



Article

# Women and the Waves: A Study of Gender Inclusion in India's Cruise Industry

**Article History:**

**Name of Author:**

<sup>1</sup>Mini Chakrapani, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Anusree A

<sup>3</sup>Dr. Anoop K K

**Affiliation:**

<sup>1</sup> Research scholar, Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies, Panaganad, Ernakulam. Kerala,

<sup>2</sup> Professor, Government Law College

Ernakulam. Kerala <sup>3</sup> Assistant

Professor, Faculty of Fisheries

Management, Kerala University of

Fisheries and Ocean Studies,

Panaganad, Ernakulam

**Corresponding Author:**

Mini Chakrapani

[minichakrapani1@gmail.com](mailto:minichakrapani1@gmail.com)

**How to cite this article:**

M Chakrapani, Anusree A, Anoop K K,

"Women and the Waves: A Study of Gender

Inclusion in India's Cruise Industry, 2026:07

(1): 1172-1183

**Received:** 28-02-2026

**Revised:** 12-03-2026

**Accepted:** 26-03-2026

**Published:** 31-03-2026

©2026 the Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)

**Abstract:**

The cruise tourism industry in India is a young but promising part of the country's blue economy, with enormous potential for job creation and economic expansion. However, this industry's growth takes place in a complicated environment of gender discrimination that reflects more general issues in the marine and hospitality industries. The many facets of gender equality in India's cruise industry are examined in this article, which also looks at regulatory frameworks, structural obstacles, present participation trends, and avenues for inclusive development. This thorough examination, which draws from worldwide maritime literature, comparative tourism studies, and rising Indian scholarship, identifies issues with workplace culture, recruiting impediments, and ongoing occupational segregation that restrict women's involvement and promotion. The study reviews current policy tools and their implementation shortcomings, summarises data on gender disparities in maritime and cruise employment, and makes practical suggestions for stakeholders. This paper adds to the expanding conversation on gender-inclusive blue economy growth and offers a research agenda for future studies, even if it acknowledges substantial data constraints unique to India's cruise industry. The results highlight the need for coordinated action across policy reform, industry practices, training infrastructure, and cultural transformation in order to achieve gender equality in India's cruise industry. These interventions promise not only social equity but also improved organisational performance and sustainable sectoral growth.

**Keywords:** Gender equality, cruise tourism, India, blue economy, maritime employment, women seafarers, hospitality sector, occupational segregation, policy frameworks, sustainable development.

## INTRODUCTION

The global cruise industry has emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of international tourism, contributing significantly to coastal economies through direct employment, port revenues, and ancillary services. Cruise tourism is an underutilised resource in the larger blue economy framework for India, given its vast coastline of more than 7,500 km and its advantageous maritime location. Because it sees marine tourism as essential to regional development, job creation, and international tourist diversification, the Indian government has increasingly acknowledged it as a priority industry.

However, cruise tourism's potential as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth still depends on resolving basic issues of access and fairness, especially with regard to

women. Globally, the maritime industry has been marked by severe gender disparities, with women making up a small percentage of seafarers and concentrating in particular occupational niches. Deeply ingrained sociocultural norms, institutional obstacles, and a lack of governmental attention to the gender aspects of marine employment all exacerbate these issues in India.

In addition to being a social justice issue, gender equality in the cruise industry has important ramifications for sustainable development, innovation, and economic efficiency. Research from a variety of industries shows that gender-diverse companies make better decisions, provide better customer service, and are more resilient to changes in the market. Using the whole labour pool via gender-

inclusive procedures is both a strategic benefit and a moral requirement for India's cruise industry, which aims to become a competitive worldwide destination.

### Gender Perspectives in the Blue Economy

Fisheries, shipping, port development, and new industries like cruise tourism are all included in India's blue economy policy debate, which has gained traction in recent years. The blue economy paradigm places a strong emphasis on using ocean resources sustainably to support economic expansion while protecting marine ecosystems. Critical scholarship has observed, however, that the development and execution of the blue economy have not sufficiently taken gender into account. Significant ambivalence and resistance among maritime institutions and industry players are shown by a comprehensive literature analysis that looks at perceptions of women's roles in India's blue economy. Issues regarding recruiting women for jobs at sea are voiced by employers, who point to perceived cultural mismatch, operational difficulties, and safety issues. These views are indicative of larger global trends of gender discrimination in the marine industry, where women have traditionally been marginalized or excluded. Thus, there are possibilities as well as obstacles at the nexus of gender equality and cruise tourist growth. There is a crucial window of opportunity to include gender-inclusive concepts from the beginning as India invests in cruise infrastructure, regulatory frameworks, and market growth, as opposed to adopting remedial efforts after patterns of exclusion have been ingrained.

