

Foreword

Gender & Politics

The modern world has multi-layers of colours that need diverse perspectives for understanding. Political world has certain specific approach which needs a specific viewpoint for its comprehension. Gender is one such lens through which politics can be understood. In both the everyday lives and political fields, gender and politics are interchangeably used to present the overall image. The significance of this theme is not only presented in its capacity to represent the entrenched inequalities but also in its potential for altering the political approaches toward greater inclusivity and a sense of justice. Gender continues to be an influential element across the globe, that brings forward to influence the factors regarding who are participating in the field of politics and whose voices are identified and marginalized. Thus, it becomes crucial and involuntary to investigate politics via the lens of gendered perspectives, as the modern social structures are constantly confronting with the concerns of democratic responsibilities and equity.

The connection of gender and politics is found everywhere; as is currently evident in the prolonged disparities which characterize the political agencies across the world. Women and gender-driven marginalized communities, despite having decades of advocacy and reformation, yet remain under-represented or deprived across the politically decision-making institutions. Such a deprived image of women is not only a numerical concern; but also illustrates an in-depth approach towards century-driven misalignment in

perceptions that has been engraved within social, economic and political procedures. The expectations and norms associated with gender in certain times shape such access to the resources, leadership roles along with opportunities, thus, resonating a theme of exclusion. Moreover, gender and politics is seen to be presenting crucial information across the approaches via which sustenance and operations by power is presented.

The feminist movements across the globe have been vested with the honor of playing transformative roles across challenging the conventional political representation. Initiating from the preliminary struggles for suffrage to the contemporary campaigns illustrating challenges like reproductive rights, workplace (pay) quality and political representation; highlights that these movements have evolved and expanded its boundaries of what constitutes political participation. They carry redefined citizenship for involving not only formal rights but also substantive forms of equality and dignity. By putting forward a collective dedication to bringing in advanced gender equality approaches, global guidelines and agreements have furthermore institutionalized these aspirations and preferences. Despite having such a pathway, the omnipresent nature of the gender-driven discriminatory actions and violence illustrates that these dedications might remain unevenly contested, thus, reducing the requirement for a continued assimilation and critical reflection processes.

The above-described paragraph highlights the international image, whereas, in the Indian context, the reciprocal matrix of cultural norms, traditions, democracy and social hierarchies are responsible to not only shape gender and politics but also equally present in the decision-making processes. The Indian constitutional infrastructure ensures the presence of

equality and fosters a robust foundation for gender justice-based systems. The lived realities however are presenting a different picture; showcasing that numerous women and marginalized gender groups are revealed to have relevant gaps within the legal provisions and the actual practice. The concept of political participation and leadership opportunities for women are ceremonially restricted by forwarding social-cultural norms, agency-based biases and economic situations. Even though, India as a Nation has seen notable examples of women in positions of political power, these instances are often coexisting with widespread barriers like gender-related violence, restricted presence towards resources like education and engraved gender-based stereotypes.

As per the recent development (latest as of April, 2026), the policy-based development promising for women representation in Indian politics saw a new turn; with Women's Reservation Bill/Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam the developing approach of gender politics in India is showcasing evolving changes. This legislation highlights to have a relevant impact in order to increase women's representation in the legislative agencies, resonating a broader identification of the relevance of inclusive governance. This policy at the same time also raises significant enquiries about its incorporation, the inclusion of the diverse groups of women and the potential of drastically changing the current political frameworks. These raised questions feature that the dynamic and contested nature of gender politics always have a partnership with novel complications and challenges.

Across the formal political bodies, gender is known to play a critical role which modifies the experiences and perspectives of an individual about peace, security and approach towards conflict. One of the pivotal actors in advocating peace procedures are women, who are seen to be increasing their

contributing in roles in tables of negotiations, forwarding as activists and mediators. Their participation had been assimilated towards a more sustainable and inclusive peace outcomes, highlighting the relevance of diversified perspectives in resolving conflicts. Women are seen to often bearing the imbalanced implications of violence and instability, outlining that the gender-based dimensions of international crises are still ongoing.

The modern political landscape is moreover complicated by the rise of technological expansion, globalization and the transcending dynamics connected with both the society and political presence. Another association will the inclusion of social media or digital media which has been deemed as an essential platform for advocating for expression and activism; presenting to have a crucial role in creating spaces of protest for marginalized voices and to challenge the dominant narratives across gender and political factors. However, this space is also susceptible to new form of online harassment featuring digital gap and resource limitation, essentially to women and marginalized sections.

These proceedings forward the spirit of the National Conference to create an interdisciplinary platform for dialogue on gender and politics, exploring the ways in which gender shapes political processes, identities, and structures of power. It engaged with themes such as feminist political thought, representation, corporate narratives, and globalization, emphasizing the need to move beyond conventional political frameworks to recognize everyday forms of resistance, agency, and participation. In this context, the papers presented by our esteemed keynote speakers and panelists added significant depth and perspective to the understanding of gender and politics. By connecting Indian experiences with broader global realities, their contributions enriched discussions on

authority, inequality, representation, and justice, while also encouraging critical reflection on long-held assumptions. The insights offered through these scholarly interventions ultimately strengthened the seminar's objective of fostering more inclusive, informed, and equitable approaches to policy and political engagement.

