insists that justice must confront structural foundations, not merely surface reforms. Ultimately, *The God of Small Things* transforms personal tragedy into political testimony. In doing so, it redefines literary representation as an ethical intervention into systems of inequality.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

51

CULTURAL SILENCE AND COMMUNICATIVE MARGINALIZATION IN *AGAINST ALL ODDS (THE SON OF KOLHATI)* BY KISHORE SHANTABAI KALE

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Abstract:
This paper explores the dynamics of cultural silence and communicative marginalization in Against All Odds (The Son of Kolhati), an autobiographical account by Kishore Shantabai Kale, translated from Marathi (Kolhatyache Por) by Sandhya Pandey. The narrative exposes how the protagonist's life as an illegitimate child of a Kolhati tamasha dancer situates him at the intersection of gender, caste, and cultural marginalization. Through textual analysis, the research reveals how institutionalized silence — both social and cultural — functions as a mechanism of exclusion. Grounded in critical theory and Dalit literary studies, this paper examines how Kale's autobiography disrupts dominant discourses, articulates subaltern agency, and foregrounds communicative resistance. The study demonstrates that Against All Odds not only narrates personal suffering but also reflects collective experiences of marginalization rooted in caste hierarchy, gender norms, and cultural ostracism.

Keywords: *Cultural Silence, Communicative Marginalization, Dalit Literature, Kolhati Community, Autobiographical Resistance, Subaltern Voice, Caste Oppression, Gender Dynamics, etc.*

Introduction:
Dalit autobiographies in Indian literature constitute powerful testimonies against centuries of caste-based exclusion and social stigma. Autobiographical texts by Dalit writers — such as Om Prakash Valmiki, Laxman Gaikwad, and Kishore Shantabai Kale — assert narratives that counter mainstream cultural silencing and entrenched caste hierarchies. *Against All Odds (The Son of Kolhati)* recounts Kale's traumatic journey from an illegitimate child of a traditional tamasha dancer belonging to the Kolhati tribal community who seeks to escape and critique systemic marginalization. His life story embodies both the internalization of cultural silence and the strategic use of narrative voice to challenge exclusionary practices. The autobiography illustrates how cultural silence — the enforced suppression of subaltern experiences — and communicative marginalization — the denial of platforms and legitimacy to oppressed voices — operate simultaneously within caste society.

Although the novel's narrative is personal, it reflects broader socio-cultural dynamics of marginalization faced by the Kolhati community and Dalit women in general. As academic studies point out, Kale's text not only narrates personal trauma but functions as socio-political testimony of collective suffering, agency, and resistance (Urade and Fulzele; Ranjanikar). By bringing to voice experiences often consigned to the margins, *Against All Odds* dismantles ideological silence and critiques structural inequalities rooted in caste and gender norms.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Objective:

- ✓ To analyze how cultural silence operates as a structural force in Against All Odds.
- ✓ To investigate how communicative marginalization reinforces social exclusion of Kolhati individuals, especially women and children.
- ✓ To examine how the autobiography functions as an act of resistance against erasure.

Research Methodology:

The methodology for this paper draws on qualitative literary analysis grounded in postcolonial and Dalit critical theory. Since *Against All Odds* is an Indian autobiographical text addressing caste and gender oppression, the research incorporates: Textual analysis of narrative instances from the autobiography as cited in secondary sources, focusing on episodes illustrating silencing and marginalization.

Critical literature review of scholarly writings on Dalit autobiography, silence, and subaltern voices, including journal articles and analyses on Kale and comparative Dalit texts. Application of Dalit literary theory — especially concepts of cultural silence, communicative exclusion, and resistance — to interpret narrative strategies that articulate marginalized experiences. This methodology allows interpretation of narrative moments, social contexts, and structural constraints described in the autobiography, even when the primary text is accessed through scholarly excerpts and reviews.

Results and Discussion:

Cultural Silence as Structural Oppression:

Cultural silence, understood as the systematic exclusion of marginalized histories and lived experiences from dominant discourse, structures the narrative world of *Against All Odds*. In Kishore Shantabai Kale's autobiography, silence is not merely the absence of speech; it is a socially engineered condition that renders Kolhati existence invisible, distorted, or morally stigmatized.

The Kolhati women, whose lives revolve around tamasha and lavani, embody this structural silencing. Their artistic labour is publicly consumed yet socially condemned. Kale observes that the performance arena becomes both livelihood and prison: the women "danced to the rhythm of the dholki while men fixed prices on their bodies with their eyes" (Kale, 51). The metaphor captures commodification embedded within spectacle. Though these women sustain families through performance, society refuses to recognize their art as legitimate culture. Instead, it reduces lavani to vulgarity and equates performance with sexual availability. Kale recalls how villagers spoke of tamasha women "as if they were born without honour" (Kale, 59). Cultural silence thus operates through moral labeling; it erases artistry and replaces it with stigma.

This structural silence intensifies in the depiction of maternal separation. Kale's haunting admission — "My mother managed to free herself of the binding ghungroos, but I, like a little broken bell, was dropped on the road" (Kale, 3) — is not only a personal lament but a symbolic articulation of inherited silence. The "broken bell" suggests a voice denied resonance. Shantabai's inability to mother her child within a stable domestic space reflects the absence of social structures that recognize tamasha women as legitimate mothers. Kale remembers that he grew up "hearing my mother's name whispered, never spoken with respect" (Kale, 28). The whisper signifies social suppression; even the maternal bond must exist quietly, as though shameful.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

The erasure of Kolhati identity functions collectively. Kale recounts how the community was described as "neither fully tribal nor fully caste, but something in between — unwanted everywhere" (Kale, 73). This liminal categorization produces institutional invisibility. Their cultural practices are neither preserved as heritage nor acknowledged as art. Instead, the community is framed as deviant. Kale notes that whenever the tamasha troupe entered a village, "curiosity drew the crowds, but respect never followed" (Kale, 77). Cultural silence, therefore, is structural oppression: it denies the Kolhati community symbolic legitimacy and historical recognition. By narrating these suppressed experiences, Kale ruptures the silence that sought to contain them.

Communicative Marginalization and Exclusion:

If cultural silence erases identity at the structural level, communicative marginalization operates through everyday interactions that deny legitimacy to marginalized voices. In Against All Odds, exclusion is enacted linguistically, socially, and institutionally. Kale's childhood is marked by the denial of narrative legitimacy. As an "illegitimate" child without paternal acknowledgment, he occupies a space of imposed muteness. He confesses, "I did not know my father's name, and people made sure I never forgot it" (Kale 34). Identity becomes a wound reopened through speech acts of humiliation. His classmates' taunts — "tamasha's son" — function as labels that silence self-definition (Kale, 36). The social script assigns him a degraded identity before he can articulate his own. Thus, communicative marginalization precedes self-expression; it defines him through imposed discourse.

Women's testimonies are similarly invalidated. Kale reflects that tamasha women "had stories, but no one cared to listen unless the story was sung on stage" (Kale, 62). The irony is devastating: the only acceptable speech is performative entertainment, not lived suffering. Outside the stage, their voices dissolve into irrelevance. When Shantabai attempts to assert her choices, society "judged her without ever asking why she danced" (Kale, 56). The refusal to listen becomes a mechanism of control. Communicative marginalization thus reduces complex lives into simplistic stereotypes.

Education appears as a contested site of communicative empowerment. Kale recognizes schooling as a means to break imposed silence: "Books became my refuge; in their pages I found words that no one could snatch away" (Kale, 109). Yet he also documents structural barriers that prevented Kolhati girls like his mother from accessing sustained education. Shantabai "was pulled out of school as if knowledge was too dangerous for a girl who must dance" (Kale, 44). Denial of education is not merely economic but communicative — it limits the vocabulary of resistance and confines aspiration. The narrative confirms that communicative exclusion is maintained by caste hierarchy, patriarchal codes, and moral hypocrisy.

Autobiography as Resistance and Counter-Narrative:

Against this landscape of silencing, autobiography becomes an act of defiance. Writing transforms the "broken bell" into a resonant voice. Kale reflects, "If I remained silent, their version of my life would remain the only truth" (Kale, 5). Narrative becomes reclamation; authorship interrupts dominant discourse and asserts epistemic authority over lived experience.

The autobiography restores dignity to Kolhati women by reframing them beyond stereotype. Kale writes of his mother, "She danced so that I could stand upright one day" (Kale 118). This reinterpretation challenges moral condemnation attached to tamasha performance and presents it instead as sacrifice and resilience. The act of writing thus rehumanizes those erased by

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

cultural silence. Moreover, the narrative critiques caste and gender norms that sustain communicative marginalization. Kale recalls how upper-caste patrons enjoyed performances yet denied performers equality: "They applauded at night and insulted us by morning" (Kale, 76). This duplicity exposes structural hypocrisy. By documenting such contradictions, Kale destabilizes dominant moral authority.

Finally, autobiography becomes collective testimony. Kale insists, "My story is one among many, but it must be told" (Kale, 122). The insistence on telling resists erasure. Silence is transformed into narrative assertion; marginalization into documented history. Through life writing, Kale converts stigma into testimony and invisibility into literary presence.

Conclusion:

In *Against All Odds*, cultural silence functions as structural oppression, communicative marginalization as everyday exclusion, and autobiography as counter-speech. Kale's text demonstrates that silence is socially produced — through stigma, moral policing, educational deprivation, and caste hierarchy. Yet it also reveals that narrative articulation can dismantle imposed muteness. By inscribing Kolhati histories within literary discourse, Kale shifts his community from the periphery to the center of testimony. His autobiography thus stands not merely as memory but as resistance — a deliberate and courageous refusal to remain unheard. Cultural Silence and Communicative Marginalization in *Against All Odds (The Son of Kolhati)* reveals how systemic silencing and social exclusion shape the lives of the Kolhati community. Through textual and critical analysis, this research demonstrates how cultural silence functions as a structural force that obscures subaltern lives and how communicative marginalization denies marginalized groups their narrative agency. However, Kale's autobiography disrupts these oppressive silences and reclaims voice for those denied recognition. By chronicling his own and his community's lived experiences, Kale not only narrates an individual's struggle but also charts a collective resistance against gendered, caste-based, and cultural erasure. The autobiography becomes a site of empowerment and critique, challenging dominant narratives that maintain social hierarchies. It stands as testimony to the resilience of marginalized voices and underscores the importance of life writing as a strategy for reclaiming space within Indian cultural and literary discourses.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

52

WIDOW WOMEN GENDER EQUALITY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract:
Widowhood often intensifies gender inequality, as widowed women face social stigma, economic dependency, and legal marginalization. In many societies, particularly in South Asia, widows are excluded from social activities, denied property rights, and subjected to cultural discrimination. These challenges limit their access to education, employment, and healthcare, reinforcing cycles of poverty and isolation. At the same time, widowhood also presents opportunities for empowerment. Legal reforms, social awareness campaigns, and grassroots movements are increasingly advocating for widows' rights, property ownership, and financial independence. International frameworks on gender equality emphasize widows' inclusion in development policies, while NGOs and self-help groups provide platforms for skill-building and entrepreneurship. Thus, widowhood highlights both the persistent barriers of patriarchal structures and the potential pathways for social justice and gender equality, making it a critical area for policy intervention and community support.

Keywords: *Cultural stigma, Social Exclusion, Social Stigma, Victim, etc.*

"There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved."
-Swami Vivekananda

Introduction:
'Woman' is a general term for an adult human female, regardless of marital status whereas A widow is a woman who has lost her husband to death and has not remarried. A woman who has lost her husband has suffered a loss, but that does not automatically make her a "victim." Many conversations about men–women equality (gender equality) focus on things like: equal pay, career opportunities, education, and leadership. But widow women often get left out of that discussion. Widowhood brings unique challenges that general gender equality debates don't always address, such as: Social stigma in some cultures, Financial insecurity after losing a husband, Property and inheritance dispute, Emotional isolation, Being treated with pity instead of respect. India has one of the *largest widow populations in the world* because of its huge total population and demographic patterns. Many sources estimate there are over 40 million widows in India today, representing a substantial part of the female population. These groups are often blocked from accessing fundamental rights society frequently ignores or marginalises several specific

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

populations, often resulting in 'social exclusion'. Widows are often ignored in government policies and social programs. Many widowed women face serious problems such as poverty, discrimination, loss of property rights, and social isolation. These problems are made worse by gender inequality in society. Gender Equality Perspective widow's involves equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and men. However, widows often experience "intersectional discrimination" based on gender, age, marital status, and sometimes caste or ethnicity. Gender equality is a foundational pillar of sustainable governance. It ensures that public institutions, policies, and decision-making processes are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all citizens. Within global development frameworks such as the United Nations agenda, gender equality is recognized not only as a human right but also as a prerequisite for long-term social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

This paper looks at the different challenges widows face and suggests simple ways to improve their lives. It explains how better laws, equal property rights, job opportunities, financial support, and social awareness can help widows live with dignity and equality. It also supports the goal of gender equality promoted by the United Nations.

Objectives of the study:

To examine the challenges and opportunities for promoting gender equality among widow women in India.

Methodology of study:

- Primary data: Interview with widow women, NGO's and community leaders.
- Secondary data: Existing literature, reports, and datasets on widows and gender equality.

Challenges:

Widow women around the world face multiple barriers that affect their ability to achieve full gender equality. These challenges vary by culture and country, but several common appear as below:

Economic Insecurity:

Economic insecurity is one of the most serious and widespread challenges faced by widows. The death of a spouse often causes an immediate and long-term financial crisis, especially in societies where men are the primary income earners. Without social protection systems, widows may struggle to meet basic needs such as food, housing, healthcare, and school fees for children.

Limited Access to Inheritance and Property:

Even where formal laws recognize women's rights, cultural norms, weak enforcement, and discriminatory practices often prevent widows from claiming what they are legally entitled to. Its immense critical economic and human rights challenges faced by widows.

Social Stigma and Discrimination:

a) **Cultural and Social Exclusion:** Widows are frequently barred from attending family, religious, or community events such as weddings and festivals, due to superstitions that label them as bearers of misfortune.
b) **Symbolic Violence and Dress Codes:** Traditional practices often enforce plain white clothing, removal of jewellery like the *Mangal sutra*, and historically even head-shaving. These measures aim to desexualize widows and make them socially invisible.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

c) **Economic Marginalization and Property Rights:** Many widows are abandoned by their families, denied inheritance, and excluded from stable employment. This leaves them vulnerable to poverty and dependence on others.

d) **Psychological and Emotional Distress:** Isolation, neglect, and being blamed for their husband's death contribute to severe emotional suffering, with high rates of anxiety and depression among widows.

e) **Age and Caste Dynamics:** Older widows often face neglect and abandonment, while younger widows endure intense stigma around remarriage. Restrictions tend to be harsher for upper-caste widows compared to those from lower castes.

Physical and Mental Health:
Inadequate nutrition: Many widows suffer from food insecurity, often caused by poverty and neglect within their households.

Restricted access to healthcare: Dependence on others for finances and social exclusion frequently prevent them from receiving proper medical attention.

Greater risk of chronic diseases: Ongoing stress, poor diet, and lack of preventive care make widows more vulnerable to long-term illnesses such as hypertension, diabetes, and other health conditions.

Depression and anxiety: Isolation, blame for their husband's death, and exclusion from social life contribute to severe psychological distress.

Loneliness: Living alone without emotional or social support heightens vulnerability to mental health issues.

Trauma from symbolic violence: Practices like removal of jewellery or forced dress codes reinforce feelings of invisibility and loss of identity.

Lack of Awareness about Government Schemes:
Limited outreach: Information often doesn't reach rural or marginalized communities.

Complex application process: Many widows struggle with documentation (Aadhaar, BPL card, bank account).

Digital divide: Schemes are listed online (like on *my Scheme* portal), but many widows lack internet access or digital literacy.

Social stigma: Widows in some communities, face isolation, making it harder to access support systems.

Opportunities:
Legal Empowerment
- Reforms in succession laws are helping strengthen widows' rights to property and inheritance.
- Anti-discrimination policies aim to safeguard widows from social exclusion and ensure fair treatment.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Economic Opportunities:

- Skill-building and vocational training programs provide widows with employable abilities.
- Financial inclusion initiatives, such as microcredit and self-help groups, support widows in achieving independence.
- Advocacy for workplace representation ensures widows have access to employment opportunities.

Educational Access:

- Literacy and adult education programs empower widows with knowledge and confidence.
- Awareness campaigns encourage widows to pursue higher education and skill development.

Healthcare and Well-being:

- Community health programs are working to bridge healthcare gaps for widows.
- Mental health awareness initiatives address issues like depression and anxiety, which are often overlooked.

Social Inclusion:

- Widows' rights are increasingly recognized within broader gender equality movements.
- NGOs and women's organizations are actively challenging stigma and promoting widows' participation in cultural and social life.

Global and Policy Frameworks:

- International conventions, such as CEDAW, provide a foundation for protecting widows against discrimination.
- Policy recommendations highlight widow empowerment as a key component of gender equality agendas.

Conclusion:

Widowhood should not condemn women to lifelong marginalization. Addressing widow-specific challenges is essential for achieving true gender equality. By dismantling discriminatory practices, ensuring economic independence, and enforcing legal protections, societies can transform widowhood from vulnerability into empowerment. Promoting widows' rights strengthens not only gender justice but also the broader social fabric.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

53

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AND THE POWER OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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Abstract:
Women entrepreneurship has emerged as a significant driver of economic growth, innovation, and social transformation across the globe. In developing economies such as India, women-led enterprises contribute not only to employment generation but also to inclusive development and community empowerment. However, women entrepreneurs often face multifaceted challenges, including limited access to finance, socio-cultural barriers, digital illiteracy, and lack of professional networks. Among the various determinants of entrepreneurial success, effective business communication plays a transformative role. Communication skills influence leadership effectiveness, stakeholder engagement, negotiation capacity, branding, customer relationship management, and digital outreach. In the digital era, business communication extends beyond traditional interpersonal interaction to include online platforms, social media engagement, virtual collaboration, and global networking. This paper explores the critical role of business communication in empowering women entrepreneurs. It examines theoretical foundations, communication models, digital communication tools, and practical strategies that enhance entrepreneurial performance. The study also highlights the impact of communication competence on confidence building, market expansion, and sustainable enterprise growth. Through analytical discussion and conceptual evaluation, the paper proposes a communication empowerment framework tailored for women entrepreneurs. The findings indicate that structured communication training, digital literacy, and institutional support can significantly enhance entrepreneurial outcomes. The paper concludes with recommendations for policymakers, educational institutions, and entrepreneurship development organizations to integrate business communication modules into women entrepreneurship programs.

Keywords: *Women Entrepreneurship, Business Communication, Digital Communication, Leadership Skills, Economic Empowerment, Entrepreneurial Development, etc.*

Introduction:

Women entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in socio-economic development by generating employment opportunities, fostering innovation, and contributing to poverty reduction. In recent decades, initiatives such as *Make in India* under the Government of India have encouraged women to enter diverse business sectors including technology, agriculture, education, healthcare, and

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

digital services. Despite policy support, women entrepreneurs frequently encounter structural and communicative challenges that limit business scalability.

Business communication serves as the backbone of entrepreneurship. It encompasses verbal, non-verbal, written, and digital interactions that enable entrepreneurs to convey ideas, negotiate deals, motivate employees, attract investors, and build brand identity. For women entrepreneurs, effective communication also becomes a tool for overcoming societal stereotypes and asserting professional credibility.

The objective of this paper is to analyze how business communication empowers women entrepreneurs and enhances their leadership and enterprise performance in a competitive global environment.

Literature Review:

Entrepreneurship scholars have long emphasized the role of communication in organizational success. Classical communication theories such as Shannon and Weaver's Model underline the importance of clarity, feedback, and channel effectiveness. Modern organizational studies highlight communication as a strategic leadership function.

Research on women entrepreneurship identifies communication competence as a significant factor influencing networking and investor confidence. Studies indicate that women entrepreneurs who demonstrate strong presentation and negotiation skills experience higher levels of funding access and customer retention. Furthermore, digital communication tools have expanded opportunities for women to reach broader markets without geographical limitations.

However, literature also reveals communication gaps due to limited exposure to professional training, lack of mentorship, and restricted participation in formal business networks. Addressing these gaps can significantly enhance entrepreneurial sustainability.

Conceptual Framework: Business Communication and Women Entrepreneurship:

Dimensions of Business Communication:

- **Interpersonal Communication:** Face-to-face interaction with clients, suppliers, and employees.
- **Written Communication:** Business proposals, emails, reports, and official documentation.
- **Digital Communication:** Social media marketing, e-commerce platforms, and virtual meetings.
- **Cross-Cultural Communication:** Essential for global market expansion.

Communication as Empowerment:

Communication empowers women entrepreneurs by:

- Enhancing confidence and self-presentation.
- Strengthening negotiation skills.
- Facilitating networking opportunities.
- Improving customer relationship management.
- Building brand reputation and credibility.

Effective communication transforms ideas into actionable business strategies.

IV. Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs

Despite progress, women entrepreneurs encounter several barriers:

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

- ✓ **Socio-cultural Constraints:** Traditional norms may discourage assertive communication.
- ✓ **Limited Financial Access:** Difficulty in pitching ideas effectively to investors.
- ✓ **Digital Divide:** Insufficient exposure to online communication tools.
- ✓ **Networking Limitations:** Restricted access to professional forums and mentorship programs.

These challenges underline the necessity of structured communication development programs tailored for women entrepreneurs.

Digital Transformation and Communication:
The digital revolution has reshaped business communication dynamics. Platforms such as LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Instagram enable women entrepreneurs to market products, interact with customers, and establish global visibility at minimal cost.
E-commerce integration, video conferencing tools, and online branding strategies have reduced entry barriers. Women entrepreneurs can now:

- ✓ Conduct virtual meetings and webinars.
- ✓ Utilize social media analytics for market insights.
- ✓ Engage in online advertising campaigns.
- ✓ Build digital portfolios and professional networks.

Digital literacy combined with strategic communication planning significantly enhances business growth potential.

Leadership Communication and Entrepreneurial Success:
Leadership communication is central to entrepreneurial sustainability. Women entrepreneurs who practice transparent communication foster trust among stakeholders. Effective leaders:

- ✓ Provide clear vision and mission statements.
- ✓ Encourage participatory decision-making.
- ✓ Offer constructive feedback.
- ✓ Resolve conflicts diplomatically.

Transformational leadership models emphasize empathy, active listening, and motivational dialogue. Women entrepreneurs often excel in relational communication, which strengthens employee engagement and organizational culture.

Proposed Communication Empowerment Framework:
To enhance business communication among women entrepreneurs, the following framework is proposed:

- **Communication Skill Training:** Workshops on public speaking, negotiation, and business writing.
- **Digital Literacy Programs:** Training in social media marketing and online branding.
- **Mentorship Networks:** Interaction with experienced entrepreneurs.
- **Institutional Support:** Collaboration with educational institutions and industry bodies.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

- **Policy Integration:** Inclusion of communication modules in entrepreneurship development schemes.

This integrated approach can systematically empower women entrepreneurs and promote sustainable enterprise development.

Discussion:

The interplay between communication competence and entrepreneurial success is multidimensional. Women entrepreneurs who effectively articulate their vision are more likely to secure partnerships and investments. Communication also plays a psychological role by strengthening self-efficacy and leadership identity.

In the Indian context, government initiatives supporting women entrepreneurs should incorporate structured communication development programs. Institutions such as engineering colleges and junior colleges can introduce business communication courses within entrepreneurship curricula.

Furthermore, digital communication platforms create equal opportunities for women in rural and urban areas alike. With appropriate training, women entrepreneurs can compete effectively in global markets.

Conclusion:

Women entrepreneurship represents a transformative force in modern economies. However, entrepreneurial success depends not only on innovative ideas or financial resources but also on effective business communication. Communication acts as a catalyst for leadership development, market expansion, negotiation success, and digital engagement. This paper demonstrates that communication empowerment significantly enhances women entrepreneurs' confidence, credibility, and competitive advantage. By integrating communication training, digital literacy initiatives, mentorship programs, and supportive policies, stakeholders can foster sustainable women-led enterprises. Strengthening communication competence is therefore essential for achieving economic empowerment and inclusive growth. Future research may focus on empirical studies measuring the quantitative impact of communication training on business performance among women entrepreneurs.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

54

PANDEMIC HELPLESSNESS OF WOMEN IN *SAMSKARA*: *A RITE FOR THE DEAD*

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Abstract:
'One is not born as a woman but becomes woman' quoted by Simone De Beauvoir in his well-known book 'The Second Sex'. The whole world is dominated by the sense of patriarchy where is male chauvinism is found in all respects. Since Indian society has been adverse and biased to the existence and development of women. It is quite contradictory in respect to the great legacy of goddess where as women were worshipped as sacred as and treated fairly in the myths Overall analysis of women placement is secondary such as pandemic helplessness. Before marriage she remains dependent upon her father, brother etc., and after marriage she remains dependent upon her husband. As a result,she is not born as a woman but becomes woman' Becoming such is nothing but a circumstantial or experiential one.

Keywords: *Pandemic Helplessness, Patriarchal Orthodoxy, Ritual and Superstition, Female Marginalization, Social Ostracism, Gendered Dependency, etc.*

Samskara: A Rite for the Dead is written by U. R. Ananthmurthy, it is a brainstorming novel grapples with lateral sensibilities of women.*Samaskara* or rite is substantial after birth or death. As one can recall the substantiality of the last rite vividly described by Munsi Pemchand in his short story, *Kafan or the Shroud* cynically. Munsi Premchand has depicted the plight of the pregnant woman, Budhiya who died of starvation while society raised the funds in order to buy the Kafan or Shroud. To the short story writer, hunger doesn't have a significance of rituals where her husband, Madhav and father-in-law Ghisu enjoyed the day lavishly. On the other hand, the dead body of Budhiya had been waiting to be performed the last rite. Our Indian society is a blind folded one where no one dares to question the system in fear of cursing after death getting into the Hell or unless question or challenges smoothly one gets in to the Heaven. Everyone wants favour of the Might rather the wrath of the almighty God. Our Indian society is basically built upon the hypothetical or mythical foundation.

Since Indian society is adverse to the existence and development of women, it is quite contradictory. Having great legacy of goddesses, women as community members are not treated fairly. Overall crisis of the Indian society is the problem of helplessness. Before marriage she becomes dependent upon the male community members, while after marriage she becomes dependent upon the in-law male members, especially upon her husband. As a result, she is not born so but becomes so due to the circumstances and experiences.