### RESEARCH GAP

There is a noticeable lack of thorough, India-specific research on the gender aspects of cruise employment, despite increased policy attention to cruise tourism and concurrent debate on gender equality in marine industries. The material that is now available typically pays little attention to the unique characteristics of cruise tourism and instead concentrates on either general marine gender concerns or larger tourist sector dynamics.

The purpose of this paper is to close this gap by:

- A. Combining the information that is currently accessible on the issues of gender equality in India's cruise and marine tourist industries
- B. Examining systemic obstacles that restrict women's involvement and progress  
Analyzing policy frameworks and how well they are implemented.
- C. Finding global best practices that can be useful in the Indian setting  
Making suggestions for stakeholders based on evidence.
- D. Developing a research program to deal with ongoing data shortages.

The research is predicated on the idea that multi-level interventions encompassing legislative change, industrial practices, educational infrastructure, and cultural transformation are necessary to achieve gender equality in cruise tourism. This paper advances both academic knowledge and the practical development of policy by methodically exploring these factors.

### Cruise Tourism in India: Infrastructure, Investment, and Institutional Challenges

The cruise tourism industry in India is still in its infancy, and there is a dearth of reliable information on the market's size, passenger numbers, or exact economic impact. In contrast to developed cruise markets like the Caribbean, Mediterranean, or Alaska, India has not yet become a significant homeport or cruise destination. A number of difficulties, such as limited worldwide marketing, complicated regulations, and infrastructural limitations, contribute to the sector's emerging position.

- A. Evidence currently available indicates that the main components of cruise tourism in India are:
  - A. Major coastal cities (Mumbai, Goa, Kochi, Chennai) are visited by international cruise ships as part of larger Asian itineraries.
  - B. Smaller-scale river excursions on the Ganges and Brahmaputra.
  - C. Coastal cruises that provide quick domestic travel experiences.
  - D. India's island regions, especially the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, are the subject of expedition cruises.

Beyond direct passenger expenditure, cruise tourism has an economic influence on employment in the marine and hospitality industries as well as port services, catering, and shore excursions. Each cruise passenger generates income for local economies through a variety of channels, according to comparative studies from well-known cruise locations that show significant multiplier impacts.

### Policy initiatives taken

To improve cruise tourist infrastructure and expedite operating processes, the Indian government has launched a number of initiatives:

Port development: updating cruise terminals in important ports, such as the new cruise terminal project in Mumbai.

Simplifying regulations: Attempts to lower administrative obstacles for cruise operations, such as visa and customs processes.

Marketing initiatives: Tourism marketing to promote India as a cruise destination.

Integration of the blue economy: Cruise tourism's incorporation into more comprehensive plans for the growth of the maritime industry.

However, many prospective cruise ports have substantial gaps in shore-side amenities, transit connectivity, and tourism facilities due to unequal infrastructure development. Despite growing support, the policy environment has not consistently addressed the gender aspects of sectoral growth

### Employment scenario

The following categories apply to employment in India's cruise industry:

Onboard positions: Crew members working for cruise lines, including Indian nationals on foreign ships and employees on local cruises.

Employment on the shore: Support personnel, tourism service providers, and port workers.

Supply chain, provisioning, and supplementary services are examples of indirect employment.

With thousands of Indians employed in a variety of roles throughout worldwide cruise fleets, employment aboard foreign cruise ships is a major option for Indian people. However, there are still no published figures on the number of Indian cruise workers, their vocational distribution, and their gender composition.

Indian cruise workers are mostly found in hotel and catering departments, with little presence in technical, navigational, or senior management roles, according to industry studies and anecdotal evidence. This pattern of employment reflects greater gender segregation in the marine industry, where women are disproportionately assigned to service positions.

### **Gender Disparities and Structural Challenges in India's Cruise Industry**

#### **A. Employment barriers**

Significant obstacles prevent women from entering the marine and cruise industries, starting with hiring procedures that exhibit both overt and covert gender prejudice. Employers are generally reluctant to hire women for jobs at sea, according to research looking at stakeholder attitudes in India's blue industry.

There are several reasons for this resistance:

Operational problems: Employers point to perceived challenges in having women on board ships, such as crew dynamics, safety concerns, and facility improvements.

Cultural factors: Both supply-side and demand-side restrictions are created by deeply ingrained societal conventions about women's proper duties, family obligations, and mobility limitations. Daughters may be discouraged from pursuing professions in the marine industry by their families, who believe that such employment is incompatible with conventional gender norms.

Perception of risk: Women are frequently seen as posing operational or legal risks, such as worries about perceived physical limits, pregnancy, and harassment allegations.

**Institutional inertia:** Without taking deliberate steps to draw in and assist female applicants, maritime training facilities and recruiting firms may continue to follow customs that favours male candidates.

