

# Policy Initiatives for Governance of Socially Sustainable Development: India's Account of Incessant Endeavors

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## Abstract

Societal development in a sustainable way is always treated as a better goal than the economic and political development of the society. Rather, it would be pertinent to say that without social development we cannot attend to the economic and political development of mankind. Keeping this thought alive, policy makers in India since the beginning of policy implementation after independence focused more rigorously on strategizing programs and plans for achieving socially sustainable development. This article aims to discuss policies, programs, and strategies formulated and implemented by the Government of India, subjected to social development. It elaborates on the constitutional provisions, planning endeavors, trends and analysis of the attribute of sustainable development such as education, employment policies and strategies, and gender equality and women empowering policies of the government.

## Keywords

Social development, women empowerment, employment, education policy

## Introduction

Though the very concepts of sustainable development profoundly came into vogue in 1987 through its definition by the Brundtland Commission in the report, popularly known as, ‘Our Common Future’, and which was enlarged at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, held on June

1992 with the espousal of Agenda 21 (Parto, 2005), in India, the father of Constitution of India, Dr B.R. Ambedkar, embodies the concepts of sustainable development in the Indian Constitution, which was adopted on November 26, 1950. The complete gist of sustainable development can be understood from the preamble of the Constitution which states that

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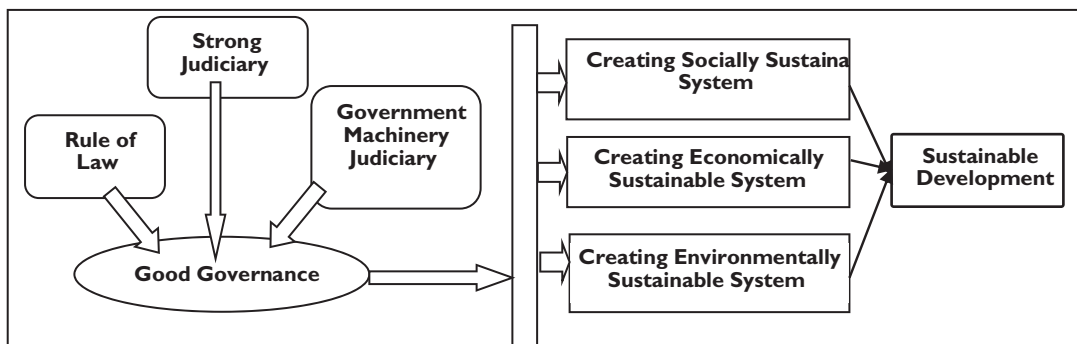
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We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign Socialist secular democratic republic and to secure to all its citizens, Justice, social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and Worship; Equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation. (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2007)

Thus, for the prosperity of its people, in sustained manner or to achieve sustainable development, the Constitution of India laid emphasis on justice, liberty, and equality, Fraternity to all of its citizens. Although India became sovereign after independence, because of its stratified social structure, the doors of development were not open to majority in the society. Only countable numbers of people of the privileged class could access all means of sustenance. The reason behind this is stiffly pointed out by Dr B.R. Ambedkar in his paper, which he had read at the anthropology seminar of Dr A.A. Goldenweizer at Columbia University, New York, the USA, on May 9, 1916, that is relevant today as per the Indian society which is concerned. He pointed out that Indian society is a caste-based society and caste is the enclosed class (Ambedkar, 1917). Thus knowledge, culture, assets, capital, and thinking skills were confined to the limited class of the society not transferable to others for their development. Because of this social disparity

due to the lack of social endosmosis and absence of culture of associate life, the concept of inclusive growth for sustainable development was explicitly absent before independence and even after initial periods of planning. Policy initiatives for inclusive growth of society began with implementation of constitutional provisions from 1950 and since the inception of planning commission in the same year. The framers of the Constitution were very visionary and they embodied the very principal of good governance for policy implementation in various articles of Constitution.

It is widely accepted that the sustainable development can be achieved through good governance. But to have good governance there should be prevalence of strong judiciary that should work under the rule of law, which is enacted and notified by the government of that particular country apart from policy implementation. Further, government machinery and judiciary of the country should be accessible, accountable, predictable, and transparent, and then only good governance will be achieved (Durwood, 2005, pp. 15–21; also see Figure 1). As far as the government system and judiciary of India is concerned, it is astonishing that they are interwoven but separated from each other. It means that government passes the laws in parliament but it is separately implemented by the judiciary and those laws even abide on those who enacted it. Thus, the constitutional provision in India is



**Figure 1.** Fundamentals for Sustainable Development

Source: Author's own conception.

directed toward the accountable and predictable government system and accessible and transparent judicial system, which follow rule of law enacted by the government for sustainable development.

This article discusses the policy initiative taken by the Government of India after independence for societal sustainable development in tune with elements of social sustainability such as education, gender equality, employment, and literacy rate and other such related indicators considered for social well-being.

### **Phase-wise Policy Initiatives for Social Sustainable Development in India**

The fundamental prerequisite of social development is the fabrication of such a social system for achieving distributional justice and equity, appropriate provision of societal services including education and health, reducing gender inequity and increasing political participation and accountability (Harris, 2000). Since the beginning of the development process, the Government of India adopted the policy of sustainable development through good governance in direction with a framework laid down by the Constitution. The Constitution is not only reflective toward political democracy but paralleled the social and economic democracy as well. It is a form of democratic experimentalism which imbued political concepts in terms of free elections and voting and also expounds complete participation and communication among all the communities (Maitra, 2012).<sup>1</sup>

### **Constitutional Provision for Sustainable Development**

The socially sustainable system is the system that proclaims equitable sharing of resources needed to enhance the capabilities of the individuals. The Constitution of India embodied such provisions

under the fundamental right that compels the executive to function for creating an equitable society.<sup>2</sup> The fundamental rights include right to equality (Articles 14–18), right to freedom (Articles 19–22), right against exploitation (Articles 23–24), right to freedom of religion (Articles 25–28), cultural and educational rights (Articles 29–31; see Ministry of Law and Justice, 2007).

The provision of fundamental rights essentially obligated the Indian government and judiciary to treat every citizen equal before law, prohibit discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, provide equal opportunity in matters of public employment, abolish untouchability, protect freedom of speech, and protect life and personal liberty. Additionally, it prohibited traffic of human beings and forced labor and employment of children in factories. Thus, through fundamental rights, the framers tried to bring social equality.

