



**Call for Papers for a
Two Day Conference on
Governance and Gender Parity: Prospects and Challenges**

Jointly organised by
*Centre for Research in Social Sciences and Education (CERSSE), JAIN (Deemed-to-be) University &
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS)*

On
February 8 – 9, 2020
At **JAIN (Deemed-to-be) University, Bengaluru, India**

Gender parity implies equal access and rights to both men and women alike. Countries all over the world prioritise governance and developmental measures that seek to enhance gender parity and equality. However, in many spheres, women are still running to catch up. India is the second most populous country in the world but it still has a lower percentage of women in the workforce compared to the global average, due to high gender inequality in society and at the workplace. This was noted in the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) India-focused extract from ‘The Power of Parity: Advancing Women’s Equality in Asia Pacific’ report, made public in May 2018.¹ India voted its 17th Lok Sabha (Lower House of the Parliament) to power in the summer of 2019 amidst the backdrop of the need to increase the presence of women in legislatures. The need to persuade political parties to give more tickets to women to contest in these elections once again resurfaced in gender debates and political discussions. The 16th Lok Sabha had

¹ In it, the state of women’s employment in Asia Pacific is graded based on 15 gender equality indicators, which produces a Gender Parity Score (GPS), graded from 1 (gender parity) to zero (full gender equality) For more see <http://www.forbesindia.com/article/web-special/india-sits-below-global-average-in-mckinseys-gender-parity-report/50569/1>

62 women out of the 543 MPs elected in it while this number in the 15th Lok Sabha was 58.² Currently there are 78 women in the 17th Lok Sabha comprising 14 per cent of its total. While it is being lauded as a record, it must not be forgotten that this highest number of women MPs elected to the Lok Sabha in the history of the country is still a woefully small one.³

In India only 18 percent of the 612.2 million women contribute to the GDP. With the global average of 36 percent women in the workforce, India's low percentage led it to score a lowly GPS of 0.30, in terms of gender equality at work. This is quite low for the economy, which generates almost 10 percent of regional GDP and is home to 33 percent of the region's combined female population. Meanwhile, the world's most populous country, China, scored a GPS of 0.51 with a women's population of 671.2 million. The report stated that the country stands to grab the largest opportunity- at \$2.6 trillion- or add 13 percent to its business-as-usual GDP only by increasing the number of women in its workforce.

Women still lag behind when it comes to pay gap. A recent report shows that at 16.1 per cent, India too, does not fare any better when the overall pay gap between men and women is measured. India, however, fared better than countries like the U.K., the U.S.A. and Germany although it still has to catch up with China. India's annual gross domestic product (GDP) could rise an additional 18 percent or \$770 billion over its business-as-usual GDP by 2025, if more women were to be a part of the paid labour force as stated in the report by McKinsey India.⁴ However, women are still fighting for equal place at work, at home and even in all levels of power and decision-making. Adding to this is the reality that even safe public spaces are shrinking for them.

It is however attitudes that legitimise violence and discrimination against women that have escalated alarmingly in countries like India, with reports emerging regularly of young girls and women from all walks of life being assaulted, molested, violated and raped, both in the country's sprawling cities as well as in tiny villages, within the four walls of their homes and in open areas like streets. It is in this context that the idea of spatiality and that of safe spaces for women needs to be revisited and the idea interrogated if women at all have any spaces left where they feel safe. World over, women are asserting their right for an independent and autonomous existence of dignity, free from fear and humiliation and are refusing to be silenced and caged any more. A closer look at statistics on sexual violence in India shows that it has

²See 'Profile of the 16th Lok Sabha' accessed on 07-03-2019 at <https://www.prsindia.org/media/media-updates/profile-of-the-16th-lok-sabha>

³ For more see Priyanca Mathur Velath, 'Women Representation: Still a long way to go', *Deccan Herald*, August 31st, 2019 accessed on 05.11.19 at <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/main-article/women-representation-still-a-long-way-to-go-758218.html>

⁴ Ibid

risen sharply. The latest National Crime Records Bureau data reflect how incidents of rapes have gone up by 12-15 percent, while other crimes have risen by 3-5 percent in recent years. Nearly 40,000 rapes were reported in 2016 despite a greater focus on women's safety. India's average rate of reported rape cases is about 6.3 per 100,000 of the population. Even India's average rate of 6.3, which is not very high when compared with the rest of the world, suffers from under-reporting. According to a recent report by the Livemint, about 99 per cent of cases of sexual violence go unreported. If true, this would put India among the nations with highest levels of crimes against women.⁵

Today, women not only find it difficult to negotiate and be in the public, but also to claim their right to have safe spaces. Gender equality, needs to percolate top-down. It is critical to thus examine and deliberate on the following issues -

- What does gender equality within governance mean in countries like India?
- What is the state of governance, institutions and political processes which bring in gender equality within governance?
- Does mere gender-budgeting and 'engendering' of public policy lead to greater gender parity?
- Does having 'safe' public spaces and creating 'gender-neutral' spaces necessarily mean that gender parity will be fostered?

We invite Abstracts for Paper Presentations (500 words) on the following themes –

- Gender Equality and Politics – Institutions and Processes
- Gender Equality in Society - Patriarchy and Power
- Gender Equality in the City – Spaces and Safety

Deadline for Abstract - January 25th, 2020. Please email your Abstracts (500 words) along with a short bio-note (200 words) to jainkasgenderconf@gmail.com

Deadline for Full Paper – February 2nd, 2020

There will be accommodation provided for all outstation guests. There is limited travel funding for accepted paper presenters.

⁵ See <https://thewire.in/society/a-closer-look-at-statistics-on-sexual-violence-in-india>