Women's access to cruise career possibilities is severely restricted by these recruiting hurdles, which act at several levels: individual, organizational, and social. Comparative studies from other marine situations show that these obstacles may be addressed with intentional, well-coordinated initiatives

### **Gender Stratification in Employment**

When women do work in cruise and marine industries, they are concentrated in particular departments and jobs and endure significant occupational segregation. The "horizontal segregation" pattern shows up as:

Concentration in hotels and catering: Most female sailors worldwide work in hotel services, cleaning, and food service roles on ferries and cruise ships. Despite being crucial, these jobs usually pay less, have less opportunities for professional advancement, and have less prestige than

technical or navigational duties.

Absence from technical roles: Women are still disproportionately underrepresented in jobs related to engineering, deck operations, and technical maintenance. Males have traditionally held these positions, which usually require certain marine credentials.

Service sector channeling: Women are disproportionately assigned to customer-facing service tasks, such as entertainment, spa services, and hospitality, rather than operational or managerial positions, even in the cruise industry.

There are several detrimental effects of this occupational segregation:

Pay disparities: Gender-based salary discrepancies are exacerbated by the fact that service professions often pay less than technical or officer roles.

Limitations on a career: Women's chances for cross-functional experience and promotion to senior positions are restricted by departmental concentration.

Deficits in skill development: Women's development of a variety of marine competences is hindered by their segregation into specific employment niches.

Stereotype reinforcement: Perceptions of "appropriate" positions for women are sustained by visible segregation, leading to self-reinforcing behaviours.

Research indicates that institutional variables such as training availability, recruiting tactics, and workplace culture are responsible for occupational segregation in marine industries rather than innate gender variations in capacity.

### **Wage Structures and Inequality in the Labour Market**

Comparative research from the marine and hospitality industries shows substantial gender-based salary discrepancies, notwithstanding the lack of comprehensive wage data particular to India's cruise industry.

There are several reasons for these pay disparities:

Effects of occupational segregation: As mentioned above, average salary disparities are directly caused by women's concentration in lower-paying service positions.

Gaps in seniority and rank: Due to their underrepresentation in senior posts and officer ranks, fewer women are able to reach higher pay scales.

Work pattern differences: Due to career breaks for family obligations, women may have less continuous marine service, which might have an impact on seniority-based salary.

Direct discrimination: Research from a variety of marine settings indicates that discriminatory remuneration practices may result in women being paid less for doing comparable work.

These income disparities have an impact on household welfare, children's results, and larger patterns of gender inequality in addition to individual women. Addressing salary disparities in expanding industries like cruise tourism is crucial for inclusive growth in India, where women's labour force participation rates are still lower than the worldwide norm.

### Harmonizing Career and Family Roles

The operational demands of the cruise industry long stay at sea, erratic scheduling, and little shore leave create unique difficulties for work-life balance that disproportionately impact women.

These difficulties are particularly severe in the Indian setting, where women are still primarily responsible for childcare and home administration.

Long-term absence from home: Cruise contracts usually require many months of nonstop labour on board, which can be challenging for women who have family obligations.

Daycare restrictions: Mothers find lengthy marine service especially difficult due to a lack of dependable, reasonably priced daycare.

Social norms: Indian women are frequently expected to put their families before their careers, which puts pressure on them to quit or stay away from marine jobs.

Support from husbands and family: In situations where women's mobility and freedom defy conventional standards, women's marine professions may encounter opposition from spouses or extended family.

Women may leave marine occupations at a greater rate than males because to these work-life balance issues, which also contribute to access obstacles and retention issues. Both business rules (flexible scheduling, family-friendly amenities) and more widespread social reform around gender roles and family duties are necessary to address these difficulties.

### Occupational Safety and Prevention of Workplace Harassment

Women's engagement in cruise and marine jobs is significantly hampered by safety issues, especially those related to sexual harassment and gender-based violence. Because of the enclosed space of ships, power structures, and a culture that has historically been controlled by males, harassment is possible and may go unnoticed.

Numerous types of harassment and discrimination against women in the marine industry are documented by research: Unwanted sexual attention, remarks, or approaches from coworkers or superiors are examples of sexual harassment. A hostile workplace is one in which women's professional competency is undermined, insulting remarks are made, or exclusionary behaviour occurs.

Prejudice in training: Female marine students report being harassed and subjected to prejudice during training programs, which has an impact on their educational experience and professional readiness. Insufficient reaction mechanisms Systems for reporting harassment may be ineffectual when women report harassment out of fear of reprisals or disbelief.

Beyond the immediate victims, harassment has an influence on all women's perceptions of maritime vocations as hostile or dangerous. Strong anti-harassment regulations, efficient reporting procedures, and cultural transformation programs are crucial for India's cruise industry to draw in and keep female workers.