For instituting India as a welfare state and in order to endow it with social and economic justice to people of the country, directive principals were built in the Constitution. The directive principals mainly contain the state to secure a social order for the promotion of welfare of the people (Article 38), equal justice and free legal aid (Article 39A), right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases (Article 41), provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief (Article 42), participation of workers in management of industries (Article 43A), provision for free and compulsory education for children (Article 45), promotion of educational and economic interests of SCs, STs, and other weaker sections (Article 46), enshrining the duty of the state to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health (Article 47), protection, and environment, safeguarding forests and wildlife (Article 48A), separation of judiciary from executive (Article 50), and promotion of international peace and security (Article 51). Both fundamental rights and directive principals have been tried to

construct the environment of associate life as it makes compulsorily the provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms.

Thus, through espousal of fundamental rights and directive principals, the Constitution of India imparts a social, economic, and environmentally sustainable system (Article 48A). Also, the Constitution adheres to accountability by making itself supreme as both the legislature (including executives) and the judiciary have to follow the constitutional provision.

### **Establishment of Planning Commission for Resource Mobilization<sup>3</sup>**

Since independence, India has adopted a centralized planning system. In the prior interlude the resources necessary for human development were unevenly distributed; in fact, there was social and economic hegemony that prevailed in India. So in order to have sustained development, it was obligatory for the government to distribute all its resources to the masses. Hence for optimum deployment of resources available and identifying the alcove resources and also to determine priority areas for carrying out developmental activities, the Government of India set up the planning commission, by a resolution, in March 1950 (Planning Commission, 2014).

The planning commission designs plans for the economic development of India. It is a statutory body headed by the prime minister and has a full-time deputy chairman and members. Nation planning is principally carried out through Five Year Plans. There are two approaches to planning: first one is sectoral planning and it includes formulation and implementation of schemes or programs aimed at development of several segments of the economy such as primary and secondary sector comprising infrastructure, social development, and manufacturing and the second one is regional planning which includes formulation and execution of schemes or programs for the development

of backward regions to reduce regional imbalance in development (Singh, n.d.).

Thus, by and large, the planning commission upholds for improving the standard of living of the people and makes plans for increasing production and offering employment opportunities to all for sustained growth of its community. Since its inception planning commission has been in direction with the government, meticulously working for establishing a socially sustainable system,<sup>4</sup> by making plans and crafting accessibility and accountability for education and employment.

### **Policy Initiatives for Education**

India had the glory of being known as a world-renowned education hub in ancient times but with emergence of the caste system it had crumbled down to an enclosed education system restricted to the elite of the society only, till the beginning of twentieth century. British colonial empire paved the way and drove slight to boost the education in India when Thomas Babington Macaulay released education minutes and noted that discerning natives must be educated so that some of the Indians could be Westernized to assist the realm at local levels.<sup>5</sup> Though the endeavor had been made to improve the education in India by Britishers, it was always attached to antedating elitist propensities. It started to rejuvenate only after 1950 when provision for compulsory education was embodied in the Constitution.

Education was picked up as the priority area since the inception of the planning periods; in the first plan itself education was considered as the basic factor of importance in the planned development of a nation. The growing importance to the education sector by the Government of India can easily be deciphered from the spending of central government on education in its Five Year Plans; it was ₹1.53 billion, ₹12.8428 billion, ₹212.1701 billion, ₹2,698.73 billion, and ₹4,537.28 billion in the First, Fourth, Eighth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Plans, respectively (Table 1).

**Table I. Expenditure on Education**

Five Year Plan	Total Outlay (₹ in Millions)#
1st Plan (1951–1956)	1530.00
2nd Plan (1956–1961)	2,530.00
3rd Plan (1961–1966)	5,600.00
4th Plan (1969–1974)	8,226.6
5th Plan (1974–1979)	12,842.8
6th Plan (1980–1985)	25,237.4
7th Plan (1985–1990)*	51,453.8
8th Plan (1992–1997)	212,170.1
9th Plan (1997–2002)	–
10th Plan (2002–07)	482,010.00
11th Plan (2007–2012)	2,698,730.00
12th Plan (2012–2017)	4,537,280.00@

**Source:** Planning Commission (Five Year Plans, retrieved from chapter on education/Social Indicator) & Ministry of HRD, Government of India.

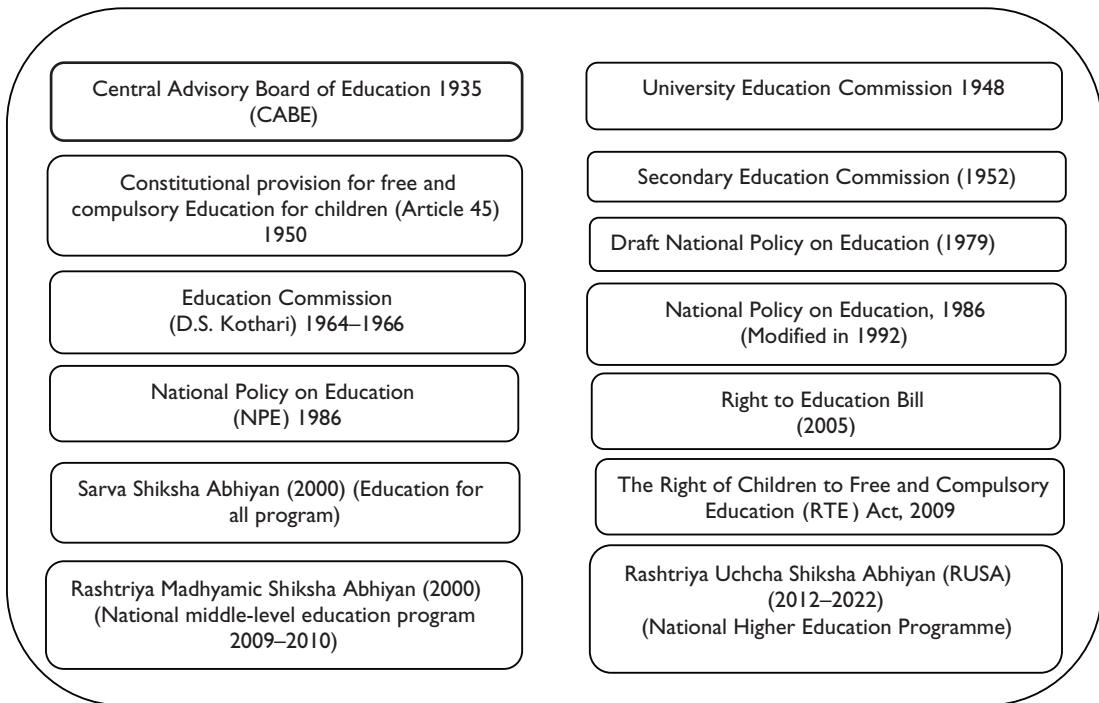
**Notes:** \* Because of financial crisis Government of India announce annual plan during 1991 and 1992 @ Projection.