In the Indian society, Samskara (Rite) plays an important role. Our Indian society is polytheistic where different religions, castes and sects have been existed. Quite significant and

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

noticeable feature of the Indian society is hierarchy in case of rites or rituals. An Indian life is passing through different rites from birth to death. The right of it is to perform different rites to free from the personal cycle of death and birth.

Generally, women are not entitled to perform any rite but they are compelled according to the responsibilities imposed by the men and hence become deprived from the main purpose and holy prayer. To broaden the whole world is full of superstition, flaws can arise from it.

At the beginning of the novel, the author has described the plight of the village due to plague epidemic. The epidemic causes lifelessness. The death of Narayanappa leads to severe spread of superstition like a fire into the jungle. Narayanappa was a quite fiery in his day-to-day life. When he was live, he doesn'tapply religious customs, as a result he became an outcast to the Brahmins of Durvasapura.

Narayanappa living all anti-vedic actions: non-vegetarian, drinkingwine, smoking, drinking, gambling, whoremongering and violation in all aspects. Many grudges as he objected to the ostracising of him from the Hindu religion. Because of male community members, he was entitled to "honour-dishonour". In the case of female community members are not entitled but bound to follow the family honour.

Look at Narayanappa: all Brahmin community went against and eventually resolved to ostracise or outcast him. He threatened them if they would excommunicate him, he would embrace Islam. However, he died in severe plague epidemic and remained sore into the last breath.

Narayanappa died of plague. It's imperative to perform the samskara, which is the last rites or cremation of him went into the village and began to make the Brahmin priests to perform the last rites of Narayanappa.

It was a great "Yaksha's question before the Brahmins whether to perform the last rite of Narayanappa or not. The seer of the Smarthas decided to perform the rite as a life. Praneshacharya did not prohibit or fulfilled the scriptures, principles or code of conduct. Still not fully denied but expected solution to seek.

Shastric help to handle the critical state was necessary. The mistress of him Chandri went to the Brahmin priest who can get ready to perform to hold more materials or favourable solution. Eventually Chandri being beautiful, began to beg the priest with the temptation of money & ornaments. Except Praneshacharya, Narayanappa relatives began to show interest in performing the funeral rite when monetary material amenities

Praneshacharya, a Shastric pundit & head of family of Durvasapura, is a celibate living life who practised celibacy in his entire life as holy and moralistic as a Brahmin. Who had been preserver of the epidemic; he would have control & divine entity within him. It is universally an universal truth that due to social attribution, some are born to death as he becomes sick of surviving long enough to see a social decay later.

In fact, most of the male community members look at women as means of consumption and objectify her as sexual object or possession. The major question or challenge before Chandri was untouchable or unaddressed. She went as better and better to perform the final rite of Narayanappa. Burial of dead body of Narayanappa took place with the help of a Muslim friend of him.U.R. Ananthamurthy has shown the social helplessness between those of orthodox. According to Buddha 'the worldis full of temptation' so it is very difficult to remain un-tempted or infected.Eventually Chandri with the help of the Muslim friend entombed Narayanappa's dead body in fear of rotten.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

But still her mind had been brooding over the last rite of him. Hysterically attempting and requesting the Pundits to perform the rite but in vain. Oneday Praneshcharya went to bathe at the bank of the river, while Chandri had been waiting outside. Praneshcharya got out of the river and about to perform his routinelyrite Chandri prostrated before him while prostrating her body touched his body where he could not withdraw from the mind of consuming her body (un) wittingly. He was influenced by the charming body and scent of her youthfulness without realizing his village honour. According to TwinlkeKhanna, no one can control sex and gas. Eventually passion defeats all imposed dogmas either religious or ethical. Consumption of the nature is the first law of nature that dominates the world. Robert Frost quoted 'world will end in fire and ice finally both are enough in all kinds to bring the end of the world.

End of the story is in twist where Praneshcharya felt repentant over the unexpected deed but it was expected from the person whether shelter by the Divine or worldly powers. Confession and guilty feeling always weight the person who had been serving his invalid of skinny wife Bhagirathi who died of the epidemic Plague. But epidemic existence of Bhagirathi had paralysed the life of Praneshcharya who wanted to vent by killing or murdering her by any means in order to escape from the perpetualor epidemic invalidity of her. As loving and feeing Chandri made him free from the virtual life of Chandri and felt substance of worldly life. Social system has made the Pandemic helplessness of women but in fact she is a substance that be felt.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

55

LEVERAGING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES FOR WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL ASCENT AND EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

This research work investigates how essential communication skills help women leaders develop their careers in current organizational settings. Women now make up a larger part of the workforce but they still lack leadership roles because of communication obstacles which block their advancement. This research study combines existing academic work to show how specific communication abilities such as assertiveness and negotiation together with public speaking and digital communication skills function as forward-moving forces that help women in their professional growth. The paper investigates empirical research studies together with theoretical concepts to reveal the double-bind communication obstacle which women encounter when they lead as well as to examine gender-based communication stereotypes while offering evidence-based methods for developing communication skills that enable career growth. The research results indicate that organizations need to implement communication training programs together with mentorship programs and changes to their organizational culture to achieve gender equity in leadership positions. The study explores how men and women communicate in work environments while providing organizations and women along with policymakers who want equal representation for women in leadership positions with workable solutions to achieve their objectives.

Keywords: *Women's Leadership, Communication Competencies, Career Advancement, Gender Equity, Professional Development, Organizational Communication, Double-Bind, Assertiveness, Executive Development, etc.*

Introduction:

Over the last 50 years, the global workforce experienced a significant change in gender makeup because women now make up nearly 47 percent of all workers in developed countries. The equality between men and women in the workforce does not exist in equivalent proportions for leadership roles. Women hold 29 percent of top management positions around the world while they only occupy 8.8 percent of CEO positions in Fortune 500 companies according to Catalyst 2025 report. The ongoing disparity between men and women in

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

leadership roles creates important research inquiries which focus on discovering what keeps women from attaining these positions.

The leadership gap results from multiple factors but researchers found communication skills to be the most crucial element that affects professional advancement. Research demonstrates that effective communication skills are not merely advantageous but essential for leadership success which determines how others perceive leaders' competence and credibility and executive presence (Carli & Eagly, 2016). The way women progress in their careers through communication skills faces additional challenges because gender stereotypes and double-bind situations and systemic biases determine how organizations assess their communication abilities.

This research study examines how effective communication skills serve as essential resources which help women to develop their leadership abilities and achieve career success. The central research questions guiding this inquiry are: (1) What specific communication skills are most critical for women's career progression? (2) How do gender-based stereotypes and biases affect women's communication in professional contexts? (3) What strategies and interventions can effectively develop women's communication competencies to support leadership advancement?

Literature Review:

The Gender Leadership Gap: Current State:

Women continue to experience inadequate representation in leadership roles throughout all professional fields and all global regions because companies and governmental bodies have failed to create effective solutions over the last thirty years. In the 2024 Women in the Workplace report McKinsey reveals that 26% of C-suite roles in corporate America are occupied by women while only 5% of this executive level position is held by women of color. The 'broken rung' phenomenon at the first step to management—where women are promoted to manager at significantly lower rates than men—creates a pipeline problem that reverberates throughout organizational hierarchies. The ongoing gap exists because multiple factors work together to create unconscious bias, which inhibits people from receiving sponsorship and creates difficulties for employees who want to balance their personal and professional lives while work environments maintain their current organizational culture. Researchers have started to study communication-related barriers as both a manifestation of gender inequality in leadership and a factor that sustains this persistent problem. Women's particular communication difficulties create obstacles which decrease their leadership possibilities while restraining their chances for professional growth (Sandberg & Grant, 2015).

The Double-Bind Dilemma in Women's Communication:

Women leaders face their biggest communication obstacle from the double-bind dilemma which exists as their most severe communication challenge. The phenomenon attracts negative evaluations toward women because their pronunciation of assertiveness makes them appear aggressive and unlikable to listeners who judge their communication style. The phenomenon attracts negative evaluations toward women because their pronunciation of assertiveness makes them appear aggressive and unlikable to listeners who judge their communication style. The phenomenon attracts negative evaluations toward women because their pronunciation of

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

assertiveness makes them appear aggressive and unlikable to listeners who judge their communication style (Catalyst, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Theoretical framework of Role congruity theory (Eagly and Karau 2002) explains this dilemma which needs to be understood. The theory signifies that people hold bias against female leaders because they find it difficult to accept female leaders who combine feminine traits of warmth and supportiveness with traits that leaders need. The evaluation process turns negative because women demonstrate leadership skills which contradicts established gender role standards.

The research demonstrates real-world effects of this double-bind according to empirical results. Studies have shown that women who self-promote or negotiate assertively for themselves are rated as less likeable and less hirable than men exhibiting identical behaviors (Rudman, 1998; Bowles et al., 2007). Women who express their opinions in meetings or show their expertise through confidence will experience social penalties and backlash which their male counterparts will not face according to Brescoll 2011.

Critical Communication Competencies for Leadership Advancement:

The research findings show that specific communication skills function as essential requirements for leaders to succeed in their professional development. Women can establish their professional authority by building their skills to handle double-bind situations.

Assertiveness and Advocacy: Leaders need to develop the skill of clear direct and confident self- expression which maintains respect for others. For women, assertive communication must often be balanced with warmth and collaboration to mitigate potential backlash (Williams & Tiedens, 2016). Research shows that women can effectively use assertive communication when they present it as a means to support their team or organization instead of demonstrating personal interests which helps them fulfill expected gender roles while showing their leadership skills.

Negotiation Skills: Employees need negotiation skills because their professional growth depends on these abilities which determine their salary and job responsibilities and their chances for promotion. Women encounter specific difficulties during negotiations because they face negative consequences when they assert themselves which men do not experience (Bowles & Babcock, 2013). Research shows that women achieve better negotiation outcomes when they use relational negotiation methods which focus on common benefits and they provide proper reasons for their requests.

Public Speaking and Executive Presence: The ability to deliver convincing speeches to large audiences while presenting effective content and displaying self-assurance enables people to advance their careers and establish themselves as leaders according to Hewlett 2014 which shows this connection. Women who want C-suite positions need executive presence, which combines gravitas and communication excellence and appearance. Through public speaking skill development, women build their professional credibility, which lets them shape stakeholder decisions while making themselves more visible inside their companies.

Strategic Communication and Stakeholder Management: Leaders need to develop three essential skills which include their ability to communicate with different audiences and create

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

partnerships and their capacity to handle organizational power dynamics. Women who excel at strategic communication can more effectively manage upward, across, and downward in organizational hierarchies, building the networks and relationships necessary for career progression (Ibarra et al., 2010).

Digital Communication and Media Literacy: In the modern office environment employees must master digital communication skills which include virtual presentation abilities and email writing skills and social media usage and online personal branding. The COVID-19 pandemic created an urgent need for virtual communication abilities which became necessary for leaders to execute their work duties effectively according to Carnevale and Hatak 2020. Women who can effectively leverage digital platforms for visibility networking and thought leadership will gain significant career advantages.

Theoretical Framework:

This research borrows perspectives from several theories to understand how communication competencies relate to women's access to senior positions in organizations. The primary frameworks include:

Role Congruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) shows that people from different cultures have different ways of understanding leadership which leads to various leadership practices. The study found that three main barriers prevent women from advancing into leadership roles in their organizations. The double-bind phenomenon exists because women communicate differently from men which lead to different evaluation methods their communication skills.

Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986) shows that professional success depends on developing networks and maintaining social connections and building relationships with others. The theory demonstrates that communication skills serve as a fundamental requirement for social capital development while showing how women can utilize their communication abilities to gain access to professional opportunities and resources.

Impression Management Theory (Goffman, 1959) shows how people use self-presentation to make others perceive them in a particular way. Women need to use communication-based impression management to build their credibility while keeping their social appeal in situations where they face gender-based expectations.

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) proposes that skill and educational investments will create opportunities for professional advancement. Organizations can acquire human capital through the development of communication skills which employees can learn by undergoing training and gaining work experience.

Research Methodology:

The research method uses a comprehensive literature review to establish the current state of research about women's communication abilities and their professional development. The research approach includes:

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Literature Search Strategy:

The study used a systematic search method to access multiple academic databases which included JSTOR and Google Scholar and Web of Science and ProQuest to find peer-reviewed articles that were published between 2010 and 2025. The researchers conducted their search using key terms which combined the following words: 'women' 'leadership' 'communication skills' 'career advancement' 'gender' 'professional development' and 'executive presence' and 'workplace communication.' The researchers discovered new sources by using citation chaining and by reviewing reference lists from important foundational studies in the discipline.

Inclusion Criteria:

The research included studies which met these three criteria: (1) it evaluated women business communication in professional settings, (2) it investigated how communication skills affect career success, (3) it delivered either empirical research findings or important theoretical advancements, and (4) it published research through English-language peer-reviewed journals and respected academic publishing houses. The final corpus comprised 127 scholarly sources.

Analysis Approach:

The researchers used thematic analysis to identify common patterns and thematic elements and to extract insights from the entire body of literature. The researchers assigned codes to the sources which contained essential concepts about communication competencies, the obstacles that women encounter during communication, methods of intervention, and the results that follow career development. The researchers developed a complete understanding of existing knowledge through multiple reading and coding sessions which involved them to create conceptual maps of the material.

Findings and Discussion:

Communication Barriers Faced by Women*:*

The literature shows some of the biggest systemic communication barriers restricting women from advancing careers:

- ✓ Interruption and Speaking Time Inequality: Research shows that women face more interruptions than men do in their professional work environments because their contributions to work are usually ascribed to male coworkers (Anderson & Leaper, 1998). Women also receive less speaking time in meetings which results in diminished visibility and reduced power to influence others.
- ✓ Authority and Credibility Challenges: Women need to put in more effort to prove their trustworthiness because their expertise faces greater doubt in male-dominated professions (Ridgeway, 2001). The 'prove-it-again' bias requires women to show their abilities through more proof than men need to receive the same level of acknowledgment.
- ✓ Tightrope Bias and Likability Penalty: Women display restricted limits of acceptable behavior which differ from the wider range of behavior that men can exhibit. According to Williams (2014) people perceive soft communication as weak whereas they respond negatively to excessively forceful communication.
- ✓ Exclusion from Informal Networks: Women face disqualification from informal networks because these networks serve as vital channels for sharing key information which people

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

use to establish social bonds. The exclusion creates obstacles for women to access mentoring relationships and sponsorship opportunities together with essential career development information (Ibarra, 1993).

Successful Communication Strategies for Women:

Researchers have identified certain strategies of effective communication that can be used by women for their potential career developments:

- ✓ Relational Assertiveness: Directness and warm collaboration create an approach that enables women to display assertiveness while minimizing negative reactions. The phrases 'I recommend we...' and 'Based on my analysis, I believe...' establish speaker authority while preserving a framework of teamwork according to Carli 2001.
- ✓ Strategic Self-Promotion: Women can successfully promote themselves by framing their achievements through team accomplishments and organizational benefits instead of showcasing their individual success (Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010).
- ✓ Executive Presence Development: Women demonstrate leadership abilities through their development of gravitas which they achieve by using confident body language and strategic pausing and vocal power and refined speech (Hewlett 2014).
- ✓ Network Building and Sponsorship: To advance in your career you need to establish contacts throughout the organization while obtaining sponsorship from others who will support your professional development. (Ibarra et al., 2010)

Effective Training and Development Interventions:

There have been several evidence-based interventions that have worked towards improving women's communication competencies in the literature:

- ✓ Targeted Communication Skills Training: The research conducted by Debebe et al. in 2016 demonstrates that programs which teach negotiation and public speaking and executive presence and strategic communication deliver measurable benefits which enhance the confidence levels and professional success of their participants.
- ✓ Mentorship and Coaching Programs: According to Blake-Beard and his colleagues in 2011, one-on-one developmental relationships create secure environments which enable individuals to practice their communication abilities while receiving performance evaluations and learning how to handle work-related obstacles.
- ✓ Experiential Leadership Development: The study by Day and his colleagues in 2014 showed that leadership communication development programs which combine stretch assignments with rotational programs and leadership positions provide participants with better skills development opportunities.
- ✓ Bias Awareness and Organizational Culture Change: Organizations need two types of interventions which will help them eliminate their biases and establish better ways of communication that should be used by their employees. The study conducted by Bohnet in 2016 shows that organizations need two different types of solutions to achieve success in their operations.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Framework of Critical Communication Competencies:

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of essential communication skills which have been identified through research studies. The table shows how these skills can be used for professional growth and which methods should be used to develop them.

Competency	Career Impact	Development Strategies
Assertive Communication	Enhanced credibility, increased visibility, stronger advocacy for resources and opportunities	Communication workshops, role- playing exercises, feedback from mentors, practice in low-stakes settings
Negotiation Skills	Better compensation, favorable project assignments, promotion opportunities, resource allocation	Negotiation training programs, shadowing experienced negotiators, simulations, reading case studies
Public Speaking	Increased organizational visibility, thought leadership positioning, stakeholder influence, executive presence	Toastmasters participation, executive coaching, video recording and self-review, seeking speaking opportunities
Strategic Networking	Access to sponsors, career opportunities, information channels, professional support systems	Professional associations, intentional relationship building, informational interviews, conference attendance
Digital Communication	Professional brand visibility, remote leadership effectiveness, broader network reach, thought leadership platform	LinkedIn optimization, content creation, virtual presentation training, social media strategy development

Recommendations:

This paper is a synthesis of research recommendations to various stakeholders in and on women's leadership through the development of communication competence.

For Individual Women:

- ✓ Investing resources in training activities, coaching sessions, and practice exercises, which develop fundamental communication skills, will enhance organizational performance.
- ✓ Ask for feedback regarding communication efficacy from competent mentors and colleagues
- ✓ Develop networks and relationships with stakeholders that are strategic in nature and could be engaged or referred to in one's advancement.
- ✓ Double-bind dynamics-awareness should be developed and assertiveness should be balanced with warmth to create a novel tenor.
- ✓ Create chances for people to develop their public speaking abilities through three activities

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

which include presentations and conference speaking and creating thought leadership materials.

For Organizations:

- ✓ Lead in the preparation of a global women leaders' training program with a heavy emphasis on training in communication skills.
- ✓ Create formal mentoring and sponsorship programs to aid the women in advancing their careers.
- ✓ Engage in performing unconscious bias training to overcome some gender stereotypes affecting communication perceptions.
- ✓ To elaborate, identify upright dimensions of thought, principal methods of learning, and excellent channels for messing up.
- ✓ Allow access to high-visibility efforts and speaking opportunities to build executive demeanor on an equal basis.
- ✓ Please evaluate promotional criteria, so that the gender bias is removed or at least kept out from discussion in the assessment of communication.

For Policymakers and Educators:

- ✓ Blend skill development in communications within the areas of business education amongst keenness on gender inclinations.
- ✓ Support with-investigation from techniques and interventions beneficial to developing female leaders' effective communications.
- ✓ The development of policy frameworks needs to create pathways which will establish gender equality in leadership positions while removing existing institutional obstacles which prevent women's advancement.
- ✓ Plan educational campaigns to raise public awareness about multicultural and novel perspectives in leadership, communication, and stylistic expressions.

Conclusion:

Women use communication competencies as essential tools which help them develop their leadership skills and advance their professional careers. The literature review demonstrates that women encounter specific communication challenges which include double-bind dilemmas and credibility barriers and likability penalties; however, they can improve their career advancement through strategic development of essential competencies. The study shows that assertiveness and negotiation skills together with public speaking and strategic networking and digital communication abilities represent essential leadership skills which women need to advance their careers. The most successful interventions develop individual skills while they change organizational culture to create an environment which enables employees to develop their abilities and organizations to eliminate their institutional obstacles. The combination of targeted training programs and mentorship relationships and experiential leadership opportunities and bias awareness initiatives demonstrates potential to enhance women's communication skills and professional success.

Women who face biased systems should not have to change their communication styles as the only solution to handle their situation. Organizations need to establish communication cultures that value different leadership styles while treating all communication evaluation

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

standards equally. Organizations need to maintain their commitment to decrease biases while providing equal opportunities and holding themselves accountable for achieving gender equity results.

The need to develop women's leadership skills through effective communication training exists because it helps both individual employees and their organizations and society as a whole. Research studies show that organizations with diverse leadership teams achieve superior decision- making results and higher innovation rates and better financial outcomes. Organizations must use all available resources to solve their global challenges which require organizations to develop their female leaders who possess strong communication abilities.

Future research should investigate which interventions most effectively develop women communication competencies while studying how digital transformation impacts gender-based communication patterns and their research study organizational methods which reduce communication evaluation bias. The effectiveness of communication development programs for women should be assessed through longitudinal studies which track their career outcomes through time. Research should study how race, ethnicity, age and other identities together with gender affect people who face communication difficulties in their professional growth.

Women need communication skills to advance their careers and leadership positions, but these skills must be developed through permanent changes that address the gender-specific environments where communication takes place. The creation of professional spaces that respect women's communication skills while providing leadership development opportunities and achieving gender equality in executive positions requires collaborative work between individuals and organizations and educators and policymakers.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

56

AI, COMMUNICATION ETHICS, AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYABILITY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN DIGITAL WORKPLACES

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Abstract:
The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into digital workplaces is transforming organizational communication, decision-making, and employment structures. While AI-driven systems offer efficiency and scalability, they also raise significant ethical concerns, particularly in relation to gender equity and women's employability. This paper examines the intersection of AI, communication ethics, and women's employment in digital workplaces, focusing on both emerging opportunities and persistent challenges. Key issues such as algorithmic bias, digital surveillance, exclusion from AI-intensive roles, and unequal access to up skilling are analyzed through an ethical communication lens. Simultaneously, the study highlights opportunities created by AI, including flexible work arrangements, remote employment, digital entrepreneurship, and enhanced participation of women in global labor markets. Using a conceptual and analytical approach supported by recent literature, the paper argues that ethical communication practices, transparent AI governance, and inclusive organizational policies are essential to ensuring equitable outcomes[2],[3],[5],[12]. The study concludes that without ethical safeguards, AI may reinforce existing gender disparities; however, with responsible implementation, AI can become a powerful tool for advancing women's employability and workplace inclusion in the digital era.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Communication Ethics, Women Employability, Digital Workplaces, Gender Equity, etc.*

Introduction:

The digital transformation of workplaces has accelerated dramatically with the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies across sectors such as information technology, finance, education, healthcare, and media. AI-driven tools now shape recruitment processes, performance evaluation, workplace communication, and organizational decision-making. While these developments promise efficiency and innovation, they also raise profound ethical questions, particularly regarding fairness, transparency, and inclusion [12], [18].

Women's employability in digital workplaces remains uneven despite increasing participation in higher education and digital skill development. Structural inequalities, gender stereotypes, and unequal access to technological resources continue to affect women's career trajectories. The ethical dimensions of AI-mediated communication play a critical role in either mitigating or amplifying these disparities.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

This paper explores how AI intersects with communication ethics to influence women's employability in digital workplaces. It seeks to answer three core questions [5][16],[19]:

- ✓ How does AI reshape workplace communication and employment practices?
- ✓ What ethical challenges do AI systems pose for women's employability?
- ✓ What opportunities can ethical AI and communication practices create for women in digital work environments?

AI and Digital Workplace Communication:
AI has fundamentally altered organizational communication by automating interactions, personalizing information flows, and enabling data-driven decision-making. Chatbots, virtual assistants, automated emails, and AI-based collaboration tools are now common in digital workplaces.

Transformation of Communication Processes:
AI enhances speed and efficiency by reducing human intervention in routine communication tasks. Automated recruitment platforms screen resumes, AI tools analyze employee sentiment, and performance feedback systems generate data-based evaluations. While these systems increase productivity, they also reduce interpersonal interaction, potentially limiting empathetic and context-sensitive communication[10],[11].

Ethical Dimensions of AI-Mediated Communication:
Communication ethics emphasizes transparency, accountability, fairness, and respect for human dignity. When AI systems mediate workplace communication, ethical concerns arise regarding informed consent, data privacy, and interpretive bias. For women employees, these concerns are particularly significant when communication systems influence hiring, promotion, and performance assessments[1],[2],[12].

Women's Employability in the Digital Era:
Women's employability refers to their ability to access, sustain, and advance in employment. In digital workplaces, employability is increasingly linked to digital literacy, adaptability, and access to technological resources.

Persistent Gender Gaps:
Despite progress, women remain underrepresented in technology-intensive roles such as AI development, data science, and cybersecurity. Socio-cultural expectations, unpaid care responsibilities, and limited mentorship opportunities further constrain women's career growth [5],[8],[16].

Impact of AI on Employment Opportunities:
AI creates new roles in areas such as digital content moderation, online education, and platform-based work. These roles often offer flexibility, which can benefit women balancing professional and personal responsibilities. However, such jobs are frequently precarious, lacking job security and social protection [3],[7],[14].

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Ethical Challenges for Women's Employability:

Algorithmic Bias in Recruitment and Evaluation:

AI recruitment systems trained on historical data may replicate existing gender biases. If past hiring favored men, algorithms may unintentionally disadvantage women applicants. Ethical communication requires transparency about how decisions are made and the criteria used by AI systems [1],[4],[13].

Ethical Issue	Description	Impact on Women
Algorithmic Bias	AI reflects historical inequalities	Reduced hiring and promotion
Data Surveillance	Excessive monitoring of work	Increased stress and privacy loss
Skill Exclusion	Limited access to AI training	Restricted career advancement

Table 1: Ethical Challenges of AI for Women's Employability

Digital Surveillance and Privacy:

AI-enabled monitoring tools track productivity, communication patterns, and online behavior. Women working remotely may experience heightened surveillance, blurring boundaries between professional and personal spaces. Ethical concerns arise when monitoring practices are not transparently communicated [6], [15].

Communication Inequality and Exclusion:

AI-driven communication platforms may privilege assertive or continuous participation, disadvantaging women who face interruptions due to care giving responsibilities. Ethical workplace communication must accommodate diverse communication styles and constraints [8], [17].

Opportunities Created By AI for Women:

Despite challenges, AI also presents significant opportunities for enhancing women's employability when guided by ethical principles.

Flexible and Remote Work:

AI-enabled digital platforms support remote collaboration, allowing women to participate in global labor markets without geographical constraints. This flexibility can improve workforce participation rates [3], [9].