### Systemic Shortcomings in Employee Development

Women's ability to enter and progress in cruise work is hampered by institutional barriers to maritime training and professional development opportunities. These deficiencies show up in a number of ways:

Access to training institutions: Historically, male-dominated maritime training academies in India and across the world have recruited few female students.

Financial obstacles: Women may find training expenses, such as tuition, equipment, and opportunity costs, to be extremely burdensome, particularly in situations where families place a high priority on their sons' education.

Curriculum and pedagogy: Training programs may reinforce masculine standards that alienate female students and fail to address gender-specific requirements or obstacles.

Mentorship gaps: Aspiring female seafarers have fewer role models and mentors due to the lack of women in top maritime roles.

Continuing education: Women may not have as many options for professional growth and advancement, which might hinder their ability to advance in their careers.

Targeted interventions, such as mentoring programs, gender-sensitive teaching, scholarships, and institutional culture change in maritime education, are necessary to address these training deficiencies.

### Present Dynamics of Women's Participation and Leadership Representation

There are currently no comprehensive data on women's employment aboard cruise ships that are particular to India in published scholarly research. The lack of research and policy focus on the gender aspects of the industry is reflected in this data gap. Nonetheless, a number of conclusions might be drawn from the facts at hand:

Global maritime context: Although this percentage has been steadily rising, women make up around 2% of sailors worldwide. Although exact numbers vary by cruise line and vessel type, women are more prevalent in cruise-specific occupations, especially in hotel and service divisions.

Indian marine employment: Women who graduate from maritime academies are pursuing a variety of maritime occupations, and the country has a small but increasing number of female sailors. Retention rates and career advancement trends, however, are still poorly understood.

Occupational distribution: As previously mentioned, the majority of women working on cruise ships are employed in hotel, catering, and service positions; they are under-represented in deck, engine, and senior officer duties.

Regional differences: Women's engagement in the marine industry varies significantly by area worldwide, with larger percentages of female cruise workers in certain nations (such as the Philippines and Indonesia) than in others.

Evidence-based policy creation and progress tracking are severely hampered by the lack of trustworthy, disaggregated statistics on women's cruise employment in India.

### Gender Dynamics in Workplace Roles and Leadership

Women's employment trends in India's cruise and marine industries are indicative of wider occupational segregation:

Roles in service and hospitality: Women are employed as store employees, performers, spa therapists, restaurant waiters, and cabin stewards. Despite being crucial to cruise operations, these jobs are usually at the bottom of organizational structures.

Administrative positions: A few women work in port authority, travel agents and cruise company offices. New developments in technological representation Although they still make up a very tiny proportion, women are increasingly employed in technical positions like as safety personnel, engineering officers, and navigation officers.

Under-representation in management: Both on board ships and in shore-based cruise operations, women are still disproportionately under-represented in senior management roles.

Both supply-side (training, credentials, career aspirations) and demand-side (recruitment procedures, promotion choices, organizational culture) elements are reflected in this pattern of positions.

### Stories of Empowerment and Achievement

Individual women have made significant progress in India's marine and cruise industries despite structural obstacles, acting as crucial role models:

Pioneer female officers: Indian women have earned certifications to serve as engineering and deck officers on a variety of ships, including cruise ships. These trailblazers show that technical proficiency and leadership in marine positions are not limited by a person's gender.

Entrepreneurial endeavours: A few women have started companies in the cruise and marine tourist industries, such as tour companies, service providers, and lodging establishments.

Training and advocacy: To boost women's involvement in the industry, female maritime professionals have supported training initiatives and advocacy campaigns.

Systemic change necessitates moving beyond dependence on exceptional people to build structural circumstances that permit widespread women's engagement and progress, even while individual success stories are crucial for inspiration and illustrating possibilities.

### Empowering Women Leaders

There are still very few women in leadership roles, both on cruise ships and in shore-based management. Several factors contribute to the "glass ceiling" or "vertical segregation" effect:

Effects of pipelines: There is a narrow pool of candidates for advancement to senior roles due to the low proportion of women working in the marine industry.

Promotional obstacles: Women may be discriminated against when making judgements regarding promotions due to presumptions about their dedication, aptitude, or fit for leadership positions.

Unofficial networks: In male-dominated settings, women may be excluded from informal mentorship and networking, which are crucial for leadership growth.

Informal networks: In male-dominated settings, women may be excluded from informal networking and mentoring,

which are frequently necessary for leadership promotion.

Work-life conflict: Women are disproportionately affected by the perception that the demands of top jobs are incompatible with family duties.