#Total outlay includes expenses on Elementary Education, Secondary Education, University Education, Technical and Vocational Education, Social Education and Administration and Miscellaneous.

The government took several initiatives (Figure 2) to improve quality, accessibility, and inclusion in education for all strata of the Indian society; in this regard, the National Policy on Education popularly known as Kothari Commission which was introduced in 1968 was the first milestone in improving the education system in India. The recommendations of the commission were principally meant for nurturing the socialistic pattern needed for national integration of the country through economic and cultural development of the country with the help of deep-seated reconstruction of education system. The main recommendation of the commission, some of which are applicable even today, was the fulfilment of directive principals under Article 45, free and compulsory education for all; improving status, emoluments, and education of teachers; development of languages; equalization of educational opportunities; identification of talent; work experience and national service; impetus to science education and research; education for agriculture and industry; and, perhaps the distinguished feature

of the policy, the adaptation of a common structure of education throughout the country and the introduction of the 10+2+3 pattern by most states (Government of India, 1968).

To provide compatible and world-class education and to suit to growing demand of industries and corporates, policy makers understood the need for evolution and diversification of Indian education and came up with the National Education Policy in 1986, which was subsequently modified in 1992, in the wake of globalization in 1991. The modified policy laid special emphasis on the elimination of gaps and creating equal educational opportunities for those who had been deprived so far. To eliminate gender inequality in vocational and professional courses and to increase participation in non-traditional occupations and in the field of emergent technologies, focus was kept on empowering women, through participation in professional, technical, and vocational education at different levels, providing special support services.



**Figure 2.** Evolution of Policy Framework on Education in India

**Source:** Ministry of Human Resource, Government of India.

Further, stiff action was taken to promote education for SCs and STs (socially and economically backward classes) and the minority and handicapped community during these periods. National Literacy Mission was carried out for adult education. Under this, education centers were established and workers education was made the responsibility of employers, trade union, and government. Under the reorganization of education at different stages, early childhood care and education programs were conceived, and investment in the development of young children in terms of health and nutrition and moral and emotional development accentuated (Government of India, 1992).

Subsequently for concretizing the education in all walks of society and making it accountable to stakeholders, Indian central and state governments

had launched education to all programs in the year 2000; right to education bill in 2005; right of children to free and compulsory education (RTE) Act in 2009; national middle-level education program 2009–2010; and a national higher education program for 2012–2022 (RUSA) and several other schemes for improving equity, access, and inclusion (Figure 3). The effect of this concentrated effort in the education sector by the government can simply be depicted from the figures of literacy rates which were 16.67 percent during the year 1951 and rose to 43.67 percent in 1981, 52.21 percent in 1991, 65.38 percent in 2001, and 74.04 percent in 2011 (Table 2).

Kasturba Gandhi Balik a Vidyalaya (Girl School)	Quality Improvement in School
National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)	Strengthening of Teachers' Training Institutions
Mid-Day Meal Scheme a (MDMS)	Adult Education and Skill Development Scheme
Mahila Samakhya (Woman Empowerment)	Scheme for Providing a Quality Education in Madarsas (SPQEM)
Scheme for setting up of 6000 Model Schools at Block level as Benchmark of Excellence	National Means cum Merit Scholarship Scheme
Scheme for construction and running of Girl's Hostel for Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools	Scheme for Infrastructure Development in Minority Institutions (IDMI)
Scheme of Vocationalisation of Secondary Education at +2 levels	National Scheme for Incentive to the Girl Child for Secondary Education
Scheme of ICT @ School	Appointment of Language Teachers
Inclusive Education for the Disabled at Secondary School (IEDSS)	Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS)
Pre-matric Scholarship Scheme	
Setting up of New Polytechnics and Strengthening of Existing Polytechnics	

**Figure 3.** Centrally Sponsored Current Programs Implemented in the Education Sector by Ministry of Human Resource Development

**Source:** Ministry of HRD, Government of India.

**Table 2.** Literacy Rates 1951–2011 (Census of India)

Year	Male	Female	Total
1951	24.95	7.93	16.67
1961	34.44	12.95	24.02
1971	39.45	18.69	29.45
1981	56.50	29.85	43.67
1991	64.13	39.29	52.21
2001	75.85	54.16	65.38
2011	82.14	65.46	74.04

**Source:** Census of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

## Employment Policies and Strategic Approach for Sustainable Development

After independence India's employment situation was very grim as the total household sector saving was a mere ₹6.34 billion and total personal disposable income was a mere ₹96.33 billion (Table 3). This is undoubtedly due to meager employment opportunities during the initial periods of planning. The causes of unemployment (1951 onward) were deficiency of capital equipment and other corresponding resources, dearth in aggregate demand, and of course the incidences of frictional unemployment. Thus, the government in its First Five Year Plan (1951–1956) laid emphasis on increasing employment opportunity and elevating the standards of living of the masses. To make it happen, due weightage was given to the development of the rural sector; major and minor irrigation work was carried out and 12 village industries along with the handicraft sector were identified for revival and development. Further, for creating additional employment for 2 million people and providing full-time employment to under-employed 3.6 million people, the plan focused on making provisions for building and construction of roads and investment in cottage and small-scale industries (First Five Year Plan, 1951–1956).

