



**Editorial**

**Women's health and well-being: Pathways to prosperity**

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**Introduction**

All over the world, the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) appears important, as the target year 2030 is approaching soon. All the countries across the globe are working to implement these goals, and the primary difficulty lies in how every individual can support to preserve the planet. This special issue of Indian Journal of Health, Sexuality and Culture has specifically addressed the themes related to women's health and well-being that is also one of the goals of UN Sustainable Development.<sup>[1]</sup>

Women, both within and outside the family unit, play an important role in the development and growth of any nation. In India, women have made important advances, mainly in areas such as education and health. This growth has been hard-earned, and it is the result of cooperative efforts from various participants, including government agencies, both at the central and local levels, NGOs, voluntary organizations, and most importantly, individual women who have initiated a positive change in India through their insistent

efforts and courage.<sup>[2]</sup>

**Women's health and economic growth**

India's growth and development in economy depends on the safety and security of women, as they are valuable assets in terms of women's capital, neutral capital (social), and human capital (health). However, despite India's proud history of women's status and position in ancient Vedic times, women still face various forms of discrimination, oppression, harassment, injustice, abuse, and violence, in more subtle and sophisticated ways in recent times. While blatant and overt discrimination may be less prevalent today, these issues persist. There is a need for a decrease in resistance to change, a shift in mind set, and the promotion of gender neutrality in society. This would encourage people to fully engage in work, support women's equality and empowerment, and enable their active participation in all aspects of society on an equal footing with men.<sup>[3]</sup>

The government of India is celebrating the "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav" 2.0 with a major focus on the theme of "Women and Children".<sup>[4]</sup> Studies and articles on this theme would be highly valuable and useful for academicians, researchers, and students working in the area of social psychology, gender and health, health psychology, and other related areas within psychology and the social and behavioral sciences.

**Different aspects of women's health**

Women's health and well-being is a complex tapestry that intertwines biological, social, cultural, and economic threads. In a country like India,

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talking about the health and well-being of women is not just a medical imperative. Still, it is a socio-cultural obligation that forms the very important aspect of society. As researchers are discussing this theme, it becomes obvious that a universal approach, one that includes physical, mental, and social health, is important for fostering a flourishing future for women and, consequently, for the nation.

Usually, women's health and well-being in India have been primarily related to reproductive and maternal health. While maternal health is indisputably critical, limiting the focus to this area alone is negligence on other critical aspects of women's physical, mental, and emotional health.

Mental health and well-being remain a stigmatized and often ignored aspect of women's health and well-being. Depression, anxiety, and stress-related disorders are found to be prevalent among women and are intensified by societal pressures, gender-based violence, and the dual burden of professional and domestic accountabilities.<sup>[5]</sup>

### **The social aspect of women's health**

The social factors related to health play an essential role in shaping the health of women in India. There are different factors such as education, occupation, income, and social status in society that significantly impact the health and well-being of women. In India, gender disparity continues to hinder women's access to education and different economic opportunities, which in turn disturbs their health and well-being.

In every society empowering women through education is a powerful means that may lead to improved health outcomes. Educated women in society are more likely to avail healthcare services, make informed decisions about their health and well-being, and may provide better care for their families. Economic empowerment among women through skill development and employment opportunities not only improves women's financial independence but also positively affects their health and well-being.

In developing countries, creating a supportive environment where discussion on mental health and well-being is openly held and where women feel safe and secure in asking for help and support can be important. Mental health programs in

community, counseling services, and incorporating mental health services into primary health services can make a substantial difference for the mental health and well-being of women. Moreover, encouraging mental health literacy may help in to overcome the stigma and inspire more women to prioritize their mental health and well-being.<sup>[6]</sup>

Another issue that is prevalent in country like India is Gender-Based Violence (GBV). It is a general issue that considerably affects women's health and well-being. Abuse in the form of physical, sexual, and emotional have deep and lifelong impacts on mental and physical health. Therefore, addressing gender based violence needs a different approach, including legal reforms, stringent law enforcement, and support services for survivors.

Health professionals play a critical role in identifying and supporting victims of GBV. Training healthcare providers to recognize signs of abuse and providing them with the tools to offer appropriate support and referrals is vital. Creating safe spaces within healthcare settings where women can speak openly about their experiences can encourage more victims to seek help.<sup>[7]</sup>

### **Other issues**

Until recently, there has been a lack of emphasis on various health issues affecting women in medical research, and women have been significantly under represented in clinical trials. Historically, research related to women's health has mainly focused on fertility and reproductive diseases, while studies on other illnesses have primarily centered on men. As a result, most diagnoses and treatments for women are based on what has been effective for men. However, due to the efforts of advocates for women's health and the exposure of inequalities in medical research, there has been an expansion of the research agenda. This has started to provide valuable insights into the similarities and differences between men and women in terms of health-related matters.<sup>[8]</sup>

By incorporating discussion related to the above issues and factors, this special issue on health and well-being may encourage important discussions, exchange of knowledge, and association among researchers, experts, policymakers, and advocates providing their services for the intersection of women's health. Improving women's health and

well-being in India is a collective responsibility that demands concerted efforts from all sectors of society. A holistic approach that integrates physical, mental, and social health considerations, while being culturally sensitive and inclusive, is imperative. By prioritizing women's health and empowering them through education, economic opportunities, and supportive policies, we lay the foundation for a healthier, more equitable, and prosperous future for all. The journey toward this goal is challenging, but with unwavering commitment and collaboration, it is undoubtedly attainable.

### Conclusion

Focusing on women's health and well-being is not just a matter of social justice in India, but it is a pathway to growth, and prosperity for societies in all over the world. By prioritizing women's health in India, individuals, families and entire community can be empowered. Access and support for mental and emotional well-being, quality of healthcare, rights of education and reproduction are the basic and fundamental for women's health and well-being and it cannot be denied that these are basic investments that have significant returns, as it is said that, healthier mothers, are important for educated children, and stronger economies.

Furthermore, it is true that addressing women's health goes beyond economics, women's health is about her dignity, equality, and basic human rights. In every community, when women are healthy and empowered, their contribution is more effective to their communities and economies; they may break cycles of poverty and inequality. Therefore, in country like India if true prosperity can be achieved it is only through comprehensive healthcare policies, gender-sensitive programs and equal opportunity for all women. Only then it is possible to unlock the full potential of half of the

world's population, fostering a future where all the women succeed and societies may prosper together.

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