According to research on women in maritime leadership, having a wider range of opinions, better decision-making, and an improved organizational culture are all ways that participation at high levels improves organizational performance. Creating opportunities for women to grow in leadership is both a strategic aim and an equitable requirement for India's cruise industry.

### Regulatory Policies and Governance Structures

Legal Safeguards for Gender Equality in the Indian Workforce

Many regulations pertaining to gender equality in employment are included in India's legislative framework; nevertheless, their implementation to the marine and cruise industries creates unique challenges.

Constitutional protections: The Indian Constitution requires equal compensation for equal labour (Article 39), forbids discrimination based on sex (Article 15), and ensures equality before the law (Article 14).

Labour laws: Gender-specific clauses are included in a number of labour regulations, such as:

Equal compensation for equal labour is required by the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976.

Maternity leave and benefits are provided by the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (modified in 2017).

Employers are required to prevent and deal with workplace harassment under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

Maritime-specific regulations: Although there are not gender-specific laws, the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, regulates job conditions for seafarers.

Implementation issues: In the marine industry, where employment may take place on boats registered in several jurisdictions, implementation and enforcement are nevertheless uneven despite strong legislative frameworks. Cruise operations' global reach adds to the regulatory complexities around relevant labour requirements.

### Global Frameworks for Maritime Safety and Regulation

India is subject to international regulations pertaining to gender equality in marine work as a signatory to International Labour Organisation (ILO) agreements and a member of the International marine Organisation (IMO):

The 2006 ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC): This extensive treaty sets basic living and working conditions for sailors, including guidelines for housing, working hours, and health protection. The MLC offers a foundation for decent labour standards that apply to all seafarers, even if it does not specifically address gender.

IMO gender efforts: Although they have been criticized for being insufficient, the IMO has implemented a number of measures, such as training programs and policy

recommendations, to encourage women's participation in marine sectors.

UN Sustainable Development Goals: SDGs 14 (Life Below Water) and 5 (Gender Equality) offer global frameworks that connect gender equality to sustainable ocean development, which are pertinent to cruise tourism.

International recommendations: A number of international organizations have released recommendations on gender equality in the marine industry, with a focus on career development, workplace safety, training, and recruiting.

There are still large gaps between policy pledges and operational realities in India's application of these international standards in the context of the cruise industry.

### Cruise Industry Regulations and Standards

India's cruise industry-specific laws are still in their infancy and pay little consideration to gender issues. Important

policy gaps consist of:

Lack of gender-specific cruise employment policies: There are no particular rules in Indian maritime policy that address gender equality in cruise employment.

Limited monitoring and data collection: Evidence-based policy creation is hampered by government agencies' failure to routinely gather and disseminate gender-disaggregated data on cruise employment.

Regulatory fragmentation: There is little cooperation on gender equality concerns among the several bodies (Ministry of Tourism, Directorate General of Shipping, Port Authorities) that have control over various areas of cruise operations.

Industry self-regulation: Cruise companies operating in Indian seas adhere to their own business rules, which differ in how much emphasis they place on gender equality, in the lack of comprehensive government legislation.

For India's sectoral growth, the creation of comprehensive, gender-responsive cruise industry laws is essential.

### Bridging the Gap: From Policy to Practice

Implementation and enforcement are nevertheless difficult even in cases when laws and rules are in place:

Limited knowledge: Many parties involved, such as employers and workers, might not be aware of their legal rights and responsibilities with relation to gender equality.

Weak enforcement mechanisms: Regulatory bodies could not have the resources or focus necessary to properly oversee and uphold gender equality laws.

Jurisdictional complexity: Determining the appropriate legislation and enforcement jurisdiction is difficult due to the international character of cruise activities.

Cultural resistance: Employers and even some employees may oppose the implementation of gender equality initiatives, believing them to be superfluous or improper.

Resource limitations: Companies and government organisations may point to resource limits as obstacles to putting comprehensive gender equality policies into action. Stronger institutional capability, more transparent accountability procedures, and ongoing political support for

gender equality in the marine industry are all necessary to close these implementation gaps.

### Gender Equality and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development

Although there is still little data specifically related to cruise tourism, research from a variety of industries shows that gender diversity improves organisational performance.

Improved decision-making: Diverse teams contribute a range of viewpoints that enhance strategic choices and problem-solving.

Innovation: Increased creativity and flexibility in response to shifting market conditions are linked to gender diversity.

Client service: By representing a range of client demographics, gender diversity in workforce may improve service quality and customer satisfaction in customer-facing businesses like cruise tourism.

Employee morale and retention: Gender-neutral, inclusive workplaces have reduced employee turnover and better employee satisfaction, which lowers the cost of hiring and training new employees.

Reputation and brand value: Businesses that are acknowledged for their commitment to gender equality may improve their reputation and brand, drawing in both clients and top talent.