Subsequently, from 1956 to 2012, and in a time span of 56 years, enormous emphasis has been put forth by the government to improve and create employment opportunity for establishing a sustainable society. The major decisions taken by the government throughout 11 Five Year Plans (1951–2011) were increasing work opportunities in rural and urban areas that face the difficulty of under-employment in household occupation and agriculture sector, attention to balance regional distribution of employment opportunities, establishment of heavy industries (Second Five Year Plan, 1956–1962), deployment of rural manpower, developing village and small industries, connecting the village economy with the rising urban centers, establishing cooperative processing industries, and venturing for new industries in rural areas (Third Five Year Plan, 1962–1967). In the fourth Plan (1967–1972), emphasis was set forth on creating skilled employees through setting up new Industrial Training Institutes and as an appendage to this the apprenticeship training program was introduced. Apart from this, Central Institute for Research and Training in Employment Service, Institute of Labour Studies, and National Safety Council and National Commission on Labour was established. To provide legal safeguards to the employees, the acts such as Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, Payment of Bonus Act 1965,

**Table 3.** Sector-wise Gross Domestic Saving (₹ in Billions)

Year	Household Sector	Private Corporate Sector	Public Sector	Gross Domestic Saving	Personal Disposable Income
1951–1952	6.34	1.36	3.09	10.79	96.33
1980–1981	181.16	23.39	61.65	265.90	1,277.03
1991–1992	1,086.3	150.64	106.41	1,344.08	5,478.98
2000–2001	4,637.50	810.62	-292.66	5,155.45	18,314.92
2010–2011	18,329.01	6,193.70	1,996.62	26,519.34	60,158.16
2011–2012	20,037.20	6,444.23	1,170.97	27,652.90	71,640.93

**Source:** Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy by Reserve Bank of India (Originally retrieved from Central Statistics Office).



and Labour Welfare Fund Acts had been enacted. In addition to this, support was extended to ancillary and small-scale industries, rural electrification, and housing and urban development.

Thereafter, from the Fifth to the Twelfth Five Year Plans, for expanding employment opportunities and to have progressive reduction of unemployment in the country, the government mainly introduced a 20-point economic program, investment in agricultural financial institutions, and development of loan programs by the land development banks, providing adequate outlays in agriculture and related activities. More allocations were made for small-scale and khadi and village industries. In addition, government introduced an integrated rural development program such as National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), setting up employment exchanges as nodal agencies, employment-/beneficiary-oriented programs such as the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP),

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), and Training Scheme for Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), a scheme for providing self-employment to educated unemployed youth. Special attention was laid on industries such as electronics, computer systems, nuclear science, environment engineering, satellite communications, bio-engineering, and non-conventional energy source development. To gear up employment and imbibe skill base among the youth, the government came up with advanced training centers and carried out up-gradation of existing telecommunication training centers. Along with these developments an appropriate support and policy framework for the development of non-agricultural, predominantly manufacturing, activities in rural areas, including rural towns, and expansion of food processing industries was set up by the government (Planning Commission of India, 1974–2012).

**Table 4.** Public and Organized Private Sectors Employment Status in India (in Millions)

Year	Public Sector (End-March)	Private Sector (End-March)	Number of Persons on the Live Register (End-December)
1973–1974	12.73	6.75	8.43
1980–1981	15.48	7.40	17.84
1985–1986	17.68	7.37	30.13
1990–1991	19.06	7.68	36.30
1995–1996	19.43	8.51	37.43
2000–2001	19.14	8.65	42.00
2005–2006	18.19	8.77	41.47
2008–2009	17.80	10.38	38.15
2009–2010	17.86	10.85	38.83
2010–2011	17.55	11.45	40.17

**Source:** Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy by Reserve Bank of India (Originally retrieved from Directorate General of Employment and Training, Ministry of Labor & Employment, Government of India).

By reason of concentrated policies and programs manifested by the government, public and organized private sector employment drastically increased. Table 4 shows that the number of persons on the live register rose from 8.43 million in 1973–1974 to 36.30, 37.43, and 40.17 million in 1990–1991, 1995–1996, and 2010–2011, respectively. Small-scale sector also showed ever-increasing employment trends as evidenced from Table 5; the number of individuals engaged in small-scale sectors in 1980–1981 was 7.10 million, which went up to 19.79, 24.09, and 101.26 million in the years 1995–1996, 2000–2001, and 2011–2012, respectively. It is further estimated that the labor force will increase in the coming years, from 528.2 million in 2014–2015 to 551.3 million in 2016–2017 (Table 6). Furthermore the sectoral policy initiative and implementation lead to enhancement in employment situation in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, non-manufacturing and services, and in the year 2009–2010, the numbers of individuals employed in these sectors were 243.21, 48.54, 56.10, and 112.33 million (Table 7). As a result of elevating employment opportunities and numerous intensive employment-oriented programs by the central government (Table 8), since independence, the numbers of poor people which were 403.7 million in 1993–1994 eroded to 269.3

million in 2011–2012 (Table 9) and gross domestic saving, and personal disposable income rose to ₹27,652.90 billion and ₹71,640.93 billion in the year 2011–2012 (Table 3).

For maintaining accountability and accessibility in employment opportunities, constitutional provision has been embodied by the framer in Article 16 of fundamental rights, as equality of opportunity in matters of public employment, which specifically states that (a) there shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State and (b) no citizen shall, on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or so on, be ineligible for or discriminated against any employment or office under the State. Not only the central government but also state government was made responsible by the Constitution of India under Article 41 of directive principals which directed that the State shall within the limits of its economic capacity and development make effective provisions for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2007).

**Table 5. Employment and Production in Small-scale Industries**

Year	SST	
	Production (Billion ₹)	Employment (Million Nos.)
1980–1981	281.00	7.10
1985–1986	612.00	9.60
1990–1991	788.02	15.83
1995–1996	1,477.12	19.79
2000–2001	2,612.97	24.09
2005–2006	4,978.42	29.49
2008–2009	15,242.35	88.11
2009–2010	16,193.56	92.22
2010–2011	17,215.53	96.57
2011–2012	18,343.32	101.26

**Source:** Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy by Reserve Bank of India (Originally retrieved from Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises, Government of India).

**Table 6. Estimated Population and Labor Force**

	2012–2013	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017
Population (in millions)	1,232.4	1,250.1	1,267.6	1,285.0	1,302.2
Labor Force (in millions)	505.3	516.7	528.2	539.7	551.3
Per 1,000 population	(410)	(413)	(417)	(420)	(423)

**Source:** Report of the working group on employment, planning and policy (Twelfth Five Year Plan 2012–2017), originally compiled from Estimated by EPWRF.