Up skilling and Digital Empowerment:

AI-based learning platforms provide personalized training and skill development opportunities. Ethical access to such resources can help women acquire in-demand digital competencies [16], [17].

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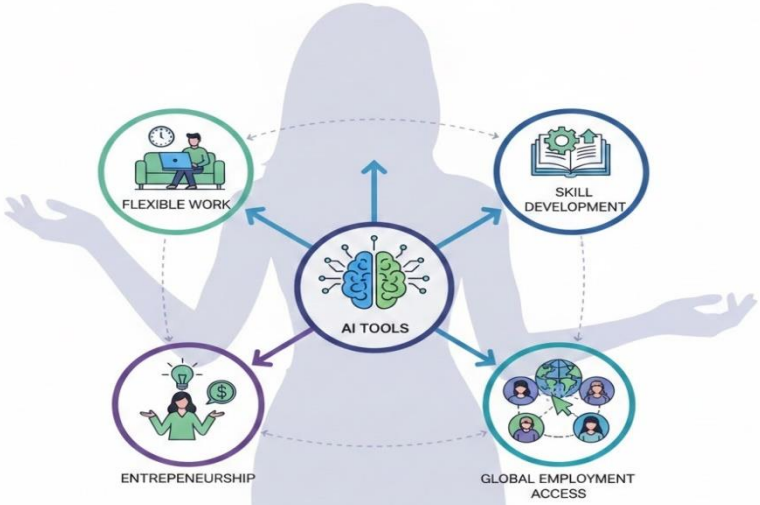
March 6th& 7th 2026



Digital Entrepreneurship:

AI tools lower entry barriers for women entrepreneurs by automating marketing, customer engagement, and data analysis. Ethical communication practices ensure fair visibility and representation in digital markets[11][19].

Towards Ethical AI and Inclusive Digital Workplaces:

Ethical AI Governance:

Organizations must adopt transparent AI policies, conduct bias audits, and include diverse stakeholders in AI design processes. Women's perspectives are essential in shaping ethical AI systems[2], [18].

Inclusive Communication Practices:

Ethical communication requires clarity, participation, and mutual respect. Organizations should ensure that AI-mediated communication does not silence marginalized voices or reinforce stereotypes [1], [8].

Policy and Organizational Recommendations:

Strategy	Objective
Bias Audits	Identify and reduce gender bias
Digital Training	Enhance women's AI skills
Transparent Policies	Build trust and accountability

Table 2: Strategies for Ethical and Inclusive AI Adoption

Conclusion:

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

AI is reshaping digital workplaces in profound ways, influencing how communication occurs and how employment decisions are made. For women, AI presents both risks and opportunities. Without ethical oversight, AI systems may reinforce existing gender inequalities through biased algorithms, surveillance, and exclusionary communication practices. However, when guided by ethical communication principles and inclusive governance, AI can expand opportunities for women by enabling flexible work, skill development, and digital entrepreneurship.

This paper argues that ethical communication is central to aligning AI innovation with gender equity goals. Organizations, policymakers, and educators must collaborate to ensure that AI serves as a tool for empowerment rather than exclusion. Future research should focus on empirical studies of women's lived experiences in AI-mediated workplaces to further inform ethical frameworks and policy interventions [2][3] [5][15].

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

57

HERMENEUTICS OF SILENCING: GENDERED INTERPRETATION AND THE STRUCTURAL LIMITS OF INTERPRETIVE JUSTICE IN *MEN EXPLAIN THINGS TO ME*

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Abstract:
This paper examines gendered silencing, which refers to the systematic marginalisation of women's voices within patriarchal power structures. It is not merely an individual act of interruption but a structural process that degrades, subjugates, and renders women's knowledge unheard within existing systems. Women's voices are interpreted through male-dominated frameworks that distort or diminish their authority. Drawing upon the hermeneutic philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer, rooted in the interpretive tradition of ancient Greek philosophy, particularly in works such as those of Aristotle, this study argues that interpretation itself is shaped by power structures. Through an analysis of Men Explain Things to Me by Rebecca Solnit, the paper demonstrates how gendered silencing operates not only at the social level but also at the level of meaning-making, where women's experiences are misinterpreted, dismissed, or erased. By examining the phenomenon commonly referred to as mansplaining, this research highlights the structural limits of interpretive justice and reveals how patriarchal interpretive frameworks continue to marginalise women's voices.

Keywords: *Hermeneutics, Silencing, Gendered interpretation, Structural interpretation, Epistemic justice, Hermeneutical injustice, etc.*

Introduction:

Hermeneutics is the discipline of interpretation, derived from the Greek word "hermeneus", meaning "to interpret" or "to translate." Traditionally associated with the interpretation of literary and religious texts, hermeneutics seeks to illuminate meanings that extend beyond the literal surface of language. It explores how texts generate deeper layers of significance when examined through social, political, religious, and psychological contexts. By moving dialectically between the text and its broader historical and cultural background, hermeneutics creates a dynamic bridge between context and meaning, transforming literal understanding into reflective and interpretive insight.

Hermeneutics is not the product of a single thinker; rather, it has evolved across different historical periods. In ancient philosophy, Aristotle examined the logical relationship between language and meaning in works such as On Interpretation, laying an early foundation for interpretive inquiry. During the medieval period, hermeneutics was primarily concerned with biblical interpretation, where religious texts were read for symbolic and spiritual meanings beyond their apparent expressions.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

In the modern era, Friedrich Schleiermacher expanded hermeneutics by emphasizing the importance of understanding the author's intention and psychological context. Later, Hans-Georg Gadamer developed philosophical hermeneutics and introduced the concept of the "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer 305), arguing that interpretation is shaped by historical consciousness and the interaction between past and present perspectives.

In contemporary thought, hermeneutics moved further into critical theory. Influenced by Paul Ricoeur's idea of the "hermeneutics of suspicion," scholars began questioning dominant interpretations and uncovering hidden structures of power within texts. Feminist critics, in particular, applied hermeneutic methods to expose gender bias, silencing, and interpretive injustice embedded in cultural and literary discourses. Thus, hermeneutics today functions not only as a method of textual explanation but also as a critical framework for examining how meaning, authority, and power operate within society. In the contemporary context, hermeneutics plays a crucial role in feminist discourse by examining how meaning is generated and how power structures shape interpretation. This paper explores the hermeneutics of silencing through gendered interruption and interpretive injustice, particularly as represented in *Men Explain Things to Me* by Rebecca Solnit.

Within such a hermeneutic framework, gendered silencing emerges as a structural problem of interpretation. Gendered silencing is closely connected to the question of interpretive justice. It can be understood as a direct product of patriarchal traditions and historically constructed power structures. According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, interpretation is always shaped by tradition; however, when tradition is governed by patriarchy, it produces gendered distortions in understanding. In *Men Explain Things to Me*, Rebecca Solnit illustrates how women's knowledge and authority are often dismissed within such interpretive frameworks. The repeated interruption and silencing of women throughout the essay reveal how social prejudices undermine women's credibility. As we examine gendered silencing more closely, it becomes evident that it operates as a form of epistemic injustice, wherein women are denied interpretive authority. Thus, prejudicial mindsets embedded in social structures contribute to hermeneutical injustice.

This paper argues that Solnit's essay demonstrates how patriarchal interpretive structures systematically silence women, producing hermeneutical injustice that limits women's epistemic agency.

Theoretical Framework:

Classical Hermeneutics and Interpretation as Power Hermeneutics may be broadly defined as the philosophical study of interpretation and meaning-making. While initially associated with the interpretation of sacred and literary texts, hermeneutics gradually developed into a theory of understanding itself. Early hermeneutic thought sought to establish principles for decoding textual meaning, assuming that interpretation could recover an intended or universal truth.

Friedrich Schleiermacher is often regarded as a foundational figure in modern hermeneutics. He argued that interpretation involves both grammatical analysis and psychological reconstruction. According to Schleiermacher, understanding a text requires entering the mental world of the author and reconstructing the author's intention. Meaning, therefore, is not merely linguistic but also rooted in psychological reconstruction. His approach marked a shift from purely theological exegesis to a universal theory of interpretation applicable to all texts.

Hans-Georg Gadamer further transformed hermeneutics into a philosophical inquiry into historical understanding. In Truth and Method, Gadamer rejects the idea that interpretation can be

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

objective or detached. He introduces the concept of "historical consciousness" and the "fusion of horizons," arguing that understanding occurs through the interaction between the interpreter's present horizon and the tradition from which the text emerges. For Gadamer, tradition is not a limitation but a necessary condition of understanding.

However, Gadamer's emphasis on tradition also raises a critical question: if tradition shapes interpretation, and if tradition itself is structured by historical power relations, then interpretation cannot be neutral. Understanding is inevitably influenced by social hierarchies, cultural assumptions, and dominant discourses. Thus, interpretation may function not only as a search for meaning but also as an expression of power. This insight provides the foundation for feminist and critical hermeneutics, which interrogate how authority operates within interpretive practices.

Feminist Hermeneutics:

Gendered Interpretation and Structural Silencing Feminist hermeneutics emerges as a critical response to the assumption that interpretive traditions are universal and unbiased. It argues that historical traditions have largely been shaped by patriarchal authority, resulting in male-centred meaning-making processes. Consequently, women have often been positioned not as producers of meaning but as objects within interpretive discourse.

While Gadamer emphasizes the continuity of tradition, feminist hermeneutics questions the gendered structure of that tradition. If tradition determines what is intelligible and credible, then a patriarchal tradition inevitably produces gendered distortions in understanding. Authority becomes concentrated within male-dominated discursive spaces, and women's speech is frequently interrupted, dismissed, or trivialized.

Feminist hermeneutics therefore examines how interpretation operates within power relations. It analyses how cultural narratives construct women as emotional, irrational, or less authoritative, thereby undermining their epistemic credibility. Silencing, in this context, is not merely the absence of speech; it is a structural condition produced by unequal access to interpretive authority. Women may speak, yet their words are ignored, corrected, or reinterpreted through male assumptions.

Gendered silencing often appears in subtle forms: conversational interruption, condescension, unsolicited explanation, or the presumption of intellectual superiority. These practices are not isolated incidents but manifestations of deeper discursive hierarchies. The dominance of male interpretive authority reinforces a system in which women's knowledge is treated as secondary or suspect. Thus, silencing functions as a structural discourse embedded within patriarchal meaning-making systems.

Interpretive Justice and Epistemic Injustice:

The issue of silencing becomes more theoretically precise when examined through the concept of epistemic injustice, developed by Miranda Fricker. Epistemic injustice refers to a form of harm inflicted upon individuals in their capacity as knowers. Fricker identifies two primary forms: testimonial injustice (Fricker, 28) and hermeneutical injustice.

Testimonial injustice occurs when prejudice causes a listener to assign diminished credibility to a speaker. For example, when women's statements are dismissed on the basis of gendered stereotypes—such as being overly emotional or less rational—their authority as knowers is unjustly reduced. This form of injustice operates at the interpersonal level but is rooted in broader social prejudice.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Hermeneutical injustice, by contrast, operates at a structural level within collective interpretive frameworks. It arises when there is a gap in collective interpretive resources that prevents individuals from making sense of their experiences. When dominant interpretive frameworks fail to recognize or adequately conceptualize women's experiences, those experiences become misunderstood or invisible. Women may struggle to articulate injustice not because it does not exist, but because the available social vocabulary does not validate their perspective.

Gendered silencing reflects both forms of injustice. Women are frequently subjected to testimonial injustice when their credibility is questioned, interrupted, or overridden. At the same time, they experience hermeneutical injustice when patriarchal interpretive structures lack the conceptual tools to recognize their authority and lived experiences. Thus, interpretive injustice is not accidental; it is embedded within historically constructed power systems.

Interpretive justice, therefore, demands more than polite listening. It requires structural transformation in how authority, credibility, and meaning-making are distributed. It calls for recognizing women as legitimate subjects of knowledge and as active participants in shaping collective understanding.

Within this theoretical framework, Rebecca Solnit's *Men Explain Things to Me* can be understood as a cultural illustration of hermeneutical injustice. The essay demonstrates how patriarchal interpretive traditions operate in everyday interactions, where women's knowledge is interrupted, corrected, or dismissed. These interactions reveal how epistemic authority remains unevenly distributed, reinforcing structural silencing.

By situating Solnit's essay within classical and feminist hermeneutics, this paper conceptualizes gendered interruption not as a personal misunderstanding but as a manifestation of deeper interpretive injustice rooted in patriarchal tradition.

Concept of Silencing:

Silencing does not always manifest as open aggression; rather, it often appears as the suppression of thoughts, feelings, and emotional expression. When women attempt to articulate their experiences of harassment and injustice, they are frequently labeled as overly emotional or irrational. At the rational level, their emotions are judged as signs of inferiority. This perception is sustained by patriarchal ideology, which positions men as authoritative voices while filtering or dismissing women's speech.

Women's perspectives are often interrupted, ignored, or invalidated, reinforcing male dominance in interpretive spaces. As Rebecca Solnit observes in *Men Explain Things to Me*, women's credibility is regularly undermined through condescension and unsolicited explanation. Such practices reveal how silencing operates not merely as an individual act but as a structural mechanism embedded within patriarchal society.

Silencing, therefore, is not merely an act of choice but a consequence of systemic power imbalance. It functions as a subtle yet persistent form of domination, limiting women's interpretive authority and reinforcing gendered hierarchies.

In *Men Explain Things to Me*, Rebecca Solnit begins the essay with a powerful anecdote about a party where a man confidently lectures her about a book, without realising that she herself is the author (Solnit 3-5). This incident is not merely anecdotal or humorous; it exposes a deeper pattern of male-centred assumptions. The man speaks with authority, presuming superior knowledge, while completely disregarding Solnit's intellectual position. Through this episode,

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Solnit illustrates how women's authority and rationality are often dismissed within a patriarchal setting (Solnit, 4).

This act of speaking over her and refusing to listen reflects what Miranda Fricker describes as hermeneutical injustice, a form of epistemic injustice in which social power shapes interpretive frameworks and marginalizes certain knowers (Fricker, 147). Instead of engaging thoughtfully with Solnit's ideas, the host filters her speech through pre-existing biases that assume women are less credible or intellectually capable. His behaviour demonstrates how women's voices are systematically undermined even when they possess expertise.

Furthermore, this example can be connected to Hans-Georg Gadamer's argument that understanding is shaped by historical tradition and prejudice. In a patriarchal society, interpretive authority has historically been aligned with male dominance. As a result, knowledge is often recognized only when it conforms to male-centred frameworks. Solnit challenges this tradition by revealing how feminist hermeneutics questions the very structures that govern interpretation.

Throughout the essay, she shows that such incidents are not isolated personal experiences but part of a broader ideological system that silences women. What appears to be a minor social interaction is, in fact, a manifestation of epistemic violence. By transforming personal narrative into political critique, Solnit exposes how testimonial injustice and interpretive dominance operate within everyday conversations.

In the party incident, the male host repeatedly interrupts Solnit, refusing to acknowledge that she herself is the author. His constant dismissal of Solnit demonstrates how intellectual authority is automatically associated with masculinity. Men are not required to provide evidence to dominate conversations, whereas women's knowledge is set aside before it is even heard. This paper argues that authority is socially assigned to men, while women are positioned as listeners rather than knowers.

The party incident reveals the structural limits of interpretive justice, as women's credibility is consistently treated as questionable. Social conditioning shapes these interactions, and cultural norms normalize male dominance in conversation. Solnit highlights how women are conditioned to be polite listeners, how doubt becomes internalized, and how disbelief toward women becomes natural and unquestioned.

This internalization reveals the deeper structural nature of interpretive injustice. It signifies that women are not merely passively interrupted; rather, they are socially conditioned to accept interruption as inevitable. This pattern is embedded in social structures, discursive practices, and cultural assumptions.

The paper also raises a possible counter-argument: not all interruptions are gendered. Some interruptions may arise from individual traits, hierarchical workplace structures, or personality differences rather than gender bias alone. Of course, interruption can sometimes be neutral; however, *Men Explain Things to Me* demonstrates a recurring pattern rather than isolated incidents. The repetition across contexts suggests structural gender bias. This study does not claim that every interruption is inherently gendered. Instead, Solnit's experiences reveal a consistent pattern in which women's expertise is demeaned, particularly in relation to male authority. The paper further argues that even when men are not consciously hostile, interpretive injustice often operates unconsciously through internalized cultural norms. The problem lies not in individual malice but in a social framework that privileges male authority. Solnit's essay functions as a form of resistance: by naming and exposing these patterns, she transforms private silencing into public

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

discourse. Although interruption may not always be gendered in isolation, its repetition within patriarchal structures reveals a broader system of silencing.

Conclusion:

This paper highlights the hermeneutical silencing present in *Men Explain Things to Me* by Rebecca Solnit. The research foregrounds key concepts such as gendered interpretation, the structural limits of epistemic justice, and the hermeneutics of superiority. The findings contribute to feminist discussions on credibility deficit and gendered authority. Specifically, this study emphasizes how social structures shape interpretive frameworks that privilege male authority while marginalizing women's knowledge. It demonstrates that hermeneutical injustice is not merely an individual act but a systemic condition embedded in cultural norms and discursive practices. Furthermore, this research underlines the importance of feminist hermeneutics in examining how interpretation itself can become a site of power and exclusion. By analysing Solnit's narrative through this lens, the paper contributes to broader concerns within feminist theory regarding voice, authority, and interpretive justice. Ultimately, feminist hermeneutics does not merely interpret; it exposes the structural conditions that regulate who may speak, who is authorized to know.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

58

BREAKING PATRIARCHAL BOUNDARIES: A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF WOMEN INVESTORS IN SHARK TANK INDIA

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Abstract:
The increasing visibility of women in positions of financial authority marks a significant shift in contemporary Indian media culture. Finance and investment have historically been constructed as masculine domains associated with rationality, control, and risk-taking. The business reality television program Shark Tank India disrupts this convention by presenting women not only as entrepreneurs but as investors who evaluate ventures, negotiate equity, and exercise economic power. This article analyzes the representation of Namita Thapar, Vineeta Singh, and Ghazal Alagh through liberal feminism, intersectional feminism, and feminist media theory. Drawing on qualitative content analysis of selected episodes from Seasons 1 and 2, the study argues that while the show normalizes women's financial authority, it does so within neoliberal capitalist frameworks that equate empowerment with profitability and individual success. The article contends that the program integrates women into venture capitalism rather than challenging structural inequalities. Nevertheless, repeated mediated performances of female economic authority contribute to reshaping cultural perceptions of leadership and financial legitimacy in India.

Keywords: *Feminist Media Studies, Women Investors, Economic Authority, Neoliberal Feminism, Indian Reality Television, etc.*

Introduction: Gender, Capital and Media Visibility:

Understanding the relationship between gender and economic authority in India requires engagement with both patriarchy as a social structure and feminism as a critical framework. Patriarchy refers to a system of social organization in which men traditionally hold primary authority over political leadership, economic resources, property ownership, and institutional power. In such systems, masculinity becomes associated with rationality, leadership, and financial control, while femininity is linked to caregiving, emotional labor, and domestic responsibility. Patriarchy operates not only through personal attitudes but through deeply embedded institutions—family structures, inheritance practices, workplace hierarchies, and market networks.

In the Indian context, patriarchal organization has historically functioned through patrilineal inheritance, male dominance in property ownership, and gendered division of labor. Even where legal reforms have strengthened women's rights—such as expanded inheritance provisions and workplace protections—social practices often continue to privilege men's control over capital and mobility. Sociologist Uma Chakravarti describes Indian patriarchy as a system sustained through both material and ideological mechanisms, where control over women's labor and sexuality ensures continuity of male authority. Similarly, Nivedita Menon argues that gender inequality

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

persists not only because of tradition but because it is normalized within everyday institutional arrangements. Economic authority, particularly in finance and entrepreneurship, has therefore long been perceived as a masculine domain.

Feminist theory emerges as an intellectual and political response to such structural inequalities. Simone de Beauvoir's well-known assertion, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 283), foregrounds the idea that gender roles are socially produced rather than biologically fixed. Liberal feminism emphasizes equal access to education, employment, and professional leadership, arguing that women must be allowed entry into spaces historically monopolized by men. Socialist and materialist feminist perspectives examine how patriarchy intersects with capitalism, suggesting that economic systems often reinforce gender hierarchies. Intersectional feminism further complicates this framework by demonstrating that gender cannot be separated from caste, class, region, and language—factors that significantly shape access to economic power in India.

In India, economic authority has historically been aligned with masculinity. Investment, venture capital, and high-risk entrepreneurship have been culturally coded as male competencies, while women have frequently been positioned as dependents, caregivers, or aspirants within male-dominated economic systems. Access to funding networks, mentorship circles, and corporate capital has often circulated within male-dominated spaces, reinforcing gender imbalance in business leadership. However, contemporary India also reflects transformation. Increasing numbers of women entrepreneurs, corporate leaders, and investors signal gradual shifts in public perception and institutional participation.

Media plays a crucial role in this transformation. Feminist media studies argue that representation does not merely reflect social reality; it shapes aspiration and legitimacy. Historically, Indian popular culture depicted men as corporate strategists and financial decision-makers, while women were framed as supportive figures. Such recurring portrayals normalized the association between masculinity and economic authority. Yet contemporary media increasingly stages alternative narratives in which women occupy positions of expertise and leadership.

Against this backdrop, Shark Tank India becomes a significant cultural text. By positioning women investors such as Namita Thapar, Vineeta Singh, and Ghazal Alagh as evaluators of capital, negotiators of equity, and arbiters of financial legitimacy, the program visually disrupts entrenched gender binaries. Their presence signals that economic rationality and strategic risk-taking are not inherently masculine traits but professional competencies. At the same time, this visibility must be situated within broader debates on neoliberal feminism. As Rosalind Gill argues, empowerment in contemporary media is often framed through individual success rather than structural reform. The show celebrates women's entry into venture capitalism, yet it operates within market-driven frameworks where empowerment is measured through profitability and scalability.

Thus, the representation of women investors in Shark Tank India occupies a complex position. It reflects the gradual dismantling of patriarchal monopolies over financial authority while simultaneously functioning within neoliberal capitalist structures. This article explores this productive tension between symbolic transformation and structural continuity, examining how mediated visibility reshapes cultural perceptions of gender and economic power in contemporary India.

Profiles of Women Investors on Shark Tank India:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Namita Thapar – Namita Thapar serves as the Executive Director of Emcure Pharmaceuticals, a leading Indian pharmaceutical company. With over two decades of experience in corporate strategy, finance, and operations, she has played a pivotal role in driving business growth and organizational innovation. On Shark Tank India, Thapar demonstrates a combination of analytical rigor and mentorship, providing strategic guidance to emerging entrepreneurs while maintaining decisive control over investment decisions. Her presence exemplifies how women can exercise financial authority in high-stakes corporate and venture contexts.

Vineeta Singh – Vineeta Singh is the Co-founder and CEO of SUGAR Cosmetics, a prominent Indian beauty brand recognized for its innovative products and marketing. An alumna of IIT Madras and IIM Ahmedabad, Singh brings technical, managerial, and entrepreneurial expertise to her role as an investor. On the show, she is known for her assertive evaluation of business proposals and insistence on sustainability and scalability, challenging traditional gendered expectations of leadership in competitive financial environments.

Ghazal Alagh – Ghazal Alagh is the Co-founder of Mamaearth, a fast-growing personal care brand specializing in natural, toxin-free products. She has been instrumental in establishing consumer trust, brand strategy, and ethical business practices. Alagh contributes a strategic and relational dimension to investment decisions on Shark Tank India, emphasizing long-term brand sustainability alongside financial metrics. Her approach highlights that financial authority encompasses both analytical acumen and strategic insight into consumer behavior and market positioning.

Finance as a Masculine Domain:

Finance and investment have long been perceived as masculine domains. High-risk entrepreneurship, venture funding, and strategic capital allocation have historically been associated with traits such as rationality, decisiveness, and competitiveness—qualities culturally coded as "male." Women, on the other hand, have often been stereotyped as emotional, cautious, or less suited to handle financial risk. The association between masculinity and finance is neither natural nor inevitable. Feminist scholarship has long argued that women's exclusion from economic power structures results from historical and institutional barriers rather than lack of competence. Access to education, property rights, inheritance laws, and professional networks has historically shaped who participates in financial decision-making. In India, these ideas are reinforced through patriarchal systems that historically restricted women's access to property, business networks, and leadership positions. Economic authority was, in many ways, socially constructed as a male competency.

Betty Friedan's critique of mid-twentieth-century gender roles remains relevant. She argued that women's inequality stemmed largely from restricted opportunities. As Friedan writes, "The problem was not that women lacked ability, but that society limited their choices" (Friedan, 45).

While Friedan's analysis emerged from a Western context, the broader insight resonates across cultures. In India, women have traditionally faced barriers related to property ownership, financial independence, and entrepreneurial legitimacy.

Even in contemporary times, women entrepreneurs often encounter skepticism regarding their leadership abilities, risk appetite, and financial acumen. Venture capital ecosystems remain male-dominated, and women-led enterprises frequently receive a disproportionately smaller share

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

of funding. Therefore, media portrayals of women investors carry symbolic significance. They challenge the cultural logic that positions women primarily as seekers of approval rather than allocators of capital.

Feminist perspectives challenge this assumption. Liberal feminism emphasizes that women possess the same capability as men to analyze, strategize, and lead in financial contexts, and that societal barriers—rather than inherent ability—have historically limited their opportunities. In media, the way women are represented in positions of authority can either reinforce old stereotypes or create space for new possibilities. When women are portrayed as confident investors making tough financial decisions, they disrupt long-standing cultural assumptions about gender and competence.

Shark Tank India exemplifies this shift by showcasing women investors actively participating in high-stakes decision-making. Namita Thapar, Vineeta Singh, and Ghazal Alagh evaluate business proposals, negotiate equity stakes, and determine funding allocation—roles historically associated with male authority. For example, during an early Season 1, Vineeta Singh challenged a founder's inflated valuation, stating, "Valuation story se nahi, numbers se banti hai" (Valuation is built on numbers, not stories). By prioritizing analytical rigor over emotional appeal, Singh counters stereotypes that associate femininity with sentimentality.