The paper by Dr. Arundhati Bhattacharyya, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Burdwan.

Prof. Bhattacharyya's presentation focused on the relationship between gender and political phenomena, like representation, participation etc. It examines how gender identity shapes political processes, political institutions, power dynamics, decision-making and actions. It also discusses how men have been historically dominant in politics, which has further led to unequal power structures. Researchers study the voting behavior, campaign activities, activities and political engagement of women, in the political horizon. Today, more and more women are participating in the political field as voters and as candidates. However, women's ability to freely exercise their political right is often hampered by various factors, like illiteracy, lack of economic resources, lack of self-confidence, patriarchal societal expectations etc. Gender equality is far from being achieved. Politics is a part of society. So, the societal environment will always have its repercussions on the political scenario. Women's participation in politics is necessary in order to reflect the views of nearly half the civilization. An analysis of the nature and extent of women's participation is therefore essential in any political system, particularly, a developing one. The present lecture seeks to examine some aspects of women's political life in West Bengal. The nature of political participation by men has been analyzed to provide a comparative view.

The paper by Dr. Sreya Maitra, Assistant Professor, Jadavpur University, *Violence Against Women in Sri Lanka in the Civil War and Post-Civil War Periods* examines the multiple narratives of the women in Sri Lanka. They are free citizens enjoying adult suffrage since independence, but the post-colonial political trajectory of Sri Lanka has challenged their liberty repeatedly, particularly harshly for women from minority communities. Women from Sinhalese and Tamil communities were severely affected by the civil war in Sri Lanka and the legacy of war continues to impose hardships. Seeking to set the agenda for reforms, women lack information on their missing relatives, face displacement from their land, suffer from economic deprivation, psychological trauma, vulnerability to sexual violence and exploitation, along with a militarised environment that reinforces their victimization on an everyday basis. Promises made by the central government to the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2015 have failed to materialise even as the urgent economic and psychosocial needs of all conflict-affected groups remain unmet. As women carry the legacy of war as a burden in their everyday lives, their role in shaping transitional justice policies cannot be ignored. The government largely has ignored the report of its Consultations Task Force (CTF) on national reconciliation processes, which conferred widely with women, particularly those women who reside in conflict-affected areas. This gap in expectation of rights and delivery of justice stems largely from the lack of representation of women in Sri Lanka's political affairs. For decades after independence, the proportion of women in Sri Lanka's parliament stagnated at around 4 per cent. This has contributed to reinforcing conservative and patriarchal perceptions of women in Sri Lankan society. As women continue to grapple with gender-based violence, the UN Population Fund reports that 90% of Sri Lankan women

and girls have faced sexual harassment in public buses and trains, while 1 in 4 women report having experienced physical and/or sexual violence since age 15 (Department of Census & Statistics, 2019). Efforts to end violence against women often face barriers, including legal gaps and social stigma. The lecture seeks to connect the gendered narratives of the past and present for women in Sri Lanka to find the answer to the pressing question: is the Sri Lankan democracy doing enough to ensure the rights and security of its women?

The paper Sustainability and Gender: A Reflection Through the Security Paradigm was presented by Dr. Gargi Adhikari, Visiting Faculty, Symbiosis School of Liberal Arts, Pune, and the Interdisciplinary School of Science, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune. The paper examines the concept of sustainability through the lens of human security and gender, offering a critical perspective on traditional “top-down” scientific and technocratic approaches. It argues that sustainability must be understood not merely as an environmental or technological concern, but as a deeply social issue, closely intertwined with questions of energy justice and the capabilities of individuals. Focusing on the Indian context, the study highlights how environmental degradation and energy poverty disproportionately affect women. Women, who bear the primary responsibility for unpaid care work and the collection of essential resources such as water and fuel, are particularly vulnerable to ecological stress and infrastructural inadequacies. These challenges not only reinforce existing gender inequalities but also limit women’s opportunities for social and economic advancement. Drawing on the framework of feminist political ecology, the paper emphasizes the need to move beyond conventional policy approaches and instead foreground the lived experiences and traditional knowledge systems of women. It argues that sustainable development

cannot be achieved without addressing structural inequalities and ensuring the meaningful inclusion of women in climate governance and energy-related decision-making processes.

The papers assembled in this volume collectively bear witness to the richness, complexity, and urgency of gender as a category of political analysis. Spanning questions of constitutional reform, transitional justice, digital activism, electoral representation, bureaucratic exclusion, and cultural resistance, the contributions traverse disciplinary and geographical boundaries while remaining anchored in a shared commitment: the dismantling of structures that systematically subordinate, silence, and render invisible those who do not conform to the dominant axes of power. From the corridors of the Indian legislature to the conflict zones of Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, from the lived precarity of Dalit women and LGBTQIA+ communities to the symbolic politics of comic book heroines, each paper reminds us that gender is never an isolated variable but always entangled with caste, class, religion, and nationality. Together, they do not merely describe a problem — they enact a method, demonstrating that rigorous, reflexive, and intersectional scholarship is itself a form of political engagement. It is in this spirit that the present volume is being offered to its readers not as a conclusion to a conversation, but as an invitation to continue and deepen the conversation.