**Table 7. Sectoral Employment Status (in millions)**

Year	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Non-manufacturing	Services
1999–2000	237.67	44.05	20.84	94.20
2004–2005	258.93	55.77	29.96	112.81
2009–2010	243.21	48.54	56.10	112.33

**Source:** Report of the working group on employment, planning and policy (Twelfth Five Year Plan 2012–2017).

**Table 8. Government Programs and Various Schemes of Government of India since Independence for Sustainable Development**

Year	Programs/Schemes	Year	Programs/Schemes
1952	Community Development Program (CDP)	1960–1961	Intensive Agriculture Development program (IADP)
1964–1965	Intensive Agriculture Area program (IAAP)	1965	Credit Authorization Scheme (CAS)
1966–1967	High yielding variety program (HYVP)	1966–1967	Green Revolution
1969	Rural Electrification Corporation	1972	Scheme of Discriminatory Interest Rate
1972–1973	Accelerated rural water Supply Program (ARWSP)	1973	Drought Prone Area Program
1973	Crash Scheme for Rural Employment CSRE	1973–1974	Marginal Farmer and Agriculture Labor Agency (MFALA)
1974–1975	Small Farmer Development Scheme SFDS	1975	Command Area Development Program: (CADP)
1977	National Institution of Rural Development	1977–1978	Desert Development Program: (DDP)
1977–1978	Food for Work Programmer	1977–1978	Antyodaya Yojna (Last person Scheme)
1979	Training Rural Youth for Self Employment TRYSEM	1980	Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP)
1980	National Rural Development program NREP	1982	Development of Women & Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)

(Table 8 continued)

(Table 8 continued)

Year	Programs/Schemes	Year	Programs/Schemes
1983	Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Program (RLEGP)	1983–1984	Farmers Agriculture Service Centers FASCs
1984	National Fund for Rural Development	1985	Comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme
1986	Council of Advancement of People's Action & Rural Technology (CAPART)	1986	Self-Employment Program for the Poor SEPUP
1986	National Drinking Water Mission	1988	Service Area Account Rural Credit
1989	Jawahar Rozgar Yojna (Employment Scheme)	1990	Agriculture & Rural Debt Relief Scheme (ARDRS)
1990	Scheme for Urban Micro Enterprises SUME	1990	Scheme of Urban wage Employment SUWE
1990	Scheme of Housing and Shelter Up gradation (SHASU)	1991	National Housing Bank Voluntary Deposit Scheme
1992	National Renewal Fund This scheme was for the employees of the public sector	1993	Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS)
1993	Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme MPLADS	1994	Scheme for Infrastructural Development in Mega Cities (SIDMC)
1993	District Rural Development Agency DRDA	1993	Mahila Samridhi Yojna (Women's Prosperity Scheme)
1994	Child Labor Eradication Scheme	1995	Mid-day Meal Scheme
1996	Group Life Insurance Scheme for Rural Areas	1995	National Social Assistance Program
1997–1998	Ganga Kalyan Yojna	1997	Kastoorba Gandhi Education Scheme
1997	Swaran Jayanti Shahari Rojgar Yojna (Urban Employment Scheme)	1998	Bhagya Shree Bal Kalyan Policy Upliftment of Female Child's March
1999	Annapurna Yojna (10 kgs food grains to elderly people )	1999	Swaran Jayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojna (Self-employment in rural areas)
1999 April	Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojna (Village infrastructure)	Aug. 2000	Jan Shree Bima Yojna Insurance for BPL people
2000	Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojna (Basic needs of rural people)	2000 Dec	Antyodaya Anna Yojna (To provide food security to poor)
2000 Dec.	Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (Connect all villages with nearest pukka road September)	2001	Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojna (Employment and food security to rural)
2001 Dec.	Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojna VAMBAY (Slum houses in urban areas)	2003	Universal health Insurance Scheme: Health insurance for rural people
2004	VMS Initiative of Public Private Partnership during Pregnancy Check-up	2004	National Food for Work Program

(Table 8 continued)

(Table 8 continued)

Year	Programs/Schemes	Year	Programs/Schemes
2005 Dece.16	Bharat Nirman: Development of India through irrigation, Water supply, Housing, Road, Telephone and Electricity	2005	National Rural Health Mission
2005	Rajeev Gandhi Grameen Vidyuti Karan Yojna (Electrification of all villages and habitations and ensuring electricity to every household)	2005	Jawahar Lal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)
2006 Feb.	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme NREGS	2007	Rastriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (health insurance to all workers in unorganized area below poverty line)
2007	Aam Aadmi Bima Yojna (insurance covers to the head of the family of rural landless households in the country)	2009	Rajiv Awas Yojna (to make India slum free in 5 years)
2014–2015	New Government announced Schemes such as Make in India, Smart City project, Prime Minister Jan-Dhan Surksha Yojana (People Security Scheme), Prime Minister Life Insurance Scheme		

**Source:** Ministry of Rural Development and Government websites <http://www.gktoday.in> (2009–2013).

**Table 9.** Estimated Number of Poor

Year	Number of Poor (Million)		
	Rural	Urban	Total
1993–1994	328.6	74.5	403.7
2004–2005	326.3	80.8	407.1
2011–2012	216.5	52.8	269.3

**Source:** Poverty Estimates (2011–2012), Government of India, Planning Commission.

## Promoting Gender Equality and Women Empowering Policies

As per the Commission on Sustainable Development, promoting gender equality is one of the indicators for societal sustainable development. Per se, empowering women and impetus to gender equality were the prime agendas of the framers of the Constitution; accordingly, this provision has also been embodied in fundamental rights and directive principles of the Constitution of India (Box 1) and thus the demo-

cratic rule of law for protection of women and gender equality was made obligatory for maintaining accountability. Not only constitutional but judiciary measure on a large scale suiting to the need of the hour was brought into force by enacting various acts in favor of women by Government of India (Table 10). Constitutional provision mainly takes account of equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic, and social spheres, equal pay for equal work for men and women, prohibition of discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, and sex, and

maintaining dignity of women. The judicial measure by and large focuses on the rights of girls to reject a child marriage, prohibiting sexual exploitation, laws against trafficking and cruelty, legalization of abortion by qualified professionals on humanitarian or medical grounds, and so on and so forth.