Although a large portion of this data originates from land-based industries, the processes are probably applicable to employment on cruise ships, indicating that gender equality may be a source of competitive advantage rather than just a cost or compliance burden.

### Efficiency and Equity in Labor Market Dynamics

More effective labour marketplaces and greater use of available skills are two benefits of gender equality in cruise employment:

Increased pool of talent: The potential workforce is essentially doubled when obstacles to women's involvement are removed, allowing businesses to choose from a wider pool of competent applicants.

Decreased skill shortages: Increasing women's participation helps alleviate the labour supply issues that the maritime industry faces on a worldwide scale.

Optimal skill matching: Instead of artificial channelling based on gender stereotypes, gender equality allows for better matching of individual abilities and interests to professional responsibilities.

Human capital development: Putting money into women's maritime education and training helps create human capital more broadly, with advantages that extend beyond work aboard cruise ships.

Making sure women have access to work in the cruise industry is an effective use of human resources for India, given its enormous young population and demand for meaningful employment options.

### Industry Contributions Toward the 2030 Agenda

Several UN Sustainable Development Goals are in line with and supported by gender equality in cruise tourism:

**SDG 5 (Gender Equality):** Direct contribution through the decrease of discrimination, equitable access to work, and economic empowerment of women.

**SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth):** Cruise employment is an example of decent work when it is marked by equal opportunity, safe working conditions, and fair compensation.

**SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities):** Reducing more general patterns of economic inequality is achieved by addressing gender in cruise employment.

**SDG 14 (Life Below Water):** Equitable benefit-sharing and inclusive governance are necessary for sustainable ocean development, which includes responsible cruise tourism.

**SDG 1 (No Poverty):** Women's access to good jobs in the cruise industry can help reduce poverty, especially in coastal areas.

According to research on the connection between tourism and gender equality, women's empowerment and involvement in the labour market can be favourably impacted by tourist growth, albeit results vary depending on the type and terms of employment. The cruise industry in India may maximize contributions to sustainable development by purposefully creating development pathways that prioritize gender equality.

### **Social Progress and Cultural Adaptation**

Women's involvement in unconventional industries like cruise work might spur wider social and cultural transformation in addition to financial advantages:

**Challenging gender stereotypes:** Stereotypes regarding suitable job for women and men's and women's talents are challenged by women's apparent success in marine positions.

**Role modelling:** Women who work on cruise ships act as role models for younger generations, which may have an impact on their goals for their education and careers.

**Impacts on families and communities:** Women's income and financial independence can change the dynamics of households and improve the wellbeing of children.

Social standards pertaining to women's responsibilities and mobility may progressively alter as more women participate in public, mobile jobs.

**Empowerment:** Women's agency and empowerment are enhanced by meaningful work that offers equitable pay, skill development, and career promotion.

Although this is not always the case and depends on working circumstances, women's control over earnings, and wider social support, research from tourist contexts shows that women's economic engagement can help to empowerment. Development of the cruise industry that emphasises gender equality might help bring about revolutionary social change in India, where women's labour force participation is still below potential.

### **Institutional Constraints on Women's Empowerment**

Deeply ingrained institutional and organizational frameworks are to blame for women's under-representation and restricted career development in the cruise industry.

**Organizational culture:** Historically, male-dominated maritime organizations had cultures that may be antagonistic or unwelcoming to women. Women may feel excluded or devalued in settings created by informal norms, language, and behaviours.

**Recruitment systems:** Gender biases may be incorporated into recruitment processes through the use of male-dominated networks for applicant sourcing, job descriptions that convey masculine norms, or interview procedures that favour male candidates.

**Promotion and evaluation:** Women may be disadvantaged by performance evaluation and promotion processes in the following ways: Subjective standards that permit prejudice, Stressing characteristics that are traditionally associated with men (e.g., assertiveness), Presumptions regarding the availability or dedication of women, Decision-making that lacks openness. Policies of the organisation: Structural obstacles to women's involvement and promotion include a lack of family-friendly policies, rigid work schedules, and insufficient accommodations for pregnancy and childcare demands.

**Leadership homogeneity:** When men predominate in positions of leadership, "homosocial reproduction" may take place, with leaders choosing and elevating people who are similar to them. It takes extensive organizational change activities, not just individual-level interventions, to address these institutional impediments.

### **Implicit Bias and Gender Stereotyping**

From early schooling to judgements on promotions, gender stereotypes and unconscious bias permeate women's maritime careers:

**Assumptions about competence:** Despite evidence to the contrary, women may be perceived as lacking the technical proficiency, physical stamina, or emotional fortitude necessary for marine employment.

**Stereotypes about leadership:** Women's rise to management roles is hampered by stereotypes that link leadership to male characteristics.