In Season 2, Episode 3, Singh emphasized rational decision-making while declining a pitch: "Main emotional decision nahi leti; mujhe sustainable business chahiye" **(**I do not make emotional decisions; I want a sustainable business). Similarly, Namita Thapar blends mentorship with financial authority. During a packaged-food pitch in season, she advised a food-business founder, "Aapka product strong hai, lekin unit economics samajhna zaroori hai" (Your product is strong, but understanding unit economics is essential). Thapar's guidance is firm yet supportive, showing that female authority in finance can combine mentorship with strategic oversight.

Ghazal Alagh adds another dimension to women's financial authority by foregrounding brand strategy and consumer trust. In one of the episodes of season 1, she observed, "Brand banana sirf product banana nahi hota; customer trust build karna padta hai" (Building a brand is not just creating a product; one must build customer trust). Alagh demonstrates that investment decisions are not only about numbers but also about long-term brand sustainability, showing that women's approaches can integrate analytical skill with relational and strategic thinking.

Through these examples, Shark Tank India challenges the notion that finance is inherently masculine. By repeatedly depicting women making analytical, strategic, and high-stakes decisions, the show normalizes female authority in business. It sends a message that financial competence is not tied to gender but to skill, insight, and professional experience. Feminist media scholars argue that such representation is crucial because it expands the socially imagined boundaries of leadership and economic legitimacy, creating aspirational models for women while reshaping cultural perceptions of authority in India.

Intersectionality and Selective Visibility:

While gender representation expands, intersectional feminism complicates celebratory narratives. Kimberlé Crenshaw reminds us that "Gender oppression cannot be understood apart from other forms of social inequality" (Crenshaw, 1245). Gender intersects with class, caste, region, and linguistic privilege in shaping economic opportunity. The women investors on Shark Tank India predominantly represent elite, urban, English-speaking corporate India. Their authority is embedded within metropolitan networks and access to capital. The linguistic codes of the show—

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March 6th& 7th 2026

venture capital jargon, English financial terminology, and corporate aesthetics—define what economic legitimacy looks like.

This selective representation excludes large segments of Indian women, particularly those from rural or marginalized caste backgrounds. While the show challenges masculine monopolies over investment authority, it reinforces classed and urbanized standards of acceptable femininity.
In Season 2, Episode 8, Namita Thapar acknowledged funding inequity by stating, "Women founders ko funding milna abhi bhi difficult hai, isliye strong fundamentals aur bhi important ho jate hain" [Women founders still find it difficult to receive funding, so strong fundamentals become even more important] (Season 2, Episode 8).

Although this comment briefly gestures toward structural disparity, the program does not sustain systemic critique. Instead, the emphasis returns to individual business fundamentals. Thus, empowerment remains conditional and market-aligned.

Performing Economic Authority:

Authority on Shark Tank India is enacted through language, posture, and negotiation.Vineeta Singh's assertiveness disrupts gendered expectations. Sheryl Sandberg notes, "When a man is assertive, he is seen as strong. When a woman is assertive, she is often labeled aggressive" (Sandberg, 37). Singh's firm negotiation style reframes assertiveness as professional competence rather than aggression.

Namita Thapar often blends mentorship with strategic authority. In Season 1, Episode 13 of Shark Tank India, during a food-business pitch, she acknowledged the strength of the product but stressed the importance of understanding unit economics. Even while offering constructive guidance, she maintained firm control over the equity negotiations, demonstrating a balance between support and decisiveness. Bell Hooks' insight that "Feminism is about transforming relationships of domination" (Hooks, 19) becomes relevant here. Thapar's approach expands the meaning of leadership beyond domination.

Ghazal Alagh often emphasizes the importance of brand strategy and cultivating consumer trust. In Season 1, Episode 7 of Shark Tank India, she highlighted that building a successful brand goes beyond merely creating a product; it requires consistently earning and sustaining customer trust Judith Butler writes, "Gender is not something one is, but something one does" (Butler, 33).
Through repeated enactments of analytical expertise, Alagh performs economic authority, destabilizing rigid gender binaries.

Non-verbal cues—composed posture, measured tone, sustained eye contact—reinforce legitimacy. Editing choices frequently depict entrepreneurs listening attentively to female judges, visually validating their expertise. Authority is collaboratively constructed through performance and production.

However, this authority remains embedded within capitalist rationality. Market scalability, margins, and growth trajectories define evaluative criteria. Women's authority is legitimized insofar as it aligns with venture capitalist logic.

Neoliberal Feminism and Market-Compatible Empowerment:

The program operates within neoliberal frameworks equating empowerment with entrepreneurial success. Rosalind Gill's critique of postfeminist media culture is particularly instructive: empowerment is framed as individual self-realization rather than structural reform (Gill, 147). Angela McRobbie similarly argues that popular culture often substitutes feminist politics with narratives of personal achievement (McRobbie, 11).

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
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March 6th& 7th 2026

Within Shark Tank India, empowerment is measured through profitability, scalability, and brand growth. Structural questions—gender bias in venture funding, caste-based exclusion, or access to informal networks—remain largely peripheral. Thus, the show integrates women into venture capitalism without challenging capitalist hierarchies. Inclusion replaces transformation. Women are celebrated for mastering the market, not for restructuring it. Yet symbolic shifts should not be dismissed. Representation shapes aspiration. Repeated portrayals of women negotiating equity stakes contribute to normalizing female financial authority.

Cultural Implications:

The repeated staging of women as capital allocators reshapes cultural imagination. Over time, viewers may cease to perceive female economic authority as exceptional. However, audience reception varies according to socio-economic context and prior gender socialization. While structural inequalities persist, mediated visibility expands the realm of the imaginable. Cultural transformation often precedes institutional reform.

Conclusion:

Shark Tank India marks a significant moment in Indian media representation by positioning women as legitimate financial decision-makers. The show challenges entrenched associations between masculinity and economic authority through repeated performances of analytical expertise. However, this transformation operates within neoliberal capitalist frameworks that validate empowerment through profitability and scalability. Women are integrated into venture capitalism rather than positioned as critics of structural inequality.

Nevertheless, symbolic inclusion carries cultural weight. By normalizing women's authority in capital allocation, the show contributes to reshaping public imagination regarding gender and economic power. The relationship between mediated visibility and material redistribution remains a crucial site for future feminist media scholarship.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

59

FROM HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY TO NEOLIBERAL PERFORMATIVITY: RECONFIGURING PATRIARCHAL IDENTITY IN INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION

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Abstract:
This paper examines the transformation of patriarchal structures in Indian English fiction through a feminist comparative reading of R. K. Narayan's The Dark Room (1938) and Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger (2008). Drawing upon R. W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity and feminist critiques of neoliberal capitalism, the study argues that while early twentieth-century fiction exposes domestic patriarchy as intimate and normalized, contemporary fiction relocates patriarchal power into the marketplace. The shift from Ramani's household authority to Balram's entrepreneurial aggression does not signal the decline of patriarchy but its transformation. Gender oppression moves from the visible space of marriage to the structural dynamics of neoliberal capitalism, where women become peripheral yet persistently subordinated. The paper contends that Indian English fiction reflects not the collapse of patriarchal identity but its adaptation to changing socio-economic conditions.

Keywords: *Masculanity, Patriarchy,Hegemonic, Neoliberal Capitalism, etc.*

Introduction:

This paper argues that Indian English fiction does not depict the decline of patriarchy but its strategic reconfiguration. Through a comparative reading of R. K. Narayan and Aravind Adiga, the study demonstrates how masculinity shifts from institutional domestic authority in early twentieth-century narratives to neoliberal, performative, self-fashioning in post-liberalization fiction, revealing patriarchy's adaptive capacity under changing socioeconomic conditions.

Theoretical Framework:

Connell's formulation of hegemonic masculinity provides a framework to understand early twentieth-century patriarchal authority as institutional and domestically entrenched. Masculinity in such contexts derives legitimacy from control over women and familial hierarchy. However, Butler's theory of gender performativity complicates this stability by suggesting that masculinity is not an ontological state but a repeated enactment. When placed within the context of neoliberal economic restructuring in post-liberalization India, masculinity emerges not as fixed dominance but as entrepreneurial self-fashioning. Thus, this paper reads Indian English fiction as charting a transition from institutional patriarchy to performative neoliberal masculinity.

Section I: Hegemonic Masculinity (20th Century Text):

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

The concept of hegemonic masculinity came to prominence through the work of Connell (1987, 1995) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005). Hegemonic masculinity in Connell's terms has come to constitute the most dominant and most socially prized form of masculinity available to men. Hegemonic masculinity symbolizes and enacts power over other masculine identities as well as over women.

In Western and Westernized societies the ideal hegemonic masculinity is treated as synonymous with an identity that is broadly considered to be "macho," ie, being (to at least some extent) assertive and aggressive, courageous, almost invulnerable to threats and problems, and stoic in the face of adversity. It is thereby viewed as associated with behaviors that display courage and strength and that include refusal to acknowledge weakness or to be overcome by adverse events, while discouraging other behaviors such as the expression of emotions or the need to seek the help of others**.**

Section II: Neoliberal Performativity (21st Century Text):

Neoliberal performativity has significantly shifted the concept of masculinity by demanding that men act as "entrepreneurs of themselves," adopting self-regulation, flexibility, and competitiveness to succeed in a precarious economy. This shift has moved masculinity away from solely being defined by bread winning and manual labor, leading to the emergence of "hybrid masculinities" that incorporate "hollow femininities" – performative, marketable, and commodified aspects of care, aesthetics.

Neoliberalism shifts responsibility from collective structures to the individual, requiring men to constantly manage, update, and sell themselves to thrive in a competitive, insecure, and service-oriented market. To maintain hegemony in a changed economy, dominant masculinities are incorporating "hollow" or superficial feminine traits—such as bodily discipline, aesthetic awareness, and emotional intelligence—that were historically considered "other" or subaltern.

As the economy shifts toward the service sector, men are adopting behaviors, such as affective labor and teamwork that were once deemed "naturally" feminine. Young men online are experimenting with softer, more emotionally aware, and less physically dominant aesthetics, often as a rejection of "toxic masculinity" or as a form of "discursive distancing" that aligns with a more individualistic, "cool-capitalist" identity. Scholars describe this shift as "hollow femininities" because these adopted feminine modalities are "hollow" in two senses: They reduce the vast history of femininity to a few commodifiable, marketable traits (e.g., care, emotional work) that are stripped of their feminist political context. By adopting these traits, men do not fundamentally challenge gender hierarchies; rather, they use "feminized" skills to strengthen their own position within both neoliberal capitalism and patriarchy.

The pressure to be a successful, self-reliant "entrepreneur" can lead to anxiety and feelings of failure among men who cannot meet these new standards, particularly those in working-class, poor, or marginalized positions. While these shifts may appear to offer greater gender flexibility, they often simply re-enshrine a "neo-patriarchy" where masculine dominance is maintained through new, more subtle forms of performance. In opposition to the "soft" or "caring" shift, some neoliberal contexts produce a "sovereign masculinity," which is a highly competitive, risk-taking, and hyper-masculine form that acts as a reaction to the anxieties and insecurity generated by neoliberalism.

Textual Analysis: Novel 1- *The Dark Room*:

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

In *The Dark Room*, R. K. Narayan presents a model of masculinity that is firmly rooted in domestic patriarchy. The protagonist, Ramani, embodies a form of male authority that is normalized, socially sanctioned, and institutionally embedded within the family structure. His masculinity derives legitimacy not from overt violence but from his unquestioned position as husband, provider, and head of the household. Economic control becomes a key mechanism of power: Ramani manages the family's finances, dictates household decisions, and assumes entitlement over his wife Savitri's obedience. His authority is further reinforced by community norms that validate male dominance as natural and necessary. Even when he humiliates or neglects Savitri, his behavior is not perceived as socially deviant; rather, it reflects a culturally accepted pattern of paternalistic control. The patriarchal order in *The Dark Room* is therefore visible and institutional—embedded in marriage, sustained through financial dependence, and legitimized by moral discourse. Masculinity functions as a stabilizing force that upholds hierarchical gender roles, aligning closely with R. W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, in which dominance is normalized rather than violently enforced.

In Narayan's other works, similar patterns of stable domestic patriarchy can be observed, though often in subtler forms. In The Financial Expert, Margayya's authority is rooted in financial ambition and his role as a provider, reinforcing the idea that masculine legitimacy stems from economic control and social respectability. In The Guide, Raju's transformation from tourist guide to spiritual figure reflects another dimension of patriarchal masculinity—where charisma and moral authority enable control over female desire and public perception. Across these texts, power remains local, community-based, and embedded within tradition. Male dominance is rarely dramatized as crisis; instead, it operates as a normalized social structure sustained by financial management, moral judgment, and the regulation of women roles. Thus, Narayan's fictional universe consistently portrays masculinity as the cultural mechanism through which stable, institutional patriarchy is maintained.

In *The Dark Room*, Ramani's patriarchal authority is normalized through everyday domestic control. His dismissal of Savitri's individuality reflects the taken-for-granted nature of male dominance; he expects obedience not because he justifies it, but because it is structurally assumed. When he asserts, "I am the master of this house," the statement is not presented as extraordinary but as a reaffirmation of institutional hierarchy. Economic control further sustains this dominance: Ramani's role as sole provider grants him decision-making power, reinforcing what R. W. Connell conceptualizes as hegemonic masculinity—authority that appears natural and morally legitimate. The power structure in Narayan's fictional world is thus local, respectability-based, and embedded within family and tradition, where masculinity stabilizes and sustains institutional patriarchy.

Savitri's Role in *The Dark Room*:

Savitri is a character with all familiar emotions and responses that become an average housewife in the Indian society. She is religious and does her everything to serve her husband and children. Narayan has described her religious activities of Savitri earlier in the novel. The traditional aspect in Savitri can further be traced in the fact that she attends her husband's call without the slightest delay and cannot think of taking her dinner before her husband Ramani has taken it. Sometimes even with reluctance, she feels obliged, as any traditional Hindu wife normally does, to obey her husband's sudden and hasty decisions as for example, going to the evening show of a cinema without prior preparations, leaving the children at home. Savitri's basic commitment to tradition is

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

also traceable in her typical distinction from her friend Gangu who objectifies all the aspirations and superficial attributes that an average Hindu housewife normally dissociates from: "It was her ambition to become a film star, though she lacked any striking figure or features or acting ability [...] she hoped to be sent someday as Malgudi delegate to the All India Women's Conference; to be elected to various municipal and legislative bodies; and to become a Congress leader. She spent her days preparing for the fulfilment of one ambition or another" (Narayan, 18). It is obvious that in the character of Gangu, Narayan perhaps presents the skin-deep aspect of feminism which, bereft of any intellectual perception, simply lives even within the constraints of religious and social morality, on a sterile and vainly ambitious zest for self-assertion in [un] conscious repugnance of patriarchy. Savitri finds how Gangu has 'absolutely tethered up her poor man' (Narayan, 6). On the other hand Janamma, the other friend of Savitri, represents the tame, docile sort of a housewife who not only exists within the designated norms without grudge, but also has an unconditioned agreement with the ways of her husband: "... What he does is right. It is a wife's duty to feel so" (Narayan, 59).

Savitri's preference of Janamma to Gangu is a pointer to her instinctive bias for a traditional entity. However, it is purely the hegemonic force of patriarchy (symbolised by Ramani) which instead of approving any sort of individuality to the 'other sex' in the institutions of marriage and family, simply perpetuates chauvinistic canons of social and sexual morality, which in the present context trammel up the pattern of Savitri's existence and turns her into a rebel. In day-to-day life, Ramani is a perfect critic of whatever Savitri does and thinks.

Though Ramani's infatuation for Shantabai finally leads Savitri to her frustrated quest for independence beyond the orbit of familial existence, the note of conjugal disharmony between Ramani and Savitri, which is aggravated by the husband's lack of minimum tolerance for his wife's opinion / independent identity, is unmistakable from the opening pages of the novel. For example, one day when with a mother's feelings, Savitri urges her son Babu to keep away from school for having a bad headache; she pathetically sees how Ramani snubs her with the information that 'the training of a grown-up boy' is 'none of a woman's business', and forces the boy to leave for school in such a crude and unfeeling manner that he seems to believe that his act demonstrates better than his wife's, a true insight into child psychology.

Her sacrifice for the family fails to elicit the least recognition from her husband. Savitri's helplessness, her lack of the power to assert herself for a genuine cause even at her middle age, stands for the real 'dark room' in the novel - the space of unmitigated suffering, neglect and torment for a traditional housewife like her. Narayan here aptly records the inner turmoil in Savitri: "How impotent she was, she thought; she had not the slightest power to do anything at home, and that after fifteen years of married life" (Narayan, 6). Savitri's pathetic realisation that 'she ought to have asserted herself a little more at the beginning of her married life and then all would have been well', is only a comic illusion in the eyes of the readers who may easily identify Ramani with the uncompromising and unrelenting force of patriarchy that relegates the identity of women to a condition of perpetual dependence and sacrifice.Yet it is noticeable that till the disclosure of Ramani's adultery with Shantabai, Savitri's character manages to retain a balance between an allegiance to her usual dharma of a housewife even at the constant loss of dignity on the one hand, and her occasional, uncontrollable urge for self-assertion on the other. It is Ramani's maltreatment of his son Babu for a petty offence before the Navaratri festival that prompts Savitri for the first time in the novel to retire to the dark room in the house in protest and there, she lies

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

down with her face turned to the wall and refuses food. Her reaction, an anguished expression of a nonviolent form of protest though, is only unproductive 'crude sulking' in the eyes of Ramani and he demonstrates "his calm indifference by humming a little song, whistling loudly and talking to his daughters, whom he saw in the hall sitting near the pavilion" (Narayan, 53). Clearly, Ramani's reaction throws light on the common attitude of male chauvinism that neither considers women as an indispensable lot nor attaches worth to their sentiments. But if it is the inefficacy of her form of protest that makes Savitri ultimately come out of her self-chosen confinement, it is nonetheless the practical wisdom of her friend Janamma and her narratives of tolerant housewives that practically help Savitri to re-discover the role of a mother or a wife in maintaining the health and well-being of the family. One finds that she hates herself for her 'selfish gloom' on such an auspicious occasion and comes out of the dark room to celebrate Navaratri with the family.

This sort of resilience in Savitri is also marked in her initial reaction to the rumour of her husband's connection with a woman. Before she takes a resolute stand in protest when Ramani's promiscuity is confirmed, the instinctive perception of the Patideva myth in the collective consciousness of the Indian Women's psyche (that traditionally recommends total subordination of wives to the husbands viewed as manifestations of God) as if comes to be articulated in Savitri's consolatory thoughts: "How well he looked in his silk suit! It was sheer envy that must have made Gangu and the rest talk scandal about him, they with their husbands all crooked and paunchy" (Narayan, 97). Even when she is made sure of Ramani's relation with Shantabai, it is noticeable that her immediate reaction is not of anger, but of self-pity typical of a traditional housewife who is not prepared to tolerate even in her dream, the share of her husband's love. As she thinks: "Perhaps she is very good-looking [...]. Let me admit my complexion has become rather sooty [...]. I am getting careless about my hair; it's hardly his fault if he can't like my appearance very much" (Narayan, 104)

Textual Analysis: Novel 2- The White Tiger:

In *The White Tiger*, Aravind Adiga reconfigures masculinity within the logic of post-liberalization neoliberal India, where authority is no longer inherited but competitively produced. Balram Halwai does not occupy a pre-secured patriarchal position; rather, he must fabricate his dominance through calculated performance, mobility, and economic aggression. His declaration, “I am tomorrow,” exemplifies a self-fashioned identity aligned with neoliberal ideology, which privileges entrepreneurial autonomy and individual success over communal stability. Here, masculinity is not an essence but a repeated enactment—an insight resonant with Butler’s theory of gender performativity, which posits that identity is constituted through reiterative acts rather than innate traits. Balram performs confidence, ruthlessness, and ambition in order to inhabit the role of the “self-made man,” thereby producing masculinity as a market-oriented spectacle.

Unlike Ramani’s normalized domestic sovereignty, Balram’s authority emerges through rupture—most dramatically through the murder of his employer, which he frames as an act of economic emancipation. This violence signals that neoliberal masculinity operates within heightened instability; power must be seized and continually reasserted. Yet, despite its apparent modernity, this model does not dismantle patriarchy. Women remain marginal to Balram’s upward trajectory, and hierarchical domination persists, now structured by class mobility and capitalist competition rather than familial entitlement. Patriarchy thus adapts to neoliberal conditions by

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

relocating masculine authority from the domestic sphere to the marketplace, transforming paternal control into entrepreneurial dominance.

In *The White Tiger*, Aravind Adiga presents a world where patriarchy has shifted from domestic moral authority to market-driven power, yet women remain structurally constrained within this transformation. Unlike the domestically regulated women in R. K. Narayan's fiction, Adiga's women exist within a neoliberal economy where class mobility and capitalist aspiration redefine—but do not erase—gender hierarchy.

Female Characters in *The White Tiger*:

Pinky Madam: Liberal Modernity without Structural Power

Pinky Madam initially appears to represent urban, globalized femininity. Educated in America, she resists traditional expectations and challenges her husband Ashok's submissive behavior toward his father. At one point she tells him, "You're still a slave"—a line that exposes how class privilege does not automatically produce masculine autonomy. Yet her rebellion operates within limited bounds. From a Butlerian lens, her modern identity is performative—cosmopolitan, liberal—but still embedded within patriarchal economic systems. Her freedom is individualized, not structural.

The Grandmother (Kusum): Internalized Patriarchy:

Balram's grandmother, Kusum, represents rural patriarchy sustained through women themselves. She enforces obedience, arranges marriages, and demands economic loyalty. Balram describes her authority vividly, "The Great Socialist was one thing, but the Grandmother was something else entirely." Her power, however, is not emancipatory; it operates within the logic of survival and hierarchy. She ensures that male earning members remain financially accountable to the family. This reflects what R. W. Connell would call complicity within hegemonic masculinity—women helping to stabilize male-dominated structures because their survival depends on it. Here, patriarchy is not only imposed by men; it is reproduced through women who internalize its norms.

In the urban elite world, women often function as markers of status. Marriage alliances are business strategies. Female bodies become symbols of modernity, refinement, or respectability. Balram repeatedly links women to ownership and display, reflecting how neoliberal masculinity equates success with consumption—including the consumption of relationships.

For example, Ashok's marriage to Pinky enhances his cosmopolitan image. Yet when she leaves, his masculinity collapses into emotional instability, revealing how fragile neoliberal male identity truly is. From Hegemonic Masculinity to Neoliberal Performativity—Adiga's women illuminate a crucial shift:

- ✓ In traditional patriarchy (Narayan), women are morally regulated within the home.
- ✓ In neoliberal patriarchy (Adiga), women are repositioned within market logic.

But in both systems, male identity depends upon regulating or instrumentalizing women. Through a Butlerian framework, gender in The White Tiger appears as performance shaped by economic aspiration. Through Connell's model, neoliberal masculinity emerges as a new hegemonic form—entrepreneurial, competitive, ruthless. Yet this masculinity continues to rely on women's containment, protection, commodification, or symbolic use.

Thus, the novel demonstrates that patriarchy has not weakened under neoliberal modernity; it has become more flexible, more strategic, and in some ways more invisible.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Discussion: Reconfiguration of Patriarchy:

The comparative trajectory from R. K. Narayan to Aravind Adiga reveals not the dissolution of patriarchy in Indian English fiction but its historical recalibration. In The Dark Room, Narayan presents a model of patriarchal authority that is domestically entrenched and institutionally stabilized. Ramani's assertion, "I am the master of this house," encapsulates a form of masculinity that derives legitimacy from economic provision and marital hierarchy rather than overt coercion. His authority is normalized through routine domestic practices, financial control, and moral entitlement. Savitri's anguished reflection that "a part of me is dead" underscores how patriarchal masculinity operates through emotional erasure and structural subordination rather than spectacle. This configuration closely aligns with R. W. Connell's formulation of hegemonic masculinity as the culturally exalted form of masculinity that "guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women."

However, the post-1991 neoliberal transformation of India produces a radically altered socio-economic terrain, one that destabilizes inherited authority while generating new competitive hierarchies. In The White Tiger, Adiga relocates patriarchal power from the household to the marketplace. Balram's declaration, "I am tomorrow," signals a self-fashioned masculinity grounded not in lineage or respectability but in economic mobility and entrepreneurial aggression. Unlike Ramani's inherited domestic sovereignty, Balram must construct authority through rupture—most dramatically through the murder of his employer, which he reframes as liberation from servitude. This performative dimension of masculinity resonates with Judith Butler's argument that gender is constituted through repeated acts that produce the illusion of stable identity. Balram performs ruthlessness, confidence, and ambition to inhabit the neoliberal fantasy of the self-made man. Masculinity is no longer institutionally secured; it must be continuously enacted.

The movement from Narayan's stable domestic patriarchy to Adiga's competitive neoliberal masculinity thus demonstrates patriarchy's adaptive resilience. In Narayan, male authority is visible, localized, and morally sanctioned. In Adiga, it is mobile, precarious, and economically mediated. Yet in both contexts, masculinity functions as the cultural mechanism through which hierarchical power is organized and justified. What changes is not the existence of male dominance but the discursive framework that legitimizes it. Traditional patriarchal authority rooted in family and community gives way to entrepreneurial self-fashioning aligned with capitalist modernity. Indian English fiction, read across these historical moments, therefore documents not the erosion of patriarchy but its strategic transformation in response to socioeconomic restructuring.

Conclusion: Reconfiguration, Not Liberation:

Masculinity functions not merely as a gender identity but as a cultural technology through which patriarchal power is organized, legitimized, and transformed across historical contexts. It's not like: Masculinity changed, so patriarchy weakened." but "Masculinity changed because patriarchy had to adapt. Why Did Patriarchy Need to Adapt? Because society changed. Women entered education, Women entered workforce, Legal reforms challenged male authority, India underwent economic liberalization in 1991,Global capitalism reshaped class structures. Old patriarchal models (strict domestic authority, unquestioned male control) became harder to maintain. So what happens to systems of power when threatened? They don't collapse easily. They mutate.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Patriarchy did not disappear. But the social world changed — so patriarchy had to reorganize itself to survive.