**Box 1.** Constitutional Provision for Judiciary and Government *Accountability* for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

**Article 14:** Men and women to have equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic and social spheres.

**Article 15(1):** Prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex etc.

**Article 15(3):** Special provision enabling the State to make affirmative discriminations in favor of women.

**Article 16:** Equality of opportunities in matter of public appointments for all citizens.

**Article 39(a):** The State shall direct its policy towards securing all citizens men and women, equally, the right to means of livelihood.

**Article 39(d):** Equal pay for equal work for both men and women.

**Article 42:** The State to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

**Article 51 (A)(e):** To renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

**Source:** Ministry of Law and Justice (2007).

Additionally, during the initial periods of planning, the Government of India, for bringing social change and for empowering women, adopted tripartite structural changes through constitutional provisions and legal reforms and planned development and state support to social welfare activities (Government of India, 1951–1961). As such, government of India in the subsequent Five Years Plans expounded several targets for empowering women and encouraging gender equality through

improving employment status and wages by gender, policy framing for gender, poverty eradication, structural adjustment for income and consumption effects (Institute of Development Studies, 1995), and establishment of a network of maternity and child health and family welfare centers. To achieve these targets Government of India, with time demands, came up with National Nutrition Policy in 1993, National Population Policy in 2000, Gender Sub-Plan—Eighth Five Year Plan (1992–1997), and National Health Policy in 2002 (Ministry of Development, n.d.).

The positive result of policy implementation can be understood from the fact that the sex ratio improved from 930 in 1971 to 933 and 940 women per 1,000 males in the year 2001 and 2011, respectively (Table 11). Over-rigorous policies' observance by the government institution pertaining to child and female health reduces infant mortality rate (IMR) from 105 children in 1982 to 58, 50, and 40 children in the years 2005, 2009, and in 2013, correspondingly. Even the female mortality rate shows robust improvement as it diminished to 42 in 2013 from 104 females in 1982 (Table 12). Proper medical assistance and nutritional supplement support by the government resulted in satisfactory saving of life, both male and female, as per the indicator of women development. Table 13 indicates that the projected levels of expectation of life at birth of females are more than males and depicts that, during 2001–2005, females' life expectation was of 66.1 years whereas for males it was 63.8 years, and the subsequent projected values for 2021–2025 are 72.3 and 69.8 years. This quantitative reality certainly shows a step forward for achieving gender equality and women empowerment.

With the beginning of Sixth Five Year Plan (1980–1985), policies and programs for women's empowerment and reducing gender inequality were strengthened at large by the government. This program includes providing incentives for improving the enrolment ratio of girls in schools, implementation of integrated child development

**Table 10. Act for Protection of Women's Right and Empowerment**

Act	Year	Provision
Hindu Marriage Act (Amended in 1976)	1955	Provides the right for girls to reject a child marriage before attaining maturity whether the marriage has been consummated or not
The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (Amended in 1986)	1956	Makes the sexual exploitation of male or female, a cognizable offence. It is being amended to decriminalize the prostitutes and make the laws more stringent against traffickers
Dowry Prohibition Act (First Amended in 1984) (Second Amended in 1986)	1961	Made women's subjection to cruelty a cognizable offence. The second amendment makes the husband or in-laws punishable, if a woman commits suicide within 7 years of her marriage and it has been proved that she has been subjected to cruelty. Also a new criminal offence of 'Dowry Death' has been incorporated in the Indian Penal Code
Medical Termination Pregnancy Act	1971	Legalizes abortion by qualified professional on humanitarian or medical grounds. The maximum punishment may go up to life imprisonment. The Act has further been amended specifying the place and persons authorized to perform abortion and provide for penal actions against the unauthorized persons performing abortion
Equal Remuneration Act	1976	Provides for equal pay to men and women for equal work
Child Marriage Restraint Act	1976	Rises the age for marriage of a girl to 18 years from 15 years and that of a boy to 21 years and makes offences under this Act cognizable
Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act	1986	Enacted to protect the dignity of women and prevent violence against them as well as their exploitation.
Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act	1987	
Pre-conception and Pre-natal Diagnostic Technique Act	1994	The laws regulating sex determination and abortions
The Marriage (Amendment) Act	2001	Amended the Hindu Marriage Act, Special Marriage Act, Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, the Code of Criminal Procedure providing for speedy disposal of applications for maintenance; the ceiling limit for claiming maintenance has been deleted and a wide discretion has been given to the Magistrate to award appropriate maintenance
The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act	2005	Provides for more effective protection of the rights of women, guaranteed under the Constitution, who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
Juvenile Justice Bill (Passed in Parliament)	2015	Care and protection of children's (females), provides for lowering age for trial from 18 years to 16 years heinous crime against women's

**Source:** Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India (Report of the Working Group on Empowerment of Women for the XI Plan).

**Table 11. Sex Ratio (Number of Females per 1,000 Males): Census 1951–2011**

Year	Rural	Urban	All India
1951	965	860	946
1961	963	845	941
1971	949	858	930
1981	951	879	934
1991	938	894	927
2001	946	900	933
<b>2011</b>	<b>947</b>	<b>926</b>	<b>940</b>

**Source:** Ministry of Child and Women Development (Handbook of Statistical Indicator on Women Development).

**Table 12. Infant Mortality Rate by Sex**

Year	Total	Male	Female
1982	105	106	104
1990	80	78	81
2000	68	67	69
2005	58	56	61
2009	50	49	52
2013	40	39	42

**Source:** Family Welfare Statistics in India (2011) Statistics Division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India (Sample Registration System, Registrar General India).

**Table 13. Projected Levels of Expectation of Life at Birth (without AIDS): All India In Years**

Category	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	2016–2020	2021–2025
Female	66.1	68.1	69.6	71.1	72.3
Male	63.8	65.8	67.3	68.8	69.8

**Source:** Ministry of Child and Women Development (Handbook of Statistical Indicator on Women Development).

service projects, and functional literacy as part of the national adult education program. Impact of program and policy execution by the government is depicted in Figures 2 and 3 throughout the decades; the enrolment in school education has drastically improved both for boys and for girls since the year 1951. The enrolled boys and girls in 1951 in class I–V was 13.8 and 5.4 million, which rose to 58.6 and 42.3 million in 1991–1992, 70.5

and 61.6 million in 2005–2006, and 72.6 and 67.2 million in 2011–2012. Throughout these years the percentage of girls over boys raised from 28 percent in 1951 to 41.9 percent in 1991–1992, 46.6 percent in 2005–2006, and 48.1 percent in 2011–2012, respectively. The increasing trends also occurred for enrollment in school for classes VI–VIII), classes IX–X), and classes XI–XII during the respective periods (Table 14).