**Role congruity:** When women in technical or leadership positions behave in ways that would be appropriate for males, they may be criticised for going against gender norms.

**Intersectional stereotypes:** Stereotypes based on gender, caste, class, or geography may be exacerbated for women from marginalised areas.

**Self-stereotyping:** Internalised preconceptions may affect women's confidence and professional goals, which can lead to "opt-out" behaviours.

Even well-meaning people and organizations can exhibit unconscious bias, according to research, necessitating systematic interventions including awareness training, organized decision-making procedures, and accountability systems.

### **Barriers in Mentorship and Network Building**

Women's professional progression is hampered by mentorship and networking gaps caused by the dearth of women in top marine positions:

**Mentor scarcity:** Because there aren't enough women in top roles, there aren't many same-gender mentors available to offer advice, support, and role modelling.

**Network exclusion:** Women may be shut out of social interactions and relationship-building opportunities that promote job progression in male-dominated informal professional networks.

**Sponsorship gaps:** Women may not have as much access to "sponsors" senior executives who actively support a person's promotion as males.

**knowledge asymmetry:** Women may have less access to knowledge about opportunities, organizational politics, and career plans if they are excluded from informal networks.

**Isolation:** Because they frequently lack friends with whom to discuss obstacles and tactics, women in male-dominated organizations may feel alone in their careers.

In order to close these disparities, formal mentorship and networking initiatives that make up for informal network exclusion must be established in addition to expanding women's representation, which will increase the pool of possible mentors.

### **Family Responsibilities and Occupational Pressures**

Given current gender conventions about care obligations, the nature of cruise employment provides unique obstacles for work-family balance that disproportionately affect women:

**Extended absence:** It might be challenging to balance childcare and elder care obligations with cruise contracts that call for months of nonstop sea duty.

**Lack of flexibility in scheduling or rotation patterns** makes it challenging for those with caregiving duties to continue their employment.

**Career disruptions:** Women who take time off from their marine jobs to care for their families or have children may encounter challenges upon their return, such as lost seniority and skill obsolescence.

**Partner opposition:** In situations where men's occupations are given priority, wives or partners may oppose women's marine careers.

**societal judgement:** Women who put their jobs ahead of their families may encounter societal criticism, which can have negative psychological effects.

**Inadequate support systems:** Combining nautical jobs with family duties is especially difficult due to the lack of daycare, elder care, and other support services.

Workplace regulations (such as flexible scheduling and family assistance) as well as more general societal changes pertaining to gender roles and caregiving obligations are necessary to address work-family conflict.

### **Multiple Dimensions of Inequality**

In addition to gender-related obstacles, women in the marine industry frequently have overlapping disadvantages based on other aspects of their identities.

**Caste and class:** Women from economically poor homes or lower castes in India have additional obstacle while trying to get marine education and job.

**Regional disparities:** Women from specific areas may have restricted access to training facilities or specific mobility restrictions.

**Caste and class:** Women from economically poor homes or lower castes in India have additional obstacles while trying to get a marine education and a job.

**Regional disparities:** Women from specific areas may have

restricted access to training facilities or specific mobility restrictions.

**Educational background:** Women who don't have familial ties to the marine industry might not have the knowledge or motivation to seek such occupations.

**Language:** Women from non-English-medium educational backgrounds may find it difficult to obtain jobs on international cruises due to English language requirements.

**Age:** Discrimination based on age may be experienced by women who pursue employment in the marine industry later in life or after taking professional pauses.

Women's experiences of obstacles differ depending on a number of intersecting identity factors, according to an intersectional approach, necessitating customised interventions that meet particular needs and settings.

### **Strategic Directions and Future Pathways**

#### **Reforms in Regulation and Policy**

Comprehensive legislative changes at several levels are necessary to achieve gender equality in India's cruise industry:

**Gender-responsive cruise policy:** Create clear guidelines for the cruise industry that incorporate gender equality goals, such as:

Goals for the employment of women in all professions  
Conditions for gathering and reporting gender-disaggregated data

Rewards for businesses that show progress towards gender equality

Penalties and accountability systems for discrimination.

**Strengthened enforcement:** Enhance capacity and prioritization of agencies responsible for enforcing labour standards and anti-discrimination laws in maritime sectors, including:

- A. Dedicated staff with gender expertise
- B. Proactive monitoring and inspection
- C. Accessible complaint mechanisms
- D. Swift, meaningful penalties for violations.

**International alignment:** Ensure that Indian policies, including full implementation of pertinent ILO and IMO laws, are in line with and beyond international norms for gender equality in marine employment. **Intersectoral coordination:** Establish coordination structures across government agencies (shipping, tourism, labour, and women's development) to enable coherent approaches to gender equality in cruise tourism.