Women's financial independence, the ability to tell and control their own stories, critical awareness of social conditioning, and the courage to challenge internalized gender expectations are essential steps in questioning both traditional patriarchy and its modern neoliberal forms. By revealing how masculine authority is constructed and maintained in Indian English fiction,

Today's women can strengthen themselves by pursuing financial independence, developing critical awareness, and refusing to internalize limiting gender expectations. Building confidence in decision-making and claiming space in public, professional, and intellectual spheres are crucial steps toward lasting empowerment. Literature plays a powerful role in this journey: it exposes hidden structures of patriarchy, gives voice to women's experiences, and offers alternative models of identity and resistance. By reading critically and engaging with diverse narratives, women can better understand social conditioning and imagine new possibilities for autonomy, equality, and self-definition.

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March 6th& 7th 2026

60

LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER EQUALITY AND INEQUALITY

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Abstract:
Literature has historically functioned as a cultural mirror that reflects, reinforces, and challenges gender relations. Literary works have played a vital role in shaping discourse on gender equality and inequality. This paper examines how gender is constructed in literature, how female and marginalized voices resist oppression, and how feminist literary criticism reinterprets traditional texts. Drawing on global and Indian literary examples, the study highlights literature as a site of both ideological control and social transformation. It reveals how authors use narrative, characterization, and symbolism to both reinforce and challenge gender norms. The study demonstrates that literature acts as a mirror and a catalyst for cultural attitudes toward gender roles, power structures, and social justice. It also explores how literature represents gender equality and inequality across time, cultures, and genres.

Keywords: *Gender, Feminism, Patriarchy, Representation, Feminist Literary Criticism, Equality, Inequality, etc.*

Gender — a system of social and cultural meanings attached to sex differences — has been a central theme in literary representation. Gender is not merely a biological distinction but a socio-cultural construct that determines roles, power relations, and access to resources. Literature, as a product of society, encodes these structures and provides insight into the lived experiences of men and women.

Gender equality refers to equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for individuals regardless of gender. Gender inequality, conversely, involves hierarchical differences that privilege one gender over others. Literature, as a cultural artifact, reflects societal norms and can either uphold traditional gender roles or contest them.

Early literary traditions often portrayed women as: passive, dependent, confined to domestic roles. However, modern and contemporary texts increasingly present women as: autonomous individuals and critiques of patriarchy. Many classical texts depict women as: secondary to male heroes and defined by beauty, morality, or motherhood objects of the male gaze. Quantitative studies of novels show: male characters dominate narrative agency and female characters are more associated with appearance and emotion than action. Fairy tales and rhymes often: portray men as active and powerful whereas women as nurturing and passive. These narratives shape early gender consciousness. Regarding women Indian literature reflects: patriarchy, caste and gender intersections, control over female sexuality, social restrictions on

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

education and mobility. Critical studies show contemporary Indian texts deconstruct gender roles and question power hierarchies.

Feminist Literary Criticism – which examines how texts construct gender roles and power relations.Gender Performativity (Judith Butler) – which views gender as enacted through repeated social behaviors.Intersectionality (Kimberlé Crenshaw) – which recognizes that gender intersects with race, class, and other identities.

Feminist literary criticism emerged as a major critical approach in the twentieth century, focusing on women's representation, women's writing, and the politics of gender in texts. Feminist criticism analyzes how literature: perpetuates gender stereotypes, marginalizes women's voices, constructs masculinity and femininity, challenges patriarchal ideology. It focuses on rereading canonical texts, rediscovering women writers, examining language and narrative structure from a gendered perspective. Feminist literature: gives speech to silenced characters, rewrites myths and history from women's perspectives questions male authority. Feminist narratives often create: utopian or dystopian worlds gender-equal societies to inspire social change and critical thinking.

Narrative Techniques and Gender:

Literary devices contribute to gender representation such as Point of view shapes how readers perceive gendered experiences (e.g., first-person female narrators create empathy for women's struggles).Symbolism (e.g., the constricting corset in realist novels) becomes a metaphor for social restriction. Language and dialogue reveal gendered power dynamics.

Literary Representation of Gender Equality and Inequality:

Literary works from early periods often reflect rigid gender norms. For instance: In Greek tragedy (e.g., Antigone by Sophocles), female characters may resist male authority, but often face tragic outcomes. Medieval romances idealize female purity while valorizing male heroism. These texts typically reinforce patriarchal values, though exceptions show resistance to inequality. The Renaissance saw increased debate about women's roles: Shakespeare's Twelfth Night features cross-dressing and questions gender identity and desire.

Early feminist voices (e.g., Mary Astell) began influencing literary perspectives. 19th Century Realism marked greater scrutiny of gender norms: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* portrays a heroine who challenges subservience and demands emotional autonomy. Jane Eyre, demand for emotional and economic independence. Jane confronts gendered limitations in education, employment, and marriage. Her moral independence and assertion of self-worth challenge patriarchal control.

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* critiques women's domestic confinement and the male-dominated moral order. Nora's eventual rejection of her domestic role symbolizes a dramatic claim for equality and self-determination. The play was controversial for its critique of marriage norms and women's economic dependency. *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood presents a dystopian society where women's bodies and roles are strictly controlled. It highlights how misogyny can be institutionalized and how resistance persists amid oppression. In *A Room of One's Own* – need for space and financial autonomy present women as intellectual and creative beings rather than dependents.

***Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte:**

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

In *Jane Eyre*, Brontë challenges 19th-century norms by presenting a female narrator who asserts her moral and intellectual autonomy. Jane's refusal to become Rochester's mistress underscores her resistance to gendered subjugation: "I am no bird; and no net ensnares me" (Brontë 1847). The novel critiques patriarchal power linked to marriage and class.

***The Awakening* by Kate Chopin:**
Chopin's *The Awakening* depicts Edna Pontellier's struggle for selfhood against restrictive gender norms. Her pursuit of artistic and sexual independence disrupts the era's expectations of women as wives and mothers, ultimately leading to her tragic choice, a commentary on the limited spaces available for female self-realization (Chopin 1899).

***The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood:**
Atwood's dystopian novel portrays extreme gender inequality through the total control of women's bodies and reproductive capacities. In Gilead, women are stripped of rights and reduced to roles defined by fertility. The narrative exposes how patriarchal structures can be sanctioned through ideology and law. Atwood's work remains a powerful warning about the fragility of gender equality (Atwood 1985).

***Beloved* by Toni Morrison:**
Morrison's *Beloved* addresses the intersection of gender, race, and historical trauma. Female characters navigate identities constrained by slavery and its aftermath. Sethe's act of infanticide, while horrifying, reflects the desperate assertion of agency in a world where Black women's bodies were violently controlled. Morrison's novel insists that gender inequality cannot be separated from other systems of oppression (Morrison 1987).

***Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi:**
Satrapi's graphic memoir *Persepolis* recounts her experience growing up during and after the Iranian Revolution. The book illustrates how state-imposed gender norms affected women's public and private lives, while also showing personal resistance and redefinition of gender roles. Visual storytelling makes gendered experiences vivid and accessible (Satrapi 2000).

***The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy:**
In Roy's novel, caste and gender intersect to constrain female characters. Ammu's rebellion against social norms results in tragedy, exposing how patriarchal and caste systems work together to punish transgressions. The text foregrounds gender inequality within a specific cultural framework (Roy 1997).

Later works increasingly depict how gender intersects with race, class, and culture, complicating simple binaries of equality/inequality. Intersectional approaches show that gender inequality cannot be fully understood in isolation.

Conclusion:
Literature offers rich and varied representations of gender equality and inequality. From classic novels to contemporary narratives, texts reveal how gender norms shape characters' lives and how those norms can be challenged. Studying these representations helps readers to recognize and critique gendered structures in their own societies.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
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March 6th& 7th 2026

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

61

MARRIAGE AS CHOICE, NOT CONSTRAINT: REFRAMING FEMINIST READINGS IN *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE*

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Abstract:
Many people consider Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice to be a love romance but it also highlights the scathing social critique of English society in the early nineteenth century. The story revolves around the marriage as well as money, which reflects the social structures, gender dynamics, and economic realities of Regency England. This paper investigates the ways in which Jane Austen used marriage as a socio-economic institution, looking at the reasons behind financial worries as well as their effects and ethical ramifications. This study makes the case that the novel illustrates how social behaviour and interpersonal relationships are influenced by economic pressures while simultaneously promoting marriage based on respect and sincere affection. Pride and Prejudice remain one of the most critically studied novels in English literature, largely due to its nuanced portrayal of courtship and marriage. Central to the novel is the complex relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy. Unlike conventional romantic pairings of the period, their relationship develops through intellectual conflict, moral correction, and personal transformation.

Keywords: *Bennet, Constraint, Marriage, Pride and Prejudice, etc.*

Introduction:

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen presents marriage as deeply intertwined with money, social status, and security in early nineteenth century England. Through the experiences of the Bennet sisters and the society around them, Austen explores how financial stability often shapes romantic choices, while also critiquing marriages based solely on wealth and social advancement.

During Austen's time, women had limited economic opportunities and were largely dependent on marriage for financial security. The Bennet family's estate is entailed away from the female line, meaning the daughters cannot inherit their father's property. This legal reality makes marriage not just a matter of love, but of survival. Mrs. Bennet's urgent desire to see her daughters married reflects the economic vulnerability of women without independent income.

Jane Austen contrasts different types of marriages to highlight the tension between love and money. Charlotte Lucas's practical marriage to Mr. Collins demonstrates a realistic but unromantic approach, prioritizing security over affection. In contrast, Elizabeth Bennet's relationship with Mr. Darcy suggests that a successful marriage can combine emotional compatibility with financial stability. Similarly, Lydia Bennet's reckless elopement exposes the dangers of ignoring both moral and financial consequences.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Relationship of Elizabeth and Darcy:

Through social commentary, Jane Austen critiques a society in which wealth heavily influences personal relationships. Yet she does not dismiss the importance of money altogether. Instead, she suggests that while financial security is necessary, marriage should ideally be founded on mutual respect, understanding, and genuine affection. In this way, *Pride and Prejudice* presents marriage as both a social institution shaped by economic realities and a personal union that should transcend mere financial considerations.

The novel is set in Regency-era England, a period in which marriage functioned as both a personal and economic institution. Women's financial security was largely dependent upon advantageous marriages, particularly in families such as the Bennets. Within this framework, Darcy represents wealth, rank, and aristocratic privilege, while Elizabeth embodies wit, moral independence, and middle-class sensibility. The class divide between them initially creates tension. Darcy's early reluctance to associate with those he perceives as socially inferior reflects the rigid class consciousness of the time. Elizabeth's sharp sensitivity to social arrogance, meanwhile, reflects Jane Austen's critique of hierarchical snobbery. Thus, their personal conflict mirrors broader societal tensions.

The relationship begins with misinterpretation and wounded pride. Darcy's dismissive remark about Elizabeth's appearance at the Meryton assembly sets the foundation for her prejudice against him. His aloof demeanour reinforces her perception of him as arrogant and disdainful (Austen 8). Simultaneously, Darcy forms his own prejudiced view of Elizabeth's family, particularly due to the impropriety displayed by some of her relatives. His pride in his social standing prevents him from recognizing Elizabeth's intelligence and moral strength at first.

Despite their mutual dislike, Elizabeth and Darcy are drawn together through conversation and debate. Their exchanges are marked by irony, wit, and intellectual equality (18). Unlike many courtships in the novel, their relationship is grounded in mental compatibility. Darcy gradually admires Elizabeth's independence of mind and refusal to flatter him. Elizabeth, however, remains influenced by misinformation, particularly regarding Darcy's alleged mistreatment of George Wickham. Her prejudice deepens, reinforcing her belief in Darcy's moral deficiency.

The turning point occurs with Darcy's first proposal. Although he confesses his love, he frames it in terms that emphasize Elizabeth's inferior connections. His declaration reveals both emotional vulnerability and persistent pride (161-162). Elizabeth's rejection is equally significant: she condemns his arrogance and accuses him of injustice. This confrontation becomes the catalyst for transformation.

Darcy's explanatory letter marks a critical structural and psychological shift. In it, he clarifies his actions regarding Wickham and his interference in Jane Bennet's relationship with Bingley. The letter compels Elizabeth to confront her own prejudice (171). Her self-reflection is one of the novel's most profound moments of character development. She acknowledges her blindness and wounded vanity, recognizing that her judgment was influenced by personal resentment. Darcy, too, undergoes reform. He resolves to behave more graciously and demonstrates this change through action rather than words. His hospitality toward Elizabeth and her relatives at Pemberley contrasts sharply with his earlier pride. Their growth is symmetrical both learn humility, self-awareness, and the importance of moral responsibility.

The ultimate test of Darcy's character is presented by Lydia Bennet and Wickham's elopement. He steps in to save Elizabeth's family from scandal and to ensure the marriage, without looking for attention. For a number of reasons, this deed is essential. It shows true love that is

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

based on action. It validates the moral development of Darcy. Elizabeth's last reservations about his personality are allayed by it. Crucially, Elizabeth's acceptance of Darcy's second proposal is driven by a shift in understanding and affection rather than financial necessity. Therefore, their union stands for equality as opposed to dependency.

Conclusion:

Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy's relationship in *Pride and Prejudice* is a romantic story and a moral analysis by Jane Austen. They demonstrate the novel's primary focus on self-awareness and moral development by moving from miscommunication and wounded conceit to respect for one another and enduring love. Both characters show that personal change is necessary for genuine human connection by overcoming the constraints of pride and prejudice via confrontation, introspection, and altered behaviour. In the end, their marriage represents a reinterpretation of emotional and social partnership within the confines of Regency society. Instead of reiterating strict class divisions or traditional gender norms, their union affirms equality of intelligence, moral character, and emotional development. Austen emphasizes the timeless lesson that true love cannot be separated by changing their relationship instead of just reconciling them.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

62

DIGITAL LITERACY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: BRIDGING THE GENDER DIVIDE IN SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:
In recent years digital literacy has emerged as a critical component of skill development in the 21st century knowledge economy. However, a resolute gender digital divide continues to limit women's approach to digital technologies, thereby restricting their socio-economic empowerment. The present research paper focuses on the relationship between digital literacy and women's empowerment, prioritizing on how digital skills contribute to economic independence, social mobility, decision-making power, and gender equality. The study explores basic barriers such as socio-cultural norms, lack of infrastructure, educational disparities, and economic restraint that hinder women's digital participation. It also analyzes the role of national and global initiatives, including Digital India, Skill India Mission, Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Literacy Abhiyan, National Skill Development Corporation, and UN Women in promoting digital inclusion among women. The paper asserts that digital literacy is not merely a technical ability but a transformative tool that enhances communication skills, commercial opportunities, access to information, and public participation. Bridging the gap between the gender divide in digital skill development is important for achieving sustainable development and gender equality. The study includes targeted policy measures, inclusive training models, and community-based digital education can significantly enhance women's empowerment.

Keywords: *Digital Literacy, Women's Empowerment, Gender Digital Divide, Skill Development, Gender Equality, Digital Inclusion, Empowerment, Communication Skills, etc.*

Introduction:

The continuous expansion of digital technologies has transformed economies, governance systems, education, and communication in the world. Today's digital era is an access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) that is essential for participation in economic and social life. Digital literacy the ability to access, estimate, create, and communicate information using digital platforms has become a basic skill for employability and empowerment. Despite technological advancements, gender discriminations in digital area remain significant. Women, particularly in developing countries, face many barriers that limit their position to devices, internet connectivity, and digital training. Such a disparity, commonly referred to as the "gender digital divide," focuses existing inequalities in education, employment, and decision-making.

Digital literacy plays an important role in women's skill development by improving communication abilities, increasing employment opportunities, enabling entrepreneurship, and strengthening participation in governance. Therefore, bridging the gender digital divide is

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

essential for achieving significant growth and sustainable development. Present research paper explores the conceptual framework of digital literacy and women's empowerment, examines existing challenges, analyzes policy initiatives, and proposes policy to promote gender equality through digital skill development.

Digital Literacy and Women's Empowerment:
In concept of digital literacy and women's empowerment, it is studied that how digital skills contribute to improving women's social, economic, and political status.

Digital Literacy:
Digital literary is included the basic structure of information literary including access and use of digital devices (smart phones, computer, internet). It also consists of online communication skills, cybersecurity awareness, digital content creation, financial digital literacy and digital content creation. It also deals with content writing that enhances critical thinking, problem-solving and communication competence which is essential components of skill development. Digital literacy is essential for navigating modern life, including job opportunities, education, and social interaction. It involves safe, responsible, and adequate use of digital tools.

Women's Empowerment:
Women's empowerment refers to the process by which women gain control over resources, decision-making, and opportunities. Especially in contexts where this ability was previously rejected. It involves connect to resources, participation in decision-making, control over income and assets, and freedom from discrimination and violence. Empowerment is multidimensional and transformative that it changes both individual capacities and social behavior. There are five key dimensions including economic empowerment comprising of women can earn income and have employment opportunities, access credit, banking and financial services. Women can do online jobs, freelancing and remote area employment. They can use digital platforms for e-commerce and marketing. They have access to digital banking; mobile banking and government benefit transfers.

Social empowerment is another factor which comes in women empowerment. It involves social status and recognition, freedom from discrimination from men. Their participation in community and social networks is essential for empowerment. Through joining to online communities and self-help groups they can perform well. They have access to information about healthcare, legal rights and social services. They can raise their voices through social media platforms and build networks beyond geographical limitations. This platform creates spaces for dialogue, concurrence and awareness, helping women challenge traditional gender norms. Political participation is important factor related to women empowerment that consists of awareness of legal and constitutional rights, participation in voting, engagement in civic discussions, role of leadership in various elections. In these women can access to government portals, participate in online petitions, campaigns and discussions.

They engage with political representatives through digital media. Fourth major constraint is educational advancement that refers to access to formal and informal education. However, it deals with continuous skill development, digital and technical competencies and life learning opportunities. Women are enabling to enroll in some online courses and certificate programs. They have access to e-books, research material, and educational videos and participate in virtual classroom and webinars. Psychological confidence is a major factor which comes under women empowerment. It develops the self confidence and self-esteem of women, decision making, sense

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

of autonomy and independence and also freedom to express opinions. It helps to enhance confidence in using technology, encourages self-expression through blogs, videos and social media, builds leadership and communication skills. If women gain digital competence, they develop a stronger sense of their identity.

The Gender Digital Divide:
As compared to men, women are fewer opportunities in digital sectors. So, their access needs to be increased for their empowerment. Such digital divide is manifested in several forms.

Access Divide:
Women often have less access to smartphones, computers, and internet connectivity due to economic dependency or cultural restrictions. These are major barriers in women's use of digital media. Their economic dependency is responsible to limit their ability to purchase digital devices. Even though cultural norms in few of the communities restrict their independent use of mobile phones and internet services. As compared to cities rural areas lack proper digital infrastructure, that affects women more severely. Limited access prevents them from using digital banking, online education, e-governance services, that result in their social and economic empowerment remains restricted.

Usage Divide:
Even when access exists, women may lack confidence or training to utilize digital platforms effectively. Most of the women have fear of using these devices. They haven't proper training and their usage is less. However, women lack digital literacy and basic technical knowledge. Their fear of making mistakes or damaging devices reduces their confidence. Women have lack of formal training programs that prevents skill development. Availability of these instruments' women may use them only for basic communication rather than for education, business, or skill enhancement. This limits their ability to benefit from digital opportunities such as online entrepreneurship and e-learning.

Skill Divide:
Skill divide is another factor which is related with digital media and women empowerment. That refers to the underrepresentation of women in advanced digital and technology. More ever Women are less involved in use of coding, programming, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and data analytics. Discouraging gender stereotypes is another factor that discourage girls form pursuing basic science, technology, engineering, mathematics education. Major challenge is limited exposure to technical training institutes reduces career advancement. Discrimination at work place is another factor related to lack of mentorship. Women are underrepresented in advanced digital skills such as coding, data analysis, and technical training.

Safety Issues:
Online harassment and cybersecurity threats discourage women's participation in digital spaces. These disparities reinforce broader socio-economic inequalities and limit women's ability to benefit from digital transformation.

Digital Literacy as a Tool for Economic Empowerment:
Digital literacy related with the ability to access, understand, evaluate, and use digital technologies effectively and securely. For women, in developing countries like India, digital literacy acts as a

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

major instrument of economic empowerment by expanding employment opportunities, encouraging business, and promoting financial situatedness. It reduces traditional barriers such as limited mobility, lack of information, and restricted access to financial resources.

Employment Opportunities:

Diverse employment avenues for women have opened by digital literacy. Through online job portals independent and remote working systems, women can gain work opportunities beyond their immediate geographical area. They have work from home opportunity, that provide remote jobs in content writing, data entry, digital marketing, online tutoring and customer support services where women have available responsibilities and paid work. Women have access to online job portals where they can get platforms like government employment exchanges and private job websites provide equal access to job listings. Freelancing platform is also helpful for women to search the websites offering these services that allow them to commercialize. Another platform for women in skill development; they get online courses and certification programs improve employability and professional growth. However, digital employment reduces dependency and enhances income generating capacity, that women facing cultural or mobility access.

Entrepreneurship:

Women have become empowered to digital skills by reducing the cost and barriers of starting a business. It is possible through online business, related to home-based ventures such as handicrafts, tailoring, home made food products, and consultancy services to be promoted through digital tools. They will earn money by social media including Facebook; Instagram and You Tube to connect directly with customers through advertise. E-commerce platform helps in job for women including Amazon and Flipkart that allows women to sell products without investing in physical shops. Digital payment system helps them to pay online via Google Pay and Phone Pe. This digital entrepreneurship enhances financial independence, self-confidence, and decision-making power within the family and society.

Financial Inclusion:

Financial inclusion is a critical extent of women's empowerment. Digital literacy enables women to access banking and financial facilities independently. Women can open their accounts online, check balances, transfer money, and apply for loans without intermediaries. They can send money though mobile and those are transparent. Women can send money through various online platforms including NEFT or RGTS. Digital platforms provide awareness about saving schemes, insurance, and investment options. This financial self-dependence helps women's control over income and resources, thereby enhancing economic security.

Communication Skills and Social Empowerment:

Digital literacy plays an important role in strengthening women's communication skills that directly contributes to their social empowerment. When women acquire digital knowledge, they become more confident in expressing ideas, participating in discussions, and engaging with communities.

Social Networking:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Social networking helps women to achieve communication techniques such as Facebook and WhatsApp help women to build social networks in their surroundings. However, these networks provide mental support, information sharing, and opportunities for collaboration.

Online Collaboration:
Digital mediums like email, video conferencing and shared workplaces enable women to collaborate professionally and socially. This enhances teamwork skills, leadership qualities, and collective problem-solving abilities.

Access to Educational Webinars:
Women learn through webinars, online workshops, virtual training programs those allow them to improve public speaking, presentation skills, and subject knowledge, and continuous learning increases confidence and social acceptance.

Participation in Digital Forums
Safe spaces for women have provided through online discussion groups and community forums to provide spaces to share their experiences, thoughts, social issues and criticize independently. This strengthens critical thinking and democratic participation. Particularly women who trained under Skill India Mission and programs supported by National Skill Development Corporation achieve improved communication skills, increasing confidence and leadership capacity. Digital platforms also amplify women's voices in advocacy movements, contributing to gender-sensitive public discourse.

Socio-Cultural Obstacles to Digital Inclusion:
Socio-cultural obstacle plays in an important role in women's digital inclusion. Patriarchy often restricts women's access to mobile phones and the internet, as technology use may be controlled by the male in a family or harassed them due to traditional beliefs. Literary and educational including lower female literacy rates, reduce women's ability to acquire and and use of digital tools. Economic factors prevent many women from owning personal devices or affording internet services due to limited financial sources. Additionally, digital safety issues such as cyber constraints and online abuses discourage active participation in digital field. Therefore, overcoming these challenges requires integrated social, educational, and policy abilities, and holistic digital empowerment strategies that combine skill development with broader social transformation.

Conclusion:
Digital literacy is a transformative tool that plays a vital role in women's empowerment and gender equality. Bridging the gender digital divide is not only a technological necessity but also social imperative. Access to digital skills enhances women's economic independence, communication issues, leadership potential, and public participation. While government initiatives such as Digital India and Skill India Mission have made significant progress in women's strongness. However, structural obstacles rooted in socio-cultural norms, economic inequality, and digital safety concerns continue to limit women's participation. A comprehensive strategy involving inclusive policies, community engagement, educational changes, and gender-sensitive digital infrastructure is essential. Digital literacy must be recognized as a fundamental component of skill development and a milestone of sustainable gender equality. Empowering women through

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

digital skills ensures not only individual advancement but also national development and social transformation.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

63

FROM VILLAGE WELLS TO VIRAL HASHTAGS: WATER, CASTE, AND WOMEN'S COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN NILA MADHAB PANDA'S *KAUN KITNE PAANI MEIN*

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Abstract:
In this paper, the authorexplores how water shortage, systematic caste differences, and strategic communication by women come to play in Nila Madhab Panda, 2015 film, Kaun Kitne Paani Mein. The plot of the movie is built in the rural Odisha, where the drought has become a reality, and the film is created as an eco-satire reflective of the discursive and social practices of the modern India. This study uses theoretical perspectives of eco-cinema, caste studies, and gendered communication to conduct a qualitative close reading of a few scenes and a few lines paraphrased to understand the way resource depletion transforms conventional power relations. The given work specifically pays attention to the negotiation tactics of female characters, including domestic persuasion and open resistance, as they have to live in the environment where water has superseded currency. The study claims that the gendered agency in the film is prefigured by the digital activism in the present day by analyzing these interactions on a village-level. Finally, the study also implies that the communicative transformations represented in the movie provide a roadmap of how the voices of the marginalized can utilize the necessary resources to confront the hegemonic frameworks in the age of viral hashtags and water justice movements around the world.

Keywords: *Water Politics, Caste Hierarchies, Women's Communication, Eco-Cinema, Hindi Film, Digital Activism, etc.*

Introduction:

In modern India, the issue of water shortage is closely connected with the historical imbalance of the caste system. Although the traditional hierarchies used to determine who was allowed to reach the village well, the change of water to a volatile political and economic resource has occurred with the effect of modern environmental degradation. This is a mediatized reality that is becoming more and more apparent on social media where hashtags about water rights and Dalit resistance often trend, introducing rural struggles to the international digital consciousness.

However, even before these interpersonal struggles are transferred into the viral scale, they are negotiated over in the day-to-day routine of interpersonal communication in the village set-up, which is what Nila Madhab Panda offers in *Kaun Kitne Paani Mein* (2015): touching on a deeply emotional and satirical level. The movie portrays two competing villages, Upri, where people are of the high-caste but water-poor caste and where Bairi, the home of the lower-caste but water-abundant caste. With the old social order crumbling under the burden of the thirst, the movie

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

examines how the need to survive requires a complete change in the caste pride and gender roles. It is not only important as an entertainment piece, but as a potent means of peeking into the mechanisms of our minds and hearts when it comes to the management of resources and social justice.