It is also observed that the government not only strived hard for reducing inequality amongst gender but also within underprivileged social groups of the society including SCs, STs, and other backward classes (OBCs); we can understand the progress of this class through the figures of literacy rates amongst these social groups (Table 15).<sup>6</sup> The table represents the number of literates per 1,000 persons of age 5 years and above among different social groups in India during 2011–2012. It is witnessed that, during 2011–2012, in India, about 74.1 percent of the population of age 5 years and above were literate compared with 66.3 and 72.8

percent during the years 2004–2005 and 2009–2010, respectively, with understanding in at least one language, and they could both read and write a simple message. Since 2004–2005, the literacy amongst the underprivileged social groups was elevated from 52.4 percent to 63.1 percent and 64.8 percent in 2009–2010 and 2011–2012 for STs, respectively; for the same periods it was 57.3 percent, 65.4 percent, and 67.4 percent for SCs and 64.5 percent, 71.6 percent, and 72.8 percent for OBCs; thus, the increasing trends show that the government is approaching toward reducing the inequality within the social groups as well (Table 16).

**Table 14.** Enrolments in School Education (All Categories) (in Millions)

Year	Class I–V			Class VI–VIII			Class IX–X			Class XI–XII		
	Boys	Girls	Girls (%)	Boys	Girls	Girls (%)	Boys	Girls	Girls (%)	Boys	Girls	Girls (%)
1950–1951	13.8	5.4	28.1	2.6	0.5	16.1	–	–	–	1.3	0.2	13.3
1960–1961	23.6	11.4	32.6	5.1	1.6	23.9	–	–	–	2.7	0.7	20.6
1970–1971	35.7	21.3	37.4	9.4	3.9	29.3	–	–	–	5.7	1.9	25.0
1980–1981	45.3	28.5	38.6	13.9	6.8	32.9	–	–	–	7.6	3.4	30.9
1991–1992	58.6	42.3	41.9	22.0	13.6	38.2	10.0	5.0	33.6	4.2	2.0	32.2
2000–2001	64.0	49.8	43.8	25.3	17.5	40.9	11.6	7.4	38.8	6.1	3.8	38.3
2005–2006	70.5	61.6	46.6	28.9	23.3	44.6	14.5	10.5	42.0	7.8	5.6	41.7
2010–2011	70.1	64.6	48.0	32.7	29.2	47.1	17.5	14.3	45.0	10.9	8.6	44.1
2011–2012	72.6	67.2	48.1	33.1	29.9	47.4	18.6	15.5	45.5	11.6	9.4	44.8

**Source:** Ministry of Human Resource and Development (Statistics of School Education 2011–2012).

**Table 15.** Literacy Rate among Persons of Age 5 Years and above for Different Social Groupings

Social Group	Rural			Urban			Rural + Urban		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
ST	714	537	627	872	729	806	733	558	648
SC	735	545	643	862	702	785	763	580	674
OBC	779	594	688	887	771	832	809	642	728
Others	849	710	781	934	866	902	885	775	832
All	780	605	694	903	799	853	816	661	741

**Source:** Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (Employment and Unemployment Situation among Social Groups in India (NSS 68th round)).

**Table 16.** Comparative Literacy Rate among Persons of Age 5 Years and above for Different Social Groups in NSS (61st, 66th, and 68th Rounds)

Social Group	Rural + Urban			Rural + Urban			Rural + Urban		
	61st round (2004–2005)			66th round (2009–2010)			68th round (2011–2012)		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
ST	624	420	524	717	544	631	733	558	648
SC	679	461	573	743	555	654	763	580	674
OBC	749	537	645	808	621	716	809	642	728
Others	846	709	780	879	757	821	885	775	832
All	755	566	<b>663</b>	811	640	<b>728</b>	816	661	<b>741</b>

**Source:** Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation.

**Notes:** (i) SC: Scheduled Caste; ST: Scheduled Tribes; OBC: Other Backward Class.

(ii) All these groups in India treated as vulnerable groups.

In furthering the policy work, the Government of India, in the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997–2002), came up with objectives of empowering women as the agents of social change and development and finalized and adopted National Policy for Empowerment of Women (NPEW) in 2001 for creating a supportive milieu for women to exercise their rights, both within and outside home, as equal partners along with men (Ministry of Development, 2001).<sup>7</sup> A step ahead, the tenth plan (2002–2007) has made note of quantifiable targets for women and children, such as all children in school by 2003; all children to complete 5 years of schooling by 2007; reduction in gender gaps in literacy; wage rates' increase by at least 50 percent by 2007; reduction of IMR to 45 per 1,000 live births by 2007 and 28 by 2012; reduction of maternal mortality rate (MMR) to 2 per 1,000 live births by 2007 and to 1 per 1,000 live births by 2012, along with restraining the decline in child serration, providing more representation to women in premier services and in parliament, expansion of the integrated child development service scheme (Planning Commission, 2002–2007); the eleventh plan is somewhat alike but a step forward (2007–2012).<sup>8</sup> Additionally to the policy and program, government also introduced skill up-gradation support programs, economic improvement mission programs, and support

services such as Support to Training and Employment Program for Women (1986–1987), Central Social Welfare Board (2008), Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (2010), National Credit Fund for Women 1993, Gender Budgeting and Economic Empowerment of Women, Hostel for Working Women, Rajiv Gandhi National Crèches Scheme, and Conditional Maternity Benefit Scheme (Press Information Bureau, n.d.). These efforts bring about increasing work participation rates for males and females and in persons too from 19.7 percent and 52.6 percent and 36.7 percent in 1981 to 25.6 percent and 51.7 percent and 39.1 percent in the year 2011. Number of persons employed per 1,000 persons (WPR) according to usual status also shows the improving trends as it rose from 53.1 percent males and 29.9 percent females in rural areas and 51.8 percent males and 13.9 percent females in urban areas during 55th round of survey (1999–2000) to 54.3 percent males and 24.8 females in rural areas and 54.6 percent male and 14.7 females in urban areas during the 68th round of government survey (2011–2012; see Tables 17 and 18). Deeper educational awareness and increasing literacy rate and more participation in employment also helped to reduce gender gap in political participation; though it is low it has improved since the first election as the percentage of women parliamentarians slightly increase

from 4.5 percent in 1951 to 7.30 percent in 1991, 8.29 percent in 2004, and 12.15 percent in 2014. Consequently members of women parliamentarian rose from 22 MPs in 1951 to 39, 45, and 66 MPs in the 1991, 2004, and 2014 elections for 16th Lok Sabha seats, the lower house of the parliament (Table 19).

**Table 17. Work Participation Rates (WPR) by Sex 1981–2011 (Census)**

(In Percentage)

Census Year	Female	Male	Persons
1981	19.7	52.6	36.7
1991	22.3	51.6	37.5
2001	25.7	51.9	39.3
2011	25.6	51.7	39.1

Source: Census of India, Ministry of Statics & Program Implementation.

**Table 18. Number of Persons Employed per 1,000 Persons (WPR) According to Usual Status (All India)**

Social Group	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
68th (2011–2012)	543	248	546	147
66th (2009–2010)	547	261	543	138
61st (2004–2005)	546	327	549	166
55th (1999–2000)	531	299	518	139

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (Employment and Unemployment Situation among Social Groups in India [NSS 68th round 2011–2012]).

**Table 19. Representation of Women in Parliament (Member of Parliament, 1951–2014)**

Year	Women's Members of Parliament	Women MPs (%)	Year (Continued)	Women's Members of Parliament	Women MPs (%)
1951	22	4.50	1989	29	5.48
1957	22	4.45	1991	39	7.30
1962	31	6.28	1996	40	7.37
1967	29	5.58	1998	43	7.92
1971	28	5.41	1999	49	9.02
1977	19	3.51	2004	45	8.29
1980	28	5.29	2009	59	10.87
1984	43	7.95	2014	66	12.15

Participation of women's in 1st to 16th Lok Sabha Election

Source: Statistical reports of the Election Commission of India (Retrieved from [www.faculty.in](http://www.faculty.in)).

In adherence to concrete and persistent efforts by the government throughout the years since independence for empowering women and promoting gender equality, loosely associate fabrics of gender equality and women's empowerment in India transformed into noticeable development on the front of education, political participation, increase in share of employment, improvement in sex ratio, reducing infant mortality and several other attributes of women's empowerment. There has been rigorous implantation of child and medical facilities.

## Conclusion

Structured social policy formulation and its robust execution by the Government of India in adherence with constitutional provision and through rule of law bring forth obtrusive and remarkable growth in the attributes of social sustainability, predominantly in education, employment, and gender empowerment and equality. Though the inclinations show acceptable performance for these attributes, but when it is measured comparatively with other nations on the global map, India's achievement subjected to social sustainability is very negligible and can be understood from its raking as 135 in the human development index by UNDP in 2014, amongst 187 countries, even below its neighbor Sri Lanka (UNDP, 2014). Human Development Report of India 2012 pointed that the asset distribution in India is pathetic because 5 percent of households in urban areas owned 38.3 percent assets, 35 percent of households owned 51.5 percent of the assets, and rest of the 60 percent of households belonging to deprived classes owned a meager 10.2 percent of assets, and the somewhat same is the distribution of assets in rural areas. This chasm of inequality contradicts the notion of inclusive growth and it still prevails in India after 67 years of independence. Thus, it is pertinent that the Indian government come up with a comprehensive social policy framework in pace with current social changes so that it will wipe out

all kinds of discrimination, provide access to resources to all, reduce gender inequality to a large extent and put greater emphasis on the annihilation of caste which is the root cause of all discrimination in India for establishing a socially sustainable system in the true sense.

## Notes

1. John Dewey in his book *Democracy and Education* (1916) pointed out that for *continuous existence* of society there should be transmission and communication among the communities in terms of aims, beliefs, aspiration, Knowledge-a common understanding-like mildness, etc.
2. The executive comprise of President of India (Article 52), Vice President (Article 63), A Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President who shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice {Article 74(1)}, The Attorney-General for India to give advice to the Government of India upon such legal matters, and to perform such other duties of a legal character, as may from time to time be referred or assigned to him by the President, and to discharge the functions conferred on him by or under the Constitution or any other law for the time being in force [Article 76(1) & (2)] (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2007).
3. Planning commission was rechristened as National Institute for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog in 2014 by the new government.
4. Ines Omann and Joachim H. Spangenberg in their paper pointed out that social sustainability focuses on the personal assets, such as education, skills, experience, consumption, income, and employment, while institutional sustainability aims at interpersonal processes liked democracy and participation (institutional mechanisms), distributional, and gender equity (Spangenberg, 2002).
5. Macaulay's Minute on Education, February 2, 1835, expressed that, it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in

- opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class, we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population (Macaulay, n.d.).
6. The All India Employment and Unemployment Surveys of National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, is the primary source of labor market data at the national and state level. The labor force indicators at national and state and UT levels, generated from these surveys, provide the critical inputs required for planning and policy formulation exercises of various government organizations and also serves as an important element of data to other users/researchers. NSS surveys on Employment and Unemployment, with large samples of households. The present employment and unemployment survey was conducted during the NSS's 68th round (July 2011–June 2012). The document *Key Indicators of Employment and Unemployment in India, 2011–12* was brought out in June 2013 and unit level data were also released in June 2013 (Ministry of Implementation, 2013).
  7. The major goal and objectives of NPEW were (a) creating an environment for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential; (b) The *de-jure* and *de-facto* enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on an equal basis with men in all spheres—political, economic, social, cultural, and civil; (c) equal access to participation and decision-making of women in social, political, and economic life of the nation; (d) equal access to women to health-care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office, and so on; (e) mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process; (f) elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; (g) building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations (Ministry of Development, 2001).
  8. The Eleventh Plan (2007–2012) lays down six quantifiable targets such as raising the sex ratio for age group 0–6 from 927 in 2001 to 935 by 2011–2012 and to 950 by 2016–2017, passing benefits to least 33 percent of women and girl children in all government schemes, diminishing IMR from 57 to 28 and MMR from 3.01 to 1 per 1,000 live births; decreasing malnutrition among children of age group 0–3 to half its present level; reducing dropout rate for primary and secondary schooling by 10 percent for both girls and boys.

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