Research Methodology:

The study focuses on how films communicate social realities, using *Kaun Kitne Paani Mein* as a case study. It analyzes key scenes by looking at elements like mise-en-scene and characterization to uncover power dynamics. The research incorporates secondary sources about eco-cinema, caste sociology in rural India, and gender communication theories. It views film as part of broader communication processes to reveal its internal logic and critique social structures. The movie is selected for its eco-satire approach, linking environmental issues with caste problems, while exploring communication between producers, the film structure, and the audience.

Analysis of Film:

The study focuses on offering the solution to the question of how the movie uses satire to condemn the conspiracy of hydro-politics and social stratification. The issue of women communication is at the core of this question. The female characters, i.e. Paro and Gulabi, employ a fine array of communication skills, as the male patriarchs of Upri and Bairi are trapped in ego and tradition. The paper suggests humor, narrative, tactical silence, and persuasive negotiation to be among the means through which these women enter into the patriarchal power relations and can possibly serve to close the gap between the village wells and the more general communicative practices within the contemporary social justice movements. These communicative changes in the movie, offer a complex guide to how oppressed groups can shift their localized struggles over resources to larger social justice campaigns. By analyzing the film through the lens of contemporary communication theories, we can see how the characters move from “confrontational dramatic dialogues” (Anisti et al., 2025; Корольова & Попова, 2022) to “dialogic communicative actions” (Anisti et al., 2025; Корольова & Попова, 2022) that prefigure the digital activism of the modern era.

Water as Both Money and Speakman:

Water in the movie world has lost its status as a natural resource, and has taken the place of the biggest source of exchange. The traditional superiority of power between the Upri and Bairi is reversed, the high caste Upri villagers are reduced to beggars, and the low caste Bairi villagers have the advantage of the last resort. The film establishes water as a semiotic image of power that governs the circumstances of all inter-village affairs. The geographical contrast between the dry dusty landscape of Upri and the rather green water-manageable areas of Bairi is a message-sender in silence of the shifting social order. The interaction between the two villages is transactional and all the requirements of water are followed by a reminder of the ancient humiliations based on caste.

Caste, Class and Marriage Negotiations:

The principal theme of the potentiality of a marriage between Raj (Upri) and Paro (Bairi) is a scaled-down version of the larger socio-political struggle. The contribution of the marriage negotiations in the movie is that caste pride is aggressively traded with hydrological security. There is little ever a discussion on romance of the marriage of Raj and Paro, but a strategy of

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

survival. The fact that the patriarch of Upri was ready to humiliate himself to get a bride in Bairi proves that even the most antique social taboos can be broken in the face of environmental necessity.

The Non-Verbal and Verbal Communication of women:

Meanwhile, when the men are grandstanding and historical grieving, the women, Paro and Gulabi, are more down-to-earth and subversive in their instruments of communication. The femininity agency in the film is enacted in a communicative cleverness, which avoids the male deadlocks. The combination of the traditional and the contemporary wisdom characterizes communication between Paro and the world. She uses the idea of strategic silence when she is with the elders so that she may get to know how to play power games, but uses the art of persuasive storytelling when she is with Raj to show him that his assumptions about caste can be disputed. Conversely, Gulabi is a great wit and humor in order to convey his satire on the pointlessness of the men conflict. The movie also serves as a kind of mass communication that through satire gathers social opinion, similar to the way the present-day volunteer discourse (Semenenko, 2025) strengthens social solidarity during a crisis.

The tools of social critique: Satire, Humour, and Song:

The dramaturgy of satire is used by Panda to make the grim reality of the water scarcity palatable and thought-provoking to the viewer. Satirical character of the film resembles meta-communicative interface that makes the spectator think over his/her social biases. The absurdity of the situations (the water-counting rituals) and the folk-inspired songs are the criticisms of the social priorities of the society towards the rituals as opposed to the resource management. The humor is presented as the tool of justice to mock the weakness of the caste superiority in the face of the essential biological needs.

New Urbanism: Digital Activism:

The rationality of the contemporary digital movements of social justice is manifested in the village-level bargain in the movie. The communicative actions in the film are a precursor to the decentralized, resource-based activism of the modern social media movements. Likewise, just as the characters in the film must re-brand themselves as a village to receive water, modern-day activists also has to use the hashtags to place the struggles of local resources in the international scene. The subject of the movie to investigate how our hearts work is aligned with the aim of digital activism to create compassion and generate a systemic change.

The film's conclusion, where the villages must find a "collaborative strategy"(Ali, 2024, pp. 535–553; Roy, 2015, pp. 59–68) for survival, mirrors the way modern social movements use digital platforms to amplify subaltern voices. The struggleof characters to reclaim their identity through resource control is a precursor to "decolonization discourse" on social networks like *Twitter* and *TikTok* (Klopov & Veremchuk, 2025).The film suggests that once a marginalized group masters the "communicative infrastructure" of their local resource (the well), they are prepared to enter the global "Human-Machine-Human"(Dutta, 2018, pp. 239–259; Perepelytsia & Mohylat, 2025)epoch of communication. Paro concludes that, "The story of their water will eventually be told by people who have never even seen their village, but who will feel their thirst" (Kaun Kitne Paani Mein 01:40:30).

This reflects the "transformative potential" (Khale, 2024) of narrative in amplifying marginalized voices across geographical boundaries, a core tenet of modern digital activism

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Conclusion:

Therefore, the analysis of the film, *Kaun Kitne Paani Mein*, recreates the old-time village well as not a place of life, but a place of communicative work. By taking away the facade of caste superiority in the context of water scarcity, the movie is able to show that, in the end, power lies in the hands of those who cannot only communicate and negotiate in the interpersonal realm effectively, but also do so in a masterful manner. The movie helps to emphasize that the communicative agency of women that is usually disregarded as secondary is actually the leading force of social evolution during the crisis. Their skills of humor, persuasion, and strategic silence can be used to teach communication skills that focus on empathy and practicality rather than dominance and tradition. Moreover, the applicability of the movie is not confined to the movie screen. The film can be used to initiate a conversation on sustainable water consumption and social justice in an educational or community setting. With the help of the analysis of the subjective constructions of the film, the viewers may comprehend the mechanisms of distribution of resources within the real world, which are still being determined by the discursive and social practices better.

The communicative transformations in the film, provide a sophisticated roadmap for how marginalized communities transition from localized resource struggles to broader social justice movements. By analyzing the film through the lens of contemporary communication theories, we can see how the characters move from "confrontational dramatic dialogues" (Anisti et al., 2025; Корольова & Попова, 2022) to "dialogic communicative actions" (Anisti et al., 2025; Корольова & Попова, 2022) that prefigure the digital activism of the modern era.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
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March 6th& 7th 2026

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

64

PATRIARCHY AND THE SUBJUGATION OF WOMEN IN KIRAN DESAI'S *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

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Abstract:
The present paper attempts to analyze the brutal domestic violence and the death met by a typical Indian female character in the patriarchal Indian society. Women in the Indian culture face gender discrimination, are derogated to a secondary position, confined to the household activities and are often met with unfair treatment from which there is no way to escape. Through the sufferings and death of Nimi, the novelist presents how a daughter, a wife and a divorced woman are subjugated and denied any human dignity by the society.

Keywords: *Feminism, Patriarchy, Identity, Suffering, Alienation, Gender-Discrimination, etc.*

Introduction:

The complex structure of the Indian society is deeply rooted in religion. The society is clearly divided between classes as indicated by the scriptures. The role of male and female members is clearly defined, assigning the derogatory position to the women of all the classes, confining their activities to the domestic affairs. The glorification of women has been resulted in their subjugation. Indian women have suffered from a long tradition of male dominance and oppression. Efforts of the social reformers, social awareness, and education to women, constitutional and legal provisions also seem to have proved inadequate to change the fate of women.

The Inheritance of Loss: Themes and Issues:

Kiran Desai's Booker Prize Winning novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), set in 1980s, amidst the social and political upheavals, and explores the themes as post colonialism, emigration and alienation, female subjugation in a patriarchal society, depicting the misogyny inherent in the Indian society. Though the book records the transformation and empowerment of women across the generations, the present paper undertakes to analyze the feminist theme of patriarchy and the subjugation of women through a passive, neutralized character of Nimi in the novel. Nimi is the wife of the retired judge Jemubhai Patel, an anglophile living in a desolate mansion in Kalimpong in Northeastern Himalayas. Nimi is a 'naïve, illiterate subalatern woman discriminated against' (Murugandham, 3329), treated brutally by her anglophile husband. She represents a typical Indian woman sacrificing her identity and everything without resistance for the sake of her husband.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Nimi: The Victim of Domestic Violence:

Jemubhai Patel is born in a peasant family in Pimphit of Gujrat, owned by Gaekwad kings of Baroda, then the British. Being a male child, he gets good education opportunities whereas the daughters in his family were 'promptly deprived to make sure he got the best of everything, from love to food' (Desai, 59). His marriage was arranged to Bela, a girl of 14, in order to manage his expenses for his ICS education in England. His experiences of emigration and alienation during his stay abroad left a permanent impression on his mind that he despised his own self, own language, customs and people when he returned. He got uprooted from his own culture and nativity and preferred to live in isolation, 'with the solace of being a foreigner in his own country' (Desai, 29), after his retirement in Kalimpong in Cho Oyu, a mansion bought from a Scotsman.

Moving back and forth in time, the narrative presents his short relation with his wife during his serving as a District Magistrate. Bela is renamed after marriage as Nimi by Jemubhai's family. They 'reinvented her identity to suit their taste' (Nisha, 1) according to the Indian custom of changing a bride's name. The couple had not lived together as the groom was abroad for a long a time. After his return, Jemubhai finds it difficult to cope with his own customs and manners. He begins to despise her for her Indian manners. His bitter experiences as an emigrant result in his perverted approach towards his own native people. He begins to despise and treat the people around him including the cook and Nimi with the inferiority he suffered at the hands of the British.

The fact of having married to an Indian girl begins to torment him. For such a decent man as him, 'an Indian girl could never be as beautiful as an English one' (Desai, 168). He did not like her 'disruptive presence' (Desai, 172) nor does he like her face. He never spoke to her publicly or even looked in her direction. She did not 'accompany her husband on tour, unlike the other wives' (Desai, 171). Her shallow and loveless relationship with her husband resulted in her isolation from the people around. She spoke to nobody. Nimi is a pitiful typical Indian housewife who suffers without any guilt or even knowing the cause of that suffering. The brutal treatment met by her culminates a day when he gets outraged by her manner of using a Western toilet:

> One day he found footprints on the toilet seat – *she was squatting on it, she was squatting on it!* – he could barely contain his outrage, took her head and pushed it into the toilet bowl and after a point, Nimi made invalid by her misery, grew very dull, began to fall asleep in heliographic sunshine and wake in the middle of the night. She peered out at the world but could not focus on it, never went to the mirror, because she couldn't see herself in it, and any she couldn't bear to spend a moment in dressing and combing, activities that were only for the happy and the loved (Desai, 173).

The way she is treated by her husband makes her revoke into herself or towards isolation' (Nisha, 2) which outrages Jemubhai even more. 'Don't show your face outside' he yelled at her, saying 'people might run from you screaming'. Soon the relationship reached to the point of discord and he forcibly sent her back to Gujraat.

Nimi: Victim of the Patriarchal Society:

Nimi has suffered subjugation and derogatory treatment right from her childhood. Got married at the tender age of 14, she suffers child marriage. She had to stay, up to 19 years, confined at her

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

father's compound, being unable to 'contemplate the idea of walking through the gate'(Desai, 171), in order to protect dignity of her father. She was married in a well-to-do family by her father, securing her future. But the changed status of Jemubhai made her 'unsuitable' (Desai, 306) to be his wife. Nimi is well aware of the plight of divorced women in the Indian society. She resists helplessly when her husband sends her back to her parents, "I can't go," Nimi said, waking from her stupor. She could take it for herself – in fact it would be like a balm, a dark place to hide herself – but for her family – well, the thought of their shame on her behalf was too much to bear (Desai, 35).

The doors are closed for her at her parents' home as they are for a girl once married off. Her uncle turned her from the door. "You are your husband's responsibility," he said angrily. "Go back. Your father gave a dowry when you married – you got your share and it is not for daughters to come claiming anything thereafter. If you have made your husband angry, go ask for forgiveness" (Desai, 306).

It is the duty and responsibility of an Indian woman to manage her family affairs all by herself. She doesn't have any support from parental home after getting married. Be it her guilt or not, she has to take the thing along or bear the consequences herself. Jemubhai receives a telegram informing him that Nimi had caught fire over a stove. He doesn't hold himself responsible for her mysterious, unnatural death. Nimi is rejected by her husband and not accepted by her paternal family. Even her daughter was sent to convent boarding school.

Conclusion:

Through the character of Nimi the novelist has portrayed the suppression of a woman under post-colonial circumstances. Nimi is an example of traditional woman suffering 'deprivation, injustice, oppression, alienation and isolation' (Murugandham, 3329) for no reason. Her wedding that occurred at a young age and the tender dreams of a future get brutally crushed under the male dominated society. She is unable to fight back or leave her husband for the brutal societal consequences. Her death in isolation leaves a question mark on the Indian culture glorifying women ideologically and exerting derogatory norms on her social existence. Desai portrays some other female characters like Lola, Noni, Sai's mother and Sai who attempt to attain some sort of redemption, but without many fruitful results. The 'patriarchal pattern of society destroys the happiness of a wife, beloved, daugater by wounding their psyche through gender discrimination' (Nisha, 1).

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65

MALE-FEMALE RATIO IMBALANCE IN INDIA: NATURE AND INFLUENCING FACTORS

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Abstract:
This research examines the critical imbalance of male-female sex ratios in India, with specific focus on the 2011 census data showing 940 females per thousand males nationally and 925 in Maharashtra. The study identifies "Excess Female Mortality" as a primary driver for this decline, fueled by female infanticide, foeticide, and systemic neglect. A significant factor contributing to this trend is the deep-seated tradition of son preference across South Asia, where sons are valued for wage-earning potential and inheritance. Modern prenatal sex determination and small-family cultures have further exacerbated the prevention of female births. To address these disparities, the paper suggests implementing equal economic rights, free health care for daughters, and social support for families without sons. Despite current challenges, shifting attitudes in urban populations offer a potential for the sex ratio to gradually stabilize over the coming decades.

Keywords: *Sex Ratio, Son Preference, Female Foeticide, South Asia, Gender Imbalance, etc.*

Introduction:

In 2011 India has 1,21,01,93,422 people living in 640 districts of 35 States and Union Territories. The state Maharashtra having population according to 2011 census was 11,23,72,972; in this 5,83,61,397 males and 5,40,11,575 females. The sex ratio in India is 940 females per thousand male as per 2011census and Maharashtra has 925 females per thousand males. The declining f/m ratio has been further intensified after the publication of the 2001 census data which showed a considerable lowering of the f/m ratios in the child population. The overall population sex ratios are affected by migration figures, the sex ratio in the younger population is not. As such an analysis of the child sex ratio data is considered more ap-propriate. Usually, the census figures for the 0-6 year age group become readily available due to the imperative of estimation of literacy figures in the country.

Excess Female Mortality' is the basic reason for declining sex ratio and excess female mortality and turn is the result of female infanticide, female foeticide, neglect of females and mater-nal mortality. It was found that while sex differentials in childhood mortality were substantial and widely distributed in rural part of India at the time of the 1961 Census, they were even more so by the time of the 1971 census Another recent study of spatial varia-tions in sex ratio in the context of India, where they found labour force participation rate and literacy rate of women significant in lessening sex ratio; while increasing recourse to sex selective abor-tions worsen it.

Objective of the Study:

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Following are the objectives of current study

- ✓ To know what is sex Ratio.
- ✓ To Study the male -female ratio in south Asia region.
- ✓ To Study the consequences of imbalanced sex ratio.
- ✓ To suggest the solution to correcting the imbalanced sex ratio.

Data-Base:
The secondary data has been used for the preparation of this paper.

The Sex Ratio at Birth and the Population Sex Ratio:
These two terms need to be clearly differentiated. The "sex ratio at birth" is defined as the number of male live births for every statistics registration. In particular, births occurring at home and 100 female births. Accurate figures for sex ratio at birth are difficult to obtain in many populations because of inadequacy of vital births of unwanted or abandoned infants often go unrecorded. In China, the One Child Policy presents specific challenges to accurate data collection because there may be collusion between parents and authorities to hide births that are not approved within the Policy.

The Problem of Son Preference:
In many countries, however, the sex ratio deviates from these norms because of the tradition of son preference. Son preference is most prevalent in an arc of countries from East Asia through South Asia to the Middle East and North Africa. Sons are preferred because (i) they have a higher wage-earning capacity, especially in agrarian economies; (ii) they continue the family line; and (iii) they are generally recipients of inheritance. Girls are often considered an economic burden because of the dowry system; after marriage they typically become members of the husband's family, ceasing to have responsibility for their parents in illness and old age.

Son preference is manifest prenatally, through sex determination and sex-selective abortion, and postnatally through neglect and abandonment of female children, which leads to higher female mortality. Since prenatal sex determination became avail-able in the mid-1980s it has made a major contribution to imbalances in the sex ratio seen in many Asian countries. However, it is the combination of sex-selective technology and a small-family culture that has caused the highest sex ratios. When large family size is the norm and access to contraception is limited, son preference has little influence on sex ratio because couples continue bearing children, largely irrespective of the gender of the children. Female infanticide, abandonment of newborn girls, and neglect of daughters have been used in such societies to increase the male-to-female ratio in families, especially in situations where poverty has limited the number of desired children. When the family size norm is moderate and only contraceptive methods are available. Couples may consider the sex distribution of their existing chil-dren and decide whether or not to use family planning, weighing the need for a son against their desired family size. However, when fertility rates are low, by choice or coercion, female births must be prevented to allow for family size norm.

The Impact of Son Preference on Sex Ratio:
The impact of son preference on the population sex ratio can be seen in census data for 2001. Asia is the only continent with a sex ratio >100, at 104; North America stands at 96.8 and Africa at 99.8. Table 1 shows estimates for numbers of missing females for Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, South Korea, Pakistan, Tai-wan, and Iran. Across these countries, an estimated 67-92 million females

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were missing in 2001. Three of these countries are of par-ticular interest: South Korea because it has succeeded in reducing the sex ratio very substantially, India because of its marked re-gional differences in sex ratio, and China with its unique One Child Policy.

Other measures include public awareness campaigns, which should focus on the problems facing young men in finding brides. More importantly, equal social and economic rights for males and females must be guaranteed, for example, in relation to rights of inheritance. Basic health care should be available free of charge, so that parents are not deterred by financial constraints from seeking health care for their daughters. In addition, special supportive measures should be provided for families with no sons,to ensure protection for parents in old age.

The Future:

Although the effects of male surplus will be a major problem for several Asian countries over the next two to three de-cades, there are indications that the situation may then improve. In South Korea, the sex ratio has already declined, and gender pref survey, 37% of the Chinese women surveyed (predominantly erence data from China are also encouraging. In a recent national younger, urban women claimed to have no gender preference. and 45% said the ideal family consisted of one boy and one girl. Almost equal numbers of the women expressed a preference for one girl as for one boy.

Conclusion:

There are, therefore, clear indications that the essential fundamental change in attitudes is starting to happen. We believe that both the population sex ratio and the sex ratio at birth will gradually decline over the next two to three decades in these high-sex-ratio countries, however, the damage for a large number of today's young men and boys has already been done.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

66

ROLE OF SKILLING COMMUNICATION IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract:
Women empowerment is a multidimensional process that involves social participation, economic independence, educational advancement, and political representation. Among the various tools of empowerment, communication skill development plays a decisive role. Communication skilling enhances self-expression, negotiation capacity, digital participation, and leadership potential among women. This paper examines communication not merely as a soft skill but as a transformative agency that reshapes power relations, strengthens social inclusion, and fosters gender justice. It also discusses structural barriers, digital empowerment, entrepreneurial communication, and policy-level interventions. The study argues that communication competence is central to achieving sustainable gender equality.

Keywords: *Women Empowerment, Communication Competence, Gender Justice, Digital Literacy, Leadership, Social Inclusion, etc.*

Introduction:

Women's empowerment is a dynamic and multidimensional process encompassing social participation, economic independence, educational access, political representation, and personal autonomy. While structural reforms, legal rights, and economic opportunities are essential components of empowerment, the ability to communicate effectively remains a foundational catalyst for transformation. Communication is not merely a functional skill; it is a means of asserting identity, negotiating power, and participating in public life. Historically, women's voices were confined to private spheres, limiting their access to decision-making spaces in education, governance, and the economy. As Michel Foucault explains, power operates through discourse, shaping what can be spoken and who is authorized to speak. When women are excluded from discourse, they are excluded from power. Similarly, Paulo Freire emphasizes dialogue as a practice of freedom, arguing that marginalized groups gain agency through critical communication. These theoretical perspectives underline the connection between voice and empowerment. In contemporary development frameworks, gender equality is recognized as a global priority. The United Nations identifies gender equality as a central objective under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, achieving this objective requires more than policy declarations; it demands strengthening women's communicative agency—the capacity to express ideas, negotiate opportunities, and influence decisions in both personal and public domains. Communication skilling enhances assertiveness, digital participation, entrepreneurial competence, leadership confidence, and civic engagement. It enables women to challenge

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discriminatory norms, build professional networks, advocate for rights, and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development. In the digital era, communicative competence extends beyond interpersonal interaction to include media literacy, online visibility, and technological fluency. This research paper examines the role of skilling communication in women's empowerment by analysing its theoretical foundations, practical dimensions, structural barriers, and policy implications. It argues that communication competence is not a supplementary soft skill but a transformative agency that reshapes power relations, strengthens social inclusion, and advances gender justice. Empowerment begins with voice, but it is sustained through skilled, confident, and purposeful communication.

Communication as Power and Agency:

Communication is not merely the transmission of information; it is a significant source of power and a foundation of human agency. Within the framework of women's empowerment, communication operates as both a means of influence and a mechanism of action. Power, in this sense, refers to the ability to shape discourse, influence decision-making, and participate in public life. Agency refers to the capacity to act independently and make purposeful choices. When women acquire and refine communication skills—whether interpersonal, professional, or digital—they strengthen their capacity to exercise both power and agency. The relationship between communication and power has long been acknowledged in social theory. Michel Foucault argues that power circulates through discourse and that those who control discourse shape social reality (Foucault 93). In this view, communication is not neutral; it structures knowledge, norms, and authority. Historically, women were denied access to public discourse, which restricted their influence in politics, education, and economic spheres. Skilling communication disrupts this imbalance by enabling women to participate actively in shaping narratives and institutional decisions.

Similarly, Paulo Freire emphasizes dialogue as a practice of freedom. In pedagogy of the oppressed Freire asserts that authentic dialogue empowers marginalized groups to become subjects of their own history rather than passive objects (Freire 88). Communication, therefore, becomes an instrument of liberation. When women engage in critical dialogue—whether in classrooms, workplaces, or communities—they transform from silent observers into active contributors. The connection between voice and empowerment is also highlighted in feminist thought. Mary Wollstonecraft, in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, questions patriarchal authority by affirming women's rational capacity and right to participate in intellectual discourse (Wollstonecraft, 45). Her argument establishes that the denial of women's voice is fundamentally the denial of equality. Thus, communicative competence becomes central to asserting dignity and autonomy.

Contemporary global leaders echo similar sentiments. Melinda Gates observes, "A woman with a voice is, by definition, a strong woman" (Gates, 112). This statement reflects the practical dimension of communicative empowerment. Voice here symbolizes not only speech but confidence, negotiation, and participation. Likewise, Amartya Sen, in Development as Freedom explains that development must expand individuals' capabilities and freedoms, including their ability to participate in social and political discussions (Sen, 36). Communication skill is thus a core capability that enhances women's social freedom. Media discourse also demonstrates the significance of communicative agency. Reports in The Times of India highlight how women leaders advocate greater participation in governance and corporate leadership. Such participation

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March 6th& 7th 2026

demands persuasive speaking, negotiation skills, and media literacy. Without communicative competence, structural opportunities cannot translate into meaningful empowerment.

In the digital era, communication technologies further expand women's agency. Online platforms provide spaces where women articulate concerns, mobilize support, and challenge stereotypes. However, effective engagement in such spaces requires digital communication literacy. Therefore, skilling communication is essential not only for personal growth but also for collective transformation. In conclusion, communication functions simultaneously as power and agency in the process of women empowerment. Drawing on the insights of Foucault, Freire, Wollstonecraft, hooks, Sen, and contemporary leaders, it becomes evident that communication enables women to influence discourse, participate in decision- making, and reshape societal structures. Skilling communication is thus not merely a professional asset; it is a transformative strategy for achieving gender equality and sustainable social development.

Dimensions of Communication Skilling in Women Empowerment:

Assertive Communication and Self-Advocacy:

Assertive communication is a key dimension of communication skilling that strengthens women's empowerment. It refers to the ability to express thoughts, needs, and rights confidently and respectfully without undermining others. Unlike passive communication, which reflects submission, or aggressive communication, which creates conflict, assertiveness promotes clarity, balance, and self-respect. In the context of empowerment, it becomes a practical tool for self-advocacy and negotiation. In many patriarchal settings, women are socialized to avoid confrontation and suppress independent opinions. Assertiveness training challenges this conditioning by encouraging confidence, boundary-setting, and the ability to refuse unfair demands without guilt. Women who develop assertive skills are better equipped to address workplace harassment, resist domestic oppression, and confront discriminatory behaviour. It functions both as a protective mechanism and as a source of psychological strength. Professionally, assertive communication enhances economic empowerment. Women who clearly articulate their contributions, expectations, and goals are more likely to negotiate fair salaries, leadership roles, and equal responsibilities. Assertiveness also supports civic participation by enabling women to speak confidently in public forums, policy discussions, and community decision-making processes. Importantly, assertiveness is not aggression; it is respectful and constructive expression. Skills such as maintaining eye contact, using clear statements, and setting firm boundaries increase self-esteem and reduce vulnerability to exploitation. Overall, assertive communication and self-advocacy are foundational to women's empowerment. They enable women to challenge inequality, claim their rights, and participate fully in social, economic, and political life.

Communication in Entrepreneurship:

Entrepreneurship is a vital pathway for women's economic empowerment, and communication skills play a central role in entrepreneurial success. Women entrepreneurs require competence in marketing communication, branding strategies, customer engagement, negotiation, and professional networking. Effective communication fosters trust, credibility, and long-term business relationships, all of which are essential for sustainable enterprise development. According to Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller, marketing communication is fundamental in building brand identity and customer loyalty (Kotler and Keller, 512). For women entrepreneurs, the ability to clearly articulate product value, engage customers persuasively, and communicate

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

brand vision strengthens market presence. In many contexts, women-led enterprises struggle not due to lack of innovation but due to limited exposure and communication barriers. Thus, entrepreneurial communication becomes a tool of economic agency.

Furthermore, Amartya Sen argues that economic freedom enhances individual capabilities and social development (Sen, 39). Communication competence expands such economic freedom by enabling women to negotiate contracts, present business proposals, and access financial networks. Government initiatives like Skill India emphasize communication training within entrepreneurship development programs to enhance employability and business sustainability. These skill-based programs recognize that communication is not secondary but central to entrepreneurial growth. Therefore, communication in entrepreneurship is both an economic strategy and an empowerment mechanism. It enhances visibility, fosters investor confidence, and broadens business opportunities for women in competitive markets.

Digital Communication and Online Visibility:

The digital revolution has significantly transformed the dynamics of women empowerment. Digital communication platforms enable women to create content, establish online businesses, build communities, and advocate for social change. Social media, e-commerce platforms, and digital networking tools have reduced traditional barriers to entry in many sectors. Digital literacy is a crucial component of communication skilling. According to reports by UNESCO, digital literacy increases women's participation in knowledge economies and strengthens their economic independence (UNESCO, 27). When women acquire skills in online communication, content creation, and digital marketing, they expand their professional reach beyond geographical limitations. Moreover, digital communication reduces the gender digital divide by equipping women with technological competence and confidence. Online visibility enhances not only economic opportunities but also social representation. Women entrepreneurs, educators, and activists can raise awareness about issues such as gender discrimination, health, and education through blogs, podcasts, and social media campaigns. This communicative presence transforms women from passive consumers of information into active producers of knowledge. Thus, digital communication literacy is a transformative dimension of empowerment. It strengthens economic independence through online businesses and fosters social influence through digital advocacy.

Political Communication and Civic Engagement:

Political empowerment is deeply connected to communicative competence. Women's participation in governance, civic debates, and policy dialogue depends largely on confidence in public speaking, argumentation, and negotiation. Political communication enables women to represent community concerns, articulate policy demands, and influence legislative decisions.The concept of participatory democracy emphasizes dialogue and deliberation. Jürgen Habermas argues that democratic legitimacy emerges from rational-critical debate within the public sphere (Habermas 89). For women to fully participate in this public sphere, communicative skills are indispensable. Without the ability to debate, persuade, and articulate viewpoints, political representation remains symbolic rather than substantive.

Organizations such as UN Women actively promote leadership training programs that enhance women's communication skills in governance and advocacy. These platforms encourage women leaders to engage in public policy discussions, election campaigns, and community mobilization. Communication training equips women to speak confidently in assemblies, negotiate policy changes, and advocate for gender-sensitive legislation. Additionally, assertive and

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

persuasive political communication strengthens grassroots participation. Women who are trained in debate and public dialogue can effectively address issues such as education, healthcare, and economic development within their communities. This reinforces the idea that empowerment is not merely representation but active engagement. Communication skilling in entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and political participation collectively expands women's economic, social, and civic agency. Whether in business negotiations, online platforms, or democratic forums, communication remains the foundation of visibility, influence, and sustainable empowerment.

Communication and Emotional Intelligence:

Emotional intelligence is closely interconnected with communication and plays a significant role in women's empowerment. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions while also responding effectively to the emotions of others. When combined with communication skills, emotional intelligence enhances interpersonal effectiveness, leadership capacity, and conflict resolution. According to Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence consists of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman 43). Among these components, empathy and social skills are directly linked to communicative competence. Women are often observed to demonstrate strong empathetic communication, which fosters collaboration and relationship-building. While such tendencies may partly reflect social conditioning, they can become powerful leadership assets when strategically developed.

In Emotional Intelligence, Goleman argues that leaders with high emotional intelligence create trust and cooperation within teams (87). Skilled emotional communication contributes to effective teamwork by encouraging openness, reducing misunderstandings, and strengthening mutual respect. In professional environments, women leaders who combine assertive communication with empathy often adopt inclusive leadership styles that value participation and shared decision- making. Furthermore, emotional communication plays a crucial role in peace-building and community engagement. Marshall B. Rosenberg, in Nonviolent Communication, emphasizes that empathetic listening and compassionate dialogue can transform conflict into cooperation (Rosenberg, 21). For women engaged in social activism, community leadership, or grassroots governance, such communication skills facilitate mediation, negotiation, and reconciliation. Emotional intelligence also strengthens women's self-confidence and resilience. By managing emotional responses to discrimination or professional challenges, women enhance their psychological empowerment. Communication skilling, therefore, supports both rational expression and emotional awareness. It allows women not only to articulate arguments logically but also to build relational trust and social harmony. Thus, communication training that integrates emotional intelligence enhances effective teamwork, promotes peace-building in communities, and supports inclusive leadership models. Empowerment, in this sense, is not limited to structural access but includes emotional and relational competence.

Education, Language and Access:

Language proficiency and educational access are foundational to communicative empowerment. The ability to use language effectively determines participation in professional, academic, and civic spaces. Women with access to multilingual education are better positioned to engage in broader networks, access global opportunities, and participate in transnational dialogues.Pierre Bourdieu introduces the concept of linguistic capital, arguing that language competence functions as a form of social power (Bourdieu, 55). Individuals who command dominant or prestigious

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

languages gain access to economic and institutional opportunities. For women, especially in multilingual societies like India, proficiency in regional languages, national languages, and English enhances employability and leadership potential. Similarly, Paulo Freire emphasizes that education is a practice of freedom that enables individuals to critically engage with society (Freire, 72). Communication-based education encourages dialogue, questioning, and participation. When educational institutions integrate structured communication training, they create long-term empowerment pathways.

Educational Instituions must Incorporate:

- ✓ Business Communication to prepare women for professional environments and entrepreneurial ventures.
- ✓ Public Speaking Modules to enhance confidence in leadership and civic engagement.
- ✓ Media Literacy to enable critical evaluation of digital content and responsible participation in online spaces.
- ✓ Cross Cultural Communication to enable critical evaluation of digital content and responsible participation in online spaces.

Such structured training builds sustained communicative competence. It equips women not only with technical language skills but also with confidence, critical thinking, and adaptability. As Amartya Sen notes, development involves expanding capabilities and freedoms (Sen, 36). Language proficiency and communication education expand women's capabilities, thereby strengthening their social, economic, and political empowerment. In short, communication and emotional intelligence, along with language education and structured training, form essential pillars of women's empowerment. By enhancing both emotional and linguistic competence, communication skilling addresses internal confidence and external access simultaneously. It empowers women to lead, negotiate, collaborate, and participate fully in evolving social structures.

Barriers to Communication Empowerment:

Despite significant progress in women's education and workforce participation, systemic barriers continue to restrict women's communicative empowerment. These obstacles are deeply embedded in socio-cultural, economic, digital, and institutional structures. Addressing them requires comprehensive policy reforms and gender-sensitive communication programs that challenge structural inequalities.

Patriarchal Norms:

Patriarchal social systems often discourage outspoken behavior among women and associate silence with virtue. In many societies, women who speak assertively are labeled as aggressive or disrespectful, reinforcing gender stereotypes. Pierre Bourdieu explains that symbolic power operates subtly through cultural norms that define what is considered legitimate speech (Bourdieu, 51). When public discourse is dominated by male authority, women's voices are marginalized. Similarly, bell hooks argues that patriarchal culture conditions women to internalize silence and self-doubt, making speech a radical act of resistance (Hooks, 12). These norms restrict women's participation in leadership, community dialogue, and political engagement. Therefore, communication empowerment requires challenging cultural expectations that equate femininity with passivity.

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
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March 6th& 7th 2026

Economic Constraints:
Economic inequality significantly limits access to quality communication training, higher education, and professional development opportunities. Women from marginalized communities often lack financial resources to enroll in communication courses, digital literacy programs, or leadership workshops. Amartya Sen emphasizes that poverty restricts individual capabilities and freedoms (Sen, 87). Without economic resources, women cannot fully develop communicative competence necessary for professional advancement or civic participation. Limited access to education perpetuates a cycle where economic dependence reinforces communicative marginalization. Government and institutional initiatives must therefore prioritize subsidized communication training programs, scholarships, and community-based learning centers to ensure inclusive access.

Safety Concerns in Digital Spaces:
While digital platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for visibility and entrepreneurship, they also expose women to online harassment and abuse. Cyberbullying, trolling, and gender-based digital violence frequently silence women's voices. Reports from UNESCO indicate that online harassment disproportionately affects women, particularly journalists and public figures, leading many to withdraw from digital engagement (UNESCO, 18). Such hostile environments create psychological distress and discourage active participation in online discourse. Digital communication empowerment must therefore include cyber-safety education, strong regulatory frameworks, and supportive reporting mechanisms. Safe digital spaces are essential for sustaining women's online visibility and economic independence.

Institutional Bias:
Institutional bias within workplaces, political institutions, and academic environments often undervalues women's contributions. Leadership spaces may limit speaking opportunities or overlook women's perspectives in decision-making processes. Sheryl Sandberg observes that systemic biases discourage women from speaking up in corporate settings and hinder leadership advancement (Sandberg, 48). Similarly, Jürgen Habermas highlights that genuine participation in the public sphere requires equal access to dialogue and recognition (Habermas, 89). When institutional cultures privilege dominant voices, communicative equality remains incomplete. Addressing institutional bias requires organizational reforms, gender-sensitivity training, and transparent evaluation systems that value inclusive participation.

Communication Skilling and Sustainable Development:
Communication skilling forms a critical bridge between individual empowerment and collective progress. Sustainable development is not merely an economic or environmental agenda; it is a participatory process that depends upon inclusive dialogue, informed awareness, and community engagement. Women who possess strong communication skills contribute significantly to sustainable development by promoting social awareness, educational advancement, environmental advocacy, and democratic participation. One major contribution of empowered communicators is the promotion of health and hygiene awareness. Women often serve as primary caregivers and community educators. When equipped with effective communication strategies, they can disseminate knowledge about sanitation, maternal health, nutrition, and disease prevention. According to World Health Organization, community-based communication interventions significantly improve public health outcomes and behavioral change (WHO 19). Women trained

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

in health communication become local advocates for preventive care, thereby strengthening sustainable health systems.

Communication also plays a transformative role in encouraging girls' education. Educated and communicatively confident women are more likely to advocate for equal educational opportunities. UNESCO highlights that women's literacy and community engagement positively influence girls' school enrollment and retention (UNESCO, 34). Through persuasive dialogue and community mobilization, women leaders can challenge early marriage practices and socio-cultural barriers to education. Additionally, Amartya Sen emphasizes that development involves expanding individuals' capabilities and freedoms (Sen, 36). Communication is a foundational capability that enables women to advocate, negotiate, educate, and collaborate. Thus, communication skilling contributes directly to achieving sustainable development goals by integrating individual agency with societal advancement. In essence, communication functions as a catalyst for sustainable transformation. Empowered women communicators promote health awareness, encourage girls' education, support environmental advocacy, and strengthen democratic dialogue—demonstrating that sustainable development is deeply rooted in communicative participation.

Policy Recommendations:

To strengthen communication-based empowerment, systemic policy interventions are essential. Empowerment through communication cannot rely solely on individual initiative; it requires institutional commitment, inclusive frameworks, and gender-sensitive reforms.

Integration of Communication Skill Modules in Vocational Training Programmes:

Communication training should be embedded in all vocational and skill- development initiatives. Programs under Skill India and similar national schemes must prioritize modules in business communication, negotiation, digital literacy, and public speaking. As Paulo Freire argues, education must cultivate critical dialogue and participatory engagement (Freire, 72). Communication-centered vocational training enhances employability and entrepreneurial capacity.

Free Digital Literacy Workshop for Rural Women:

Digital communication has become essential for economic independence and civic participation. Governments and NGOs should provide free and accessible digital literacy programs, particularly for rural and marginalized women. Reports from UNESCO emphasize that digital skills significantly increase women's participation in knowledge economies (UNESCO, 27). Reducing the gender digital divide is crucial for inclusive development.

Mentorship Programmes Led By Women Leaders:

Mentorship strengthens confidence, leadership capacity, and communicative competence. Encouraging experienced women leaders to mentor young professionals fosters intergenerational empowerment. Such initiatives create supportive networks that enhance public speaking, negotiation skills, and professional visibility.

Establishment of Safe Online Platforms:

Digital empowerment must be accompanied by safety mechanisms. Online harassment often silences women's voices. UN Women advocates for safe digital environments that protect

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

women's rights and encourage participation in online discourse (UN Women, 15). Regulatory frameworks and reporting systems are necessary to ensure secure platforms for expression.

Promotion of Gender Sensitive Media Representation:
Media narratives shape public perceptions of women's leadership and communication styles. Encouraging gender-sensitive media representation challenges stereotypes that portray assertive women negatively. Media literacy programs and ethical journalism standards can contribute to more inclusive representation, thereby reinforcing communicative empowerment.

Conclusion:
Communication skilling is a transformative foundation of women's empowerment, not merely a professional skill. The ability to speak, negotiate, question, and participate determines how effectively women exercise agency and influence social, economic, digital, and political structures. Communication functions as power and agency supporting self-advocacy, economic independence, civic participation, and inclusive leadership. However, barriers such as patriarchal norms, economic inequality, digital insecurity, and institutional bias continue to limit women's voices. Sustainable empowerment therefore requires structured communication training, supportive policies, safe digital spaces, and gender- sensitive reforms. Ultimately, communication bridges individual growth with collective progress. Empowerment begins with voice and is sustained through confident, skilled, and purposeful communication, making it essential for gender equality and sustainable development.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

67

DIGITAL SPACE AS A MEDIUM OF WOMEN'S EXPRESSION AND EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract:
The paper examines digital space as a medium of women's expression and empowerment. Traditional public spaces have deliberately excluded women from participating in meaningful dialogue by suppressing their voices and causing neglect of women's issues. The vast web of interconnected networks has transformed communication through digital space and given marginalized communities an equal chance to participate in dialogue. The paper argues that digital space acts as an alternative to public space and operates as a counterpublic space by providing women with a safe and barrier-free environment for expression and empowerment. It uses theoretical analysis of public space and its feminist critique, along with numerous data available online regarding women's participation in virtual space. The paper acknowledges the dual nature of digital space: whereas it acts as a medium of liberation, it also faces certain limitations that threaten women's presence and might reduce their participation in the future. The study concludes that digital space is not free from gender bias but still acts as a transformative force and reshapes global communication by involving women in content creation and generating numerous employment opportunities.

Keywords: *Digital Space; Counterpublic, Women's Empowerment, Public Sphere, Feminist Critique, Gender Equality, Online Activism, Digital Threats, Cyber Harassment, Virtual Communication, etc.*

Introduction:

The 21st century has revolutionized traditional communication by introducing digital space. It transcends the barriers existing in communication and has transformed lives. Its accessibility and democratic nature have encouraged users from different backgrounds to participate in content creation and the exchange of ideas. Historically, global communication was often interrupted by physical, geographical, and economic barriers, which gave scope for miscommunication along with limited knowledge exchange. Virtual space has helped remove these barriers and acts as a bridge across the globe, thus changing global communication patterns.

Public space is subject to male dominance, which further leads to gender-biased communication and hostility toward marginalized participants, including women. Nancy Fraser

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

argues that the undemocratic nature of public space dissuades women from expressing their opinions and confines them to the domestic sphere. The ideas generated and discussed in such domestic spheres are often viewed as secondary and disconnected from reality, thus undermining women's potential and intellect. The forced exclusion of women from the public sphere lowers their chances of employment and active contribution to nation-building, causing economic dependence. The flawed functioning of public space promotes men's ideas of the world, ultimately leading to women's subjugation and violence.

In this context, we have to understand the significance and contribution of virtual space in promoting gender equality. Unlike public space, digital space appears more favourable, which encourages women's participation and safeguards them against violence. Access to knowledge and skill training available on digital platforms has given women financial freedom, which has destabilized the power structure dominated by men. Despite its positive outcomes, it is subject to growing threats that may hamper women's participation in the future. These threats include cyberattacks, growing censorship, online bullying, identity theft, etc. This paper argues that digital space acts as a tool for women's empowerment and a medium to express their will. It also considers its vulnerabilities and reflects on its future growth in the context of women. The paper seeks to comprehend the complex relationship between women, empowerment, and technology in the 21st century.

Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative and theoretical research methodology. It is based on conceptual analysis of public sphere theory and its feminist critique, particularly the works of Habermas (1962) and Fraser (1990). The research relies on secondary sources, including journal articles and credible online materials related to rising digital threats to women. It interprets existing literature and documented examples of women's digital use to examine digital space as a counter public. This approach enables a critical understanding of digital space along with its limitations in the context of digital space as a medium for women's expression and empowerment.

Literature Review:

The concept of public space is developed by Habermas (1962), who described it as a place which forms public opinion through rational dialogue between the participants and acts as a bridge between the state and society. Later, feminist scholars questioned the Habermas claim of public space acting as an inclusive space and pointed out its biased nature towards women. Critics like Nancy Fraser (1990) pointed out the power structure within the public sphere and its impact on women's participation and expression. She proposed counterpublic as an alternative to public space which exists parallelly and enables women to freely engage in meaningful dialogue about their rights, identity, and criticize the patriarchal structure of society.

Technology enabled the creation of virtual space, which reshaped the communication pattern, and the critics began to analyze digital space as counterpublic and its implication. Boyd (2014) examined the changing relationship between women's participation in counterpublic space and highlighted the development of trust and the coalition between them on similar issues. The studies of critics show the dual nature of digital space acting as an agent of change despite its inherent limitations. However, there remains a need to analyze digital space as counterpublic, and this study seeks to address it.

Public Space and Women:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

German philosopher Jurgen Habermas (1962), in his seminal work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, discussed public space as a safe, democratic space between society and the state. The various stakeholders of democracy participate in meaningful dialogue in public space, which in return influences decision-making and gives the right direction to society. Public space gives emphasis to equal rights to express and logical communication, thus giving every participant equal status and rejecting any kind of authoritative figure. Historically, such places existed in England and France in the form of coffee houses, salons, and libraries; however, they were dominated by elite and educated members of society. Public spaces grew in large numbers in modern times due to the Industrial Revolution, along with many countries accepting a democratic form of governance, which changed communication patterns.

Despite the positive outcome of public space, it still faces criticism from feminist critics. They argue that public spaces are often dominated by those who control power and thus undermine the presence of the subaltern. Public spaces operate under the influence of patriarchal values and thus give secondary importance to women's opinions and issues. The biased attitude of public space forces women to confine themselves to their private space. Feminist critic Nancy Fraser (1990) argued against the hypocritical nature of public spaces and questioned the universality and inclusivity of public space. She proposed counterpublic space as an alternative to public space for the marginalized sections of the community. Counterpublic space will provide women with a platform and equal rights to express their views along with a safe environment. Women can discuss issues once labelled as taboo and unimportant but vital to their lives in a protected environment without the fear of judgment or censorship. In this context, it is important to analyze digital space as counterpublic and its relation to women's expression and empowerment.

Digital Space as Counter public:

Digital space can be viewed as a contemporary counterpublic created with the assistance of technology and as an alternative to public space. It can be defined as a virtual place created through a vast web of networks which allows participants to engage in meaningful dialogue by transcending geographical barriers. Digital space includes numerous digital platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Google, Snapchat, Instagram, etc. All these digital platforms give equal chances to participants for content creation and exchange of ideas, thus resulting in global connectivity, which further leads to the generation of knowledge and employment at the grassroots level. Digital space, due to its safeguard measures and democratic nature, can be viewed as a contemporary counterpublic.

The multipurpose nature of digital space not only acts as a technological tool but also as a counter space which exists to challenge the dominant biased narrative. Although Fraser imagines counterpublic as a physical space against public space, technology has enabled the creation of such space virtually. Women's engagement with digital space forms strong bonds of sisterhood across the globe (Boyd, 2014) on various women's issues and challenges, resulting in female solidarity and resilience towards patriarchy.

Digital Space: Women's Expression and Empowerment:

Women have used digital media creatively to express their opinions, experiences, and to develop content through various digital platforms. They have also expressed their dissent and given voice to injustice and ill-treatment faced by them at various levels. For example, women in Iran used YouTube to record and spread their revolt against dictatorship by posting numerous videos

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

showing them burning hijabs, publicly cutting their hair, and singing and dancing on the streets. In India, Twitter was used to spread awareness through the hashtag MeToo about the assault on women in the entertainment industry. Digital platforms help women challenge rape culture and build bonds (Mendes, 2019).

Digital space has also helped to create employment and generate income for women. Through the use of various online platforms, women have gained financial independence through online skill training and have challenged the traditional job structure. Financial independence has challenged existing power structures within households and has increased women's participation in decision-making within families. Thus, digital space has not limited its role as a technological tool or medium of entertainment but is now acting as a transformative force.

Digital Space and Threats to Women:

It is important to acknowledge that, like public space, the counterpublic digital space is also subject to various threats. Rising consumerism, market competition, and changing politics are acting as influencing agents and threats to free speech on the internet. Women's safety is threatened due to online bullying, identity theft, cyber hacking, and data leaks, which might result in lowering their online participation. Online harassment and cyberstalking mainly target women with the aim to silence their voice (Citron, 2014). Multiple cases have been registered across the world by women politicians, reporters, and activists complaining about digital attacks and the leaking of their personal information to the public. It is true that digital space functions as a counterpublic and a medium of women's expression and empowerment; however, it is also important to highlight that it reflects the patriarchal power structure. Thus, it is important to establish global rules and regulations for women's digital safety and ensure future participation.

Conclusion:

The study demonstrates that digital space acts as a contemporary virtual counterpublic and gives women equal chances for growth and expression. It highlights the changing nature of women's employment and how it affects existing systems. It shows how women's active presence in digital space is changing job structures, helping them achieve financial freedom, unity on women's issues, and the ability to raise their voices against injustice. However, it is difficult to utilize the potential of digital space in the context of women if we fail to address its vulnerabilities. Digital violence will be a rising threat to women's presence and, if not countered at the global level, will result in turning digital space into a male-dominated territory. It is important to make structural changes in digital space and ensure women's participation in the future as well.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
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March 6th& 7th 2026

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

68

EXPLORING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract:
This qualitative research paper is a reflection of women and their contribution to leadership, and how university studies would improve their professional communication capacity. The role of higher education in professional communication competence is very high in transforming the knowledge of school into professional competency skills, such as assertion, negotiation, and oral presentation. These competencies in the institutions are learned in organized curriculums, interactive learning and co-curricular activities that circumvent the gender gap in leadership and technical sectors. Although women constitute almost 50% of the student population in Indian universities, they have not participated in leadership activities as much as they should. There are only 9.55% of higher education institutions in India which are led by women (1,151 institutions). This distinction at the systemic level is one of the ways of illuminating the hindrances in the system, yet the indication is what kind of skills women leaders can contribute to the academic world. The rate of women enrolling in and graduating from universities has increased significantly, but the number of women in top leadership positions remains very low. The image of such a scenario is a complicated landscape of continuing problems and emerging possibilities, and institutional change and individual strategies can lead to the achievement of actual gender equity. To work in a field where women are, as yet, highly underrepresented and underpaid, women in higher education leadership require a combination of essential skills, strategic career development, and good support systems. Leadership of women in the Indian higher education is attracting interest as the institutions are appreciating it. Nevertheless, a lot of development is required. According to recent studies, there is an enormous gender disparity in top posts because women occupy just about 6% of leadership roles within Indian higher education institutions (HEIs). The increasing quantity of women leadership competencies at different levels shows the image of new India and supports the nation-building.

Keywords: *Higher Education, Women Leadership, Competency, Empowerment, Gender Roles, Gender Equality, etc.*

Introduction:

Education is the strongest tool to develop the capabilities of a person and to reach the required goals of social and economic progress of a nation. Through education, people are able to expand their horizons and offer opportunities to women in increasing decision-making and leadership skills. One of the most significant ways of empowering women with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence is education. High but underutilized competency in empathy, emotional intelligence and collaborative decision making is a feature of women's leadership in Indian higher

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

education, with only a small proportion, between 5-10%, of the top leadership roles occupied by women. Competencies, particularly transformative leadership, academic stewardship, and multitasking, are based on hindrances in patriarchal structures and a lack of mentorship. Women are influencing the leadership in India by initiating a real change in the industries and bringing a more empathetic, inclusive and sustainable style of authority. They are a key to the future of the country because their leadership is backed by the historical context and current policies, yet the systemic impediments to complete equality still remain.

Background of the study:

Women in India are stepping forward to lead by building upon a rich historical foundation, transforming the world today in a variety of ways, and leading through the principles of collective, community-oriented transformation. The impact of female leadership is enormous. The performance of the Indian experiments demonstrates that when the adolescent population was exposed to female leaders in local government, gender disparity of educational aspirations and educational success was substantially lowered among the adolescents. It is an indication that the women leaders are not mere administrators, but are worthy of being emulated by the upcoming generation with their objectives. Even the Indian institutions, which are progressive, are paying attention. The use of formal mentorship and attempts to promote better promotions in Universities like the University of Delhi and IIT Madras are some steps towards the right direction.

Statement of the problem:

Empowerment of women in higher learning institutions in India is vital in innovation and creation of an inclusive learning process that revolves around changes in the administration into higher leadership. Ethical, business and educational mandate is achieving gender equality at the higher education levels. It also empowers the institutions and offers meaningful role models to the students and the diversified thinking on decision-making. The challenges are not new, but the enablers are self-evident. It has its basis on the establishment of the institutional systems change and the setup of the enabling cultures, as well as the equipping of individual women with tools and opportunities that enable them to assert leadership.

Aims and Objectives of the study:

This paper will examine the dynamics of women's leadership skills in different areas. Researching the leadership skills of women in other fields will help to break the gender barriers within the system, increase their career paths, and show the practical business benefits of the gendered decision-making process. The main objective and purposes of studying these competencies include:

- ✓ To empirically demonstrate that gender-diverse leadership teams are more innovative and profitable, driving greater competitive advantage.
- ✓ To understand how female leaders cultivate more supportive, empathetic, and collaborative cultures, resulting in higher employee retention and lower burnout.
- ✓ To highlight how women in leadership roles tend to emphasize ethical standards, sustainability, and corporate social responsibility (CSR).
- ✓ To highlight the "role-model effect," where seeing women in power inspire other women to pursue leadership roles, reducing "stereotype threat" and improving performance.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Historical Foundations of Women's Leadership:

The history of the Indian subcontinent shows that women's leadership is not a new phenomenon but has deep roots.

1. **Ancient to Medieval Periods**: Within the early Vedic times, women were allowed to attend education and had freedom to select their husbands. There are records of women rulers, regents and military commanders, including Queen Prabhavatigupta of the Gupta Empire, who worked as an administrator and Rudrama Devi, who ruled the Kakatiya dynasty in the 13th century.
2. **Colonial Era to Independence:** The women were central in the social reform and independence movement. Leaders such as Savitribai Phule who established the first girl school in India in 1848 and Sarojini Naidu, a poet and the first woman governor in independent India reshaped leadership in the country by providing education and political activism.

Key leadership competencies for women in Academia:-

Success in academic leadership for women involves a combination of professional, strategic and personal competencies:

- ✓ **Strategic Vision and Change Management**: Leading institutional transformation in a dynamic educational landscape.
- ✓ **Financial and Administrative Acumen**: Overseeing complex budgets, resources, and governance structures.
- ✓ **Relational and Team Leadership**: Fostering collaboration, mentoring faculty, and building inclusive cultures that support diverse teams.
- ✓ Personal Resilience and Self-Management: Navigating bias, managing multiple roles, and sustaining well-being and emotional intelligence under pressure.

There is a shift in women's leadership in Indian higher education, with competencies having shifted towards strategic decision-making, digital skills, and transformative leadership in order to break through structural constraints and low representation (approximately 9.55%). The most important competencies are institutional politics, emotional intelligence and creation of collaborative networks. The main competencies include using AI and technology, research management, and facilitating inclusive and gender-neutral policies. Next, there are key women leaders in Indian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) such as:

- ✓ **Strategic & Administrative Skills**: Proficiency in institutional governance, policymaking, and strategic planning.
- ✓ **Digital & Technical Competence**: Enhanced capability in using AI, data analysis, and digital learning tools to lead modern, tech-enabled campuses.
- ✓ **Emotional Intelligence & Mentoring**: High emotional intelligence, fostering empathy, and mentoring others to strengthen the leadership pipeline.
- ✓ **Transformational & Resilient Leadership**: Utilizing collaborative, transformative styles to overcome institutional, cultural, and gender-based barriers.
- ✓ **Networking & Negotiation**: Building strong, formal and informal, networks for mentorship and professional support.

Contemporary Domains of Impact:

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Today, Indian women are leading change across every sector. The following table highlights key areas and examples:

Domain of Leadership	How Women Are Shaping It	Key Examples & Impact
Business & Entrepreneurship	Building globally competitive companies and championing inclusive workplace policies.	Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw (Biocon) revolutionized biotech. Indra Nooyi (former PepsiCo CEO) is a global business icon. Falguni Nayar (Nykaa) transformed e-commerce.
Science & Technology	Breaking barriers in STEM fields and working to close the gender gap in science education.	Dr. Ritu Karidhal ("Rocket Woman of India") was a key architect of India's Mars mission. Sandhya Gupta founded Aavishkaar to address math anxiety among girls.
Social Change & Community Development	Using grassroots, participatory approaches to solve local issues like water conservation, gender equality, and rural empowerment.	Archana Mane promoted drought-resistant farming and water harvesting in Maharashtra. Ela Bhatt founded SEWA, a trade union for women in the informal sector.
Politics & Governance	Leveraging formal quotas in local governments to influence policy and reduce corruption, with research showing positive outcomes.	A 2010 study found that an additional term for a female village council head reduced bribery. Over one million women hold local governance roles.
Sports & Arts	Excelling in non-traditional fields and using their platform for social advocacy.	Jhulan Goswami, a legendary cricketer, now mentors girls from disadvantaged backgrounds. Shabana Azmi, an acclaimed actress, advocates for women's rights and housing.

Characteristics of "Feminine Leadership":

Many women leaders in India exemplify a leadership style that research and observers characterize by several key traits:

- ✓ **Empathy and Inclusivity**: Prioritizing community needs and ensuring all voices are heard in decision-making.
- ✓ **Collaborative Problem-Solving**: Preferring dialogue and collective action over top-down directives.
- ✓ **Long-Term, Sustainable Vision**: Balancing progress with concern for people and the environment

The Current Landscape for Women Leaders:

More recent statistics indicate a gradual rise in gender equality at the highest ranks of Indian academia: The proportion of female-led institutions has increased significantly (from around 6% at 2018 to 9.55% at 2021). Although this has risen, more than 89% of institutions are headed by

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

men. There is a huge obstacle during the shift between the top faculty and the executive. There are a lot of competent women still in the faculty, and they are not allowed to take further positions, such as Vice-Chancellor, because of a complicated set of institutional and social reasons.

Pathways to Strengthen Women's Leadership: Recommendations for Change:

To build a stronger pipeline, a multi-programmed approach is essential:

- ✓ **For Institutions**: Mandate transparent, bias-free promotion criteria and establish formal mentorship and sponsorship programs. Actively work to include women in influential committees and networks.
- ✓ **For Policymakers**: Consider extending gender diversity targets to leadership selection panels and funding dedicated leadership development programs for women in academia.
- ✓ **For Individuals**: Self-proposed into mentorships, publicly map success, and carve strategic networks of peers who should be the future leaders to be supported and further their causes.

Key Competencies of Women Leaders in Indian Higher Education:-

- ✓ **Emotional Intelligence (EI) & Empathy**: The female leaders often have high EI, which helps them understand students/staff needs better and foster a supportive, nurturing, and inclusive environment on campus.
- ✓ **Transformational & Collaborative Leadership**: They are more participatory and a more team-based outfit as opposed to a hierarchical outfit that is founded on mentorship and nurturing of talent.
- ✓ **Ethical Decision-Making & Institutional Stewardship**: Women leaders are said to be so committed to academic integrity and all round, well-being of academic community.
- ✓ **Adaptability & Multitasking**: They also acquire high-pressure, multitasking, and resiliency skills as a result of the necessity to have a combination of roles, adjusting to complicated, high-pressure environments.
- ✓ **Innovation in Academic Governance**: They usually introduce new insights to curriculum making and research, which is crucial in the process of updating education under NEP 2020.

The Current Leadership Landscape:

Women are underrepresented in senior academic leadership; this is a worldwide phenomenon, but with large regional variations.

Region/Country	Key Statistic on Women's Leadership	Reference
Global (Top 200 Universities)	25% led by women; 14 of 27 countries have no female leaders at this level.	*Nature, 2025*
United States	30% of university presidencies held by women; nearly 40% of institutions have never had a woman president.	*Montclair Univ., 2024 / Regis College, 2025*
United Kingdom	26.4% of top positions held by women.	*Nature, 2025*
Canada	28% of top positions are held by women.	*Nature, 2025*
Germany	19.4% of top positions held by women.	*Nature, 2025*
India	Only 6% of leadership positions held by women.	*Nature, 2025*

Conclusion:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Subsequently, to empower women in leadership in Indian higher education, several strategies are needed, such as identification of their competencies, deconstruction of the existing obstacles in a strategic manner, and active facilitation of the establishment of the talent pipeline. In fact, to have women as heads of higher education in India is not just a matter of equity but also a vehicle in terms of good performance of the institution and overall change in the society. Nevertheless, despite its importance, there is a very low proportion of women in such positions. The need to increase the number of women in leadership has had substantial evidence, both inside and outside institutions. The strategic necessity of introducing innovations, the need to improve the level of education and to improve the social progress in Indian higher education is to promote female leadership in the field. The existing representation is not large, but one can see that the advantages are great. The future is in the replacement of the passive recognition by institutional changes that will be active to eliminate the barriers and build a truly equitable leadership hierarchy.

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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

69

SUSTAINABILITY OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN WATER SHED REGION OF MARATHWADA

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Abstract:
The present study examines the sustainability of women entrepreneurs in the watershed region of Marathwada, with special reference to Latur district, in the aftermath of the 1993 earthquake. It evaluates the role of Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), a non-governmental organization, in empowering marginalized rural women through capacity building, entrepreneurship development, and community mobilization. Based on primary data collected from 60 women entrepreneurs associated with SSP, along with secondary sources, the study analyzes changes in their socio-economic status, decision-making ability, and livelihood sustainability. Training interventions based on the KSMA (Knowledge, Skill, Motivation, Attitude) framework enabled women to engage in diversified enterprises such as organic farming, dairy, poultry, tailoring, and micro-processing units. Statistical analysis, including hypothesis testing using the Chi-square method, indicates significant improvement in income levels, self-reliance, and participation in business decisions after SSP intervention. Case studies further highlight transformation from subsistence living to financially stable entrepreneurship. The findings demonstrate that community-based institutional support, skill enhancement, and access to microfinance contribute substantially to long-term sustainability and empowerment of grassroots women in disaster-prone rural regions.

Keywords: *Grassroots Women, Women Empowerment, Sustainability, Watershed Region, SSP, Micro-Entrepreneurship, etc.*

Introduction:

Gone are the days when women were considered no match for all powerful men in this world. The male dominated world was always reluctant to even acknowledge the fact that women were as good as men on parameters of hard work, intelligence quotient (I.Q) and leadership traits. In the modern era, the new generation women have an impact on all spheres of life including the most intricate and cumbersome world of entrepreneurship.

However, many entrepreneurs have also been facing various problems and SSP helps to resolve those by providing necessary support and proper training in their respective fields. SSP (SWAYAM SHIKSHAN PRAYOG) is a NGO working towards fulfilling the mission of sustainable community development by empowering women as leaders and entrepreneurs since many years throughout the country and abroad also. In case of the situations arising after tsunami in Tamil Nadu, earthquakes in Gujarat and Latur, SSP worked in communities for women-led-relief and reconstruction process. The training programme involves KSMA (Knowledge, Skill, Motivation, Attitude)

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SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

This paper consists of numerous case studies of marginalized women in the way they have transformed their life completely by becoming small entrepreneurs. During training period, women were acquainted with innovative organic farming, social enterprises, clean energy, water, sanitation health and nutrition etc. This model encouraged small farmers to shift from cash crops to diversified food crops for their family from own farm through bio farming. After fulfilling the family demands, remaining was sold out in the market at comparatively higher rates as they were produced organically. Seed banks and grain banks were setup by community leaders to cope up food security of their villages during and immediately after occurrence of a disaster. Village eco systems also awakened to a new way of reclaiming their lives with confidence and dignity. The training programme involves knowing the customers, finance and the market. As these case studies are from water shed region, organic manure is used instead of chemical fertilizers. The mixed cropping pattern is suggested. By providing skill training, the learning entrepreneurs improved their capacities to understand the market and run their businesses profitably.

This research also focuses on various initiatives taken by Swayam Shikshan Prayog in financial and social aspects of rural women in different projects. The paper is the result of an impact assessment conducted for Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) on their work with grass root women. SSP equips rural women with the variety of business skills which leads to empowerment of women entrepreneurs.

Distribution and management of available resources have built a strong community for the entrepreneurs. The training programme is designed to encourage new talent, skill & ability. The training helps to uncover the hidden demand of their family and society as well. The strength of each actor in network is leveraged to launch new markets at the bottom of the pyramid.

The formation of self help groups made starting their own business at group level viable. They started to grant loans to group members, and use the balance amount in the bank in the form of fixed deposit. In this way they have learned to open bank account as well as management of their finance and cope up with financial problems in rural areas.

While considering the life style of the entrepreneurs, a drastic change in their life style, confidence and standard of living is seen. This has been proved by testing the hypothesis of earning before the training and after the training. The women who were marginalized initially are now successful entrepreneurs with variety of business skills earning a considerable amount to fulfill their family needs and have gained recognition in the society. They sell their produce/product at village market on week days, various fairs as well as exhibitions at village levels and district levels which are arranged by SSP and sometimes by entrepreneurs collectively.

By using the Chi-square method in the research, it has been found that all the respondents are independent to take decisions in the area of planning, material handling, operations purchasing of raw material and marketing of their products. In rural area empowering women is always challenging task, institutions like SSP help to overcome these challenges.

Women empowerment through entrepreneurship development not only enhances national productivity, generate employment but also helps to develop economic independence, personal and social capabilities among the rural women and community at large; providing a long term vision of supporting a movement where women groups in rural areas are able to transform their communities.

Review of Literature:

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

Women 2000 & beyond: International Convention at Beijing 2004 Journal: A large amount of women's work is not valued, unacknowledged and not visible socially. It is the response of the women that happens through local organizations that is responsible for a rapid and efficient relief during a disaster.

Building better futures empowering grass root women to build resilient Communities-Report of Groots International – (June 2007) Edition: The report mentions that women are not considered during the process of decision making on a public-level. In order to establish significant future partnerships, it is very important to have dialogues with the regional authorities, government and the decision makers on a regular basis.

Shashtri and Sinha (2010): Entrepreneurs, particularly women, require encouragement, support and incentives from their families, social circles & most importantly from the Government. The government should proactively be involved in the upliftment of women entrepreneurs by helping them in various aspects that include finance and marketing mainly.

Hedayat Allah Nikkhah and Maroof Bin Redzuan (Malasiya) (2010): This paper (The role of NGOs in promoting empowerment for sustainable community development) lays its emphasis on the role played by NGOs in determining the potential of a community to be economically empowered with the help of various governmental and non-governmental organizations. The author states that NGOs are essential in order to develop the capacities of a society such as skills, assets etc in order to motivate the community as a whole to improve their standard of living. These NGOs act as capacity enhancers that play a pivotal role in the individual empowerment of the individual.

Ashwini Kadam & Shaheda Sheikh- Problems & Prospects of women entrepreneurs in Navi Mumbai: A case Study by Myths & Realities India Advantage Edition 2011: The authors state that entrepreneurship allows women to become financially stable and has a significant impact on the nation's economy as well. Both women and men play a key role in the economic development of a country. In the current era, women are functioning at the same levels as men and yet, there is a great deal of challenges that women have face in the business as well as in the domestic environment. Therefore, it is very important that women are assisted in terms of finance, marketing and production to help them have a great future ahead.

V. Krishnamoorthy & R. Balasubramani: The study primarily tries to establish a relationship between the motivational factors and its effects on the enterprise. The study states that there are 7 factors of entrepreneurial motivation that includes: ambition, skill, knowledge, family support, market opportunities, independence, government subsidy, satisfaction. The author concludes that the major factors that affect the enterprise are ambition, skill and independence. This was published in the International Journal under the title 'Motivational factors among women entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial success' (ISSN 2319-345X Vol.3 No.2 April 2014).

Research Methodology:

The sample women respondents who run microenterprises are referred to as entrepreneurs in this study. Considering the nature of topic for research, data is collected from respondents in questionnaire form. The sources used for data collection in the present working system are as follows.

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

- **PRIMARY DATA**: The study is mainly based on primary data collected from women entrepreneurs (60 respondents) of SSP from Latur district through personal interviews & questionnaire. The questionnaire contains demographic characteristics such as age, education, address, etc. along with some open ended and close ended type of questions. Also informal personal discussion with the women entrepreneurs was carried out. Responses of open ended questions are used for further analysis.

- **SECONDARY DATA**: The relevant secondary data includes information such as articles published in various International/National journals, pamphlets, leaflets, contents of official website of SSP, along with other websites. Also references are taken from similar previous studies by different scholars.

Objectives of Study:

✓ To evaluate the role of the SSP in women empowerment in Latur District.
✓ To study the development of entrepreneurial qualities possessed by the women after training given by SSP.

Hypothesis:

H_1: SSP enabled women to have remarkable change in their social and economical status.
H_0: SSP's efforts are not sufficient to bring any remarkable change in their social and economical status.
H_2: All the respondents are independent to take decisions in the areas of planning, operation, purchasing of the raw materials, marketing the products, Finance and others
H_0: All the respondents are not independent to take decisions in the areas of planning, operation, purchasing of the raw materials, marketing the products, Finance and others

Testing Hypothesis No.1:

Table Showing Upliftment of Marginalized Women:

SSP's help during rehabilitation	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
sustainability in business	15	24.21
Moral Support from sakhis	15	25.78
SSP training support/ facilities	28	47.89
Others	2	2.12
Total	60	100

Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) is working with women in rural areas since the Latur earthquake (1993) with a focus on moving women's collectives from disaster to development. Although SSP was not directly involved in immediate disaster relief such as distribution of relief materials; but focused its efforts on long-term commitments to build the capacities of women in disaster struck zones. In communities that have not already mobilized, SSP organized women into Self Help Groups (SHGs), created clusters, and then formed federations of SHG clusters. As a support organization, SSP provided training opportunities to women with the assistance of local experts and organized mutual learning exchange programs from different disaster affected areas. This was the first step for the upliftment of marginalized women.

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

All the respondents are not independent to take decisions in the areas of planning, operation, purchasing of the raw materials, marketing the products, Finance and others. Since the decision taken by the respondents in difference areas, it is worthwhile here to analyze the relationship between the different areas and the decision taken by the persons such as respondent himself, Father, Husband, senior employee and others. Hence an attempt has been made to test the hypothesis that "All of the respondents are not dependent on others for taking decision."

Decision Making in Business:

Sr. No.	Particular	Self	Husband	Father	SHG	Others	Total
1	Planning	7	1	0	2	0	10
2	Handling	7	2	2	1	0	12
3	Purchasing of raw materials	5	3	2	1	1	12
4	Marketing	3	3	2	2	0	10
5	Finance	7	3	3	3	0	16
Total		29	12	9	9	1	60

Before joining SSP, these women used to spend their time in looking after home and hearth. Their aspiration found an avenue for fulfillment through SSP training. They received guidelines through mentors to channel their efforts and they started selling organically grown produce at market. While some started door to door selling of homemade poppadoms and masalas, some started businesses in animal husbandry and poultry. These were the baby steps to progress with several doubts such as:

- Would our family and husband support us?
- Would we understand business and accounting?
- Would we able to sustain what we have started?

It was a herculean task but SSP supported them to keep on going. Over a period of time, money started trickling in. Now they become self-sufficient; whether it be getting milk from their cattle or vegetables and grains from their fields. Women are not asking for special concession only asking participation in society.

Case Study:

Samina Firoz Pathan:

Just as it is rightly said in Marathi that *Kelyane hot aahere, aadhi kelechi pahije*, Samina Pathan along with her husband supplemented farming with dairy. This helped them achieve progress and enabled them to cement their place in the society. This all occurred because the husband-wife duo had the same thoughts about entrepreneurship. Their struggle in this is worth taking a note of and has inspired many.

Samina Firoz Pathan who studied up to 9th, hails from Kasarkheda near Latur City. Her father worked as a labor at the wholesale market in Latur. She had seen the efforts of her parents who had taken while upbringing her and her 2 brothers. She was married in very teenage in 2006 to Firoz Pathan who owned a dairy business.

ISSN- 2395-7522 (Online), Imp. Fact.6.21 (IIJF)
Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

She has a family of almost 8-10 persons. They owned only an acre and half of farmland and her husband use to sell milk in Latur City. They would earn no more Rs. 200-300 daily. It was not easy for them to make both the ends meet. On the other hand her in-laws used to work as farm labor. Samina's childhood being spent in city, she was unable to do any farm work. During the same period, she got separated from the joint family. Her husband used to buy milk from other farmers in the village and sell it in the city. She came in contact with Mrs. Swami of Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) and Mrs. Swami informed her about SSP. She then took a course of 10 days at SSP. She thus became aware about the technicalities and pros and cons of various businesses. She decided to go with dairy business. Seeing her strong will, SSP loaned her 20,000 Rupees with which Safina bought a cow. Before buying the cow, she had already stored fodder for the cow. Today, she owns 3 cows and 4 buffaloes. She gets about 40 litres of milk from them and her husband sells it in the city at a rate of 50-60 rupees per liter. They earn about Rs.2000-2500 daily.

She has bought 3 Gunthas of land in her village of which on one part she has built a house; the other is used for animal sheds and the rest for farm manure. Her husband sells milk and Safina looks after the animals.

Adopting Organic Farming

Samina owns about 1.5 acre of farmland. She uses organic manure to make the land fertile. Her farm is adjacent to the Manjra River and has good fertility. She does organic farming on the same since the last 2 years. She has decided to cultivate food with organic farming under Sakhi Anna Surakasha Yojana. During the last season, she sowed soybean, tur, moong, udad . She uses 'Dashparshi Ark' as a pesticide. She also makes money by selling organic manure and by selling milk that she buys from other farmers. She covers the daily costs of the cattle by the profit earned by selling milk.

She explains that this is hack for her success. Efforts that are put into something surely reap something good. This is what this woman has proved.

During the last season she had sowed an acre and half of maize and earned profit of 50,000 rupees by selling the produce in market at Nanded City. After that she sowed coriander and earned almost 30,000 rupees from the same.

She aspires to sell milk by packaging it in pockets and establish herself as a brand in the dairy industry. She explains that all this has been possible due to the guidance and help provided by SSP.

While proving herself, she also helped other women like Lalita Shinde, Nasreen Pathan, Savita Shinde and Dilshaad Pathan by enabling them to buy livestock. She also purchases milk and other products from the women. Her journey is truly an inspirational one!!

Surekha Kode:

'Saving a penny equals earning one'. By saving small amounts, a large sum can be accumulated. From 'We had nothing ' to being a successful entrepreneur, factors like savings, perseverance, good public contact and strong will power play an important role. Surekha Sambhaji Kode, a 35 year old woman who is from Selu Jawalga in Renapur has had an inspirational journey.

Her family includes husband, 2 daughters and her mother-in-law. Her husband owns a kirana store. Her husband, Sambhaji Kode is a hard working, motivated and an honest person. He also has progressed in this field and owns 3 kirana shops today. One of the shops is managed by

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Literary Cognizance:An International Refereed / Peer Reviewed
e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
SPECIAL ISSUE-An International Conference on
Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

her mother-in-law, the other by her daughter and the third by her husband. On seeing this, Surekha felt that even she should work and contribute to the family.

During the period, Swayam Shikshan Prayog came into the picture. Surekha became aware about the programs conducted by SSP through Jyoti Pandit Lambote, a member of SSP. Surekha decided to attend a workshop about women entrepreneurship and organic farming. She underwent training at a camp at Renapur for 10 days and decided to start a business.

SSP decided to help Surekha and loaned her an amount of Rs.10000/- with which Surekha bought a flour mill. Later she bought a mill for grains and also a mini dal machine. Now, she owns 4 flour mills.

By the collective efforts of the whole family, they were able to buy a land of 2 acres worth 25,00,000 near the Renapur-Jawalga road. Surekha earns about 400 rupees daily from the flour mill and for organic farming; she has bought 2 cows of Devani breed. She also owns 8 goats and herself looks after the entire livestock.

Carried the Legacy

Surekha's mother-in-law is 70 years old. Her mother-in-law still runs one of their kirana shops. She also owns a bangle business and has a previous experience of entrepreneurship.

Awarded for Organic Farming

Through SSP, Surekha is involved in organic farming and thus, producing chemical free food. She has been doing organic farming since the last 2 years. By mixed pattern of farming, she herself grows the products she needs at her home.

Today, her condition is economically sound due to the kirana shops, flour mills, organic farming and the livestock. By supplementing farming by related businesses, she has been able to become strong financially.

Everyone in the village knows about her progress and she also helps others if someone is a financial crunch. She has progressed by taking everyone along with her. She also explains that she owes a huge chunk of her progress to SSP.

Limitations of Study:

- ✓ The study is limited to the women entrepreneurs related to SSP only.
- ✓ The limitations of financial and human resources (respondents) have restricted the study of 60 samples in Latur district only.
- ✓ Though an attempt is made to select the sample from all villages & to make it true representation, it is possible that the result of this sample survey perhaps may not be applicable to the sense.

Findings:

- After providing skill training and learning women entrepreneurs gain greater bargaining power and self esteem through business.
- As SSP is trying to create a rural distribution network through women entrepreneurs, they have to face many social challenges and logistic challenges and limitations on which they continuously keep innovating and working on.
- Community-based, business-minded support from SSP reflects SSP's drive to develop and innovate community-based enterprises that benefit some of the most indigent rural areas.

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e - Journal of English Language, Literature & Criticism
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Role of Women in Skilling Communication & Gender Equality
March 6th& 7th 2026

- After empowering women as business managers, there is a remarkable rise in average monthly income in village entrepreneur.

Suggestions:

- It is necessary to enhance the technical/social awareness by providing them adequate information about marketing, skill, financial provisions & technology.
- Better educational facilities and schemes should be extended to women entrepreneurs from government.
- Formation of more groups like SSP to help more and more women entrepreneurs.
- Making provision of marketing & sales assistance from government part.
- Financial institutions should provide more working capital assistance.
- In the present scenario, additional amount of credit can be given from SSP to women entrepreneurs for completing selling cycle.
- Linking rural energy with productive uses can create employment opportunities; rise income levels and improves quality of life in rural areas.
- Changing general attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of entire populations.

Conclusion:

The small scale entrepreneurs help to survive in this continuously evolving world and help in personal and professional growth. In traditional societies, even more than elsewhere, women's empowerment does not occur easily or overnight. In India, the case described (SSP), there was sufficient evidence of such change, beginning to which the project had apparently contributed. It was most perceptible among certain types of women. Perhaps one of the most important emerging lessons is that women's groups themselves, in their social aspects, play a role in such empowerment. This argues for placing importance on sustaining groups beyond the life of the project, which indeed was done in this instance. The project assessment also recommended that communication support (films, radio broadcasts and so on, with sensitization and training content) be used to speed up the empowerment process. Every cloud has a silver lining…. but you must know where to look for it once you found world is yours.

“A woman must not accept the situation; she must challenge. She must not be awed by that which has been built up around her; she must reverence that woman in her which struggles for expression” — Margaret Sanger

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