**Data infrastructure:** Requires the gathering and dissemination of gender-specific data on cruise employment, such as : Number of workers by rank, occupational type, and gender. Pay statistics by position and gender Rates of promotion and retention, Complaints and decisions regarding harassment.

#### **Corporate Commitments and Best Practices**

To promote gender equality, cruise lines and trade groups can take the following proactive steps:

**Recruitment reform:** Put in place gender-neutral hiring procedures, such as:

Examining and updating job descriptions to eliminate gendered wording organized interview procedures to lessen prejudice, focused outreach to female applicants, collaborations with maritime training facilities to promote

the enrollment of women.

**Occupational integration:** Encourage women to enter and progress in operational and technical occupations, not only service-related ones, by: Focused hiring for technical roles, cross-training initiatives that facilitate departmental mobility, Clearly defined career paths from entry-level to senior roles.

**Anti-harassment strategies:** Adopt thorough anti-harassment procedures and policies, such as: Explicit, documented rules that forbid discrimination and harassment. All staff members, including senior leadership, must complete mandatory training. Several private avenues for reporting prompt and comprehensive review of concerns, Defence against reprisals Significant repercussions for offenders.

**Family-friendly regulations:** Create regulations that promote work-life balance, like:

When it is practically possible, flexible rotation schedules improve family communication technology, programs for returning to work following professional pauses, Allowances or assistance with childcare.

**Sponsorship and mentoring:** Create official programs that match female employees with senior sponsors and mentors who may offer support and direction.

**Accountability and openness:** Make gender-disaggregated employment statistics and diversity goal progress publicly available so that external monitoring and benchmarking are possible.

### Strengthening Education and Training Frameworks

Institutions of maritime education and training are essential in preparing women for professions **aboard cruise ships:** Targeted recruitment: Maritime academies should aggressively seek female pupils by contacting educational institutions, initiatives to disseminate information about professional prospects, collaborations with groups that support women, and highlighting accomplished female maritime professionals.

**Financial support:** To lower financial obstacles, offer scholarships and financial aid exclusively for women seeking marine education.

**Gender-sensitive teaching methods:** Modify instructional strategies to guarantee inclusive classrooms: Educating teachers on gender sensitivity, including gender views in the curriculum, addressing harassment and discrimination in educational settings, and offering assistance to female pupils.

**Infrastructure and facilities:** Make sure training facilities provide the right accommodations, hygienic amenities, and safety precautions for female students.

**Placement Assistance:** Specifically for female graduates, offer career counselling and placement support, including links to companies that promote gender equality.

**Continuing education:** Provide women with access to programs for professional growth and advancement throughout their careers, including those who return from breaks.

### Transformative Social and Cultural Movements

Beyond organizational and regulatory reforms, larger cultural and societal transformation is necessary to achieve gender equality:

**Public awareness campaigns:** Promote successful women in cruise and maritime jobs and challenge preconceived notions about women's nautical talents.

**Community involvement:** Work with coastal communities to remove cultural obstacles and encourage women to pursue employment in the marine industry: correcting misunderstandings about maritime labor, highlighting the financial advantages of women's employment, and working with families to foster support for daughters' desires to pursue careers in the sea.

**Media representation:** Promote good role models and normalize the presence of women in the marine industry by encouraging media coverage of these professionals.

**Educational outreach:** Introduce females to marine job opportunities at a young age by including career awareness into school curriculum.

**Male involvement:** Encourage males to support initiatives for gender equality, such as: Taking on the standards of masculinity that bar women, encouraging shared duties within the family, and educating male managers and staff about gender equality.

**Research and the creation of knowledge:** Encourage studies on the gender aspects of the Indian cruise industry to establish a foundation of evidence for practice and policy. quantitative research describing the involvement and experiences of women, Impact assessments of initiatives, qualitative studies examining obstacles and enablers, and Comparative research that draws lessons from diverse situations.

### Assessment, Feedback, and Governance

Strong oversight and accountability are necessary for gender equality efforts to be implemented effectively:

**Baseline assessment:** Perform a thorough evaluation of the state of gender equality in India's cruise industry, taking into account employment figures, occupational distribution, pay, and working conditions.

**Objectives and indicators:** Set quantifiable, unambiguous metrics and deadlines for the advancement of gender equality: Women's representation overall and by occupational category, Gender wage gaps, Promotion rates, Retention rates, Harassment complaint resolution.

**Participation of stakeholders:** Make sure that gender equality specialists, women's groups, and female workers are meaningfully included in monitoring and assessment procedures.

### Outlook and Directions for Further Study

#### New Directions in Cruise Tourism

India's cruise industry is expected to increase due to a number of new trends:

**Infrastructure investment:** Planned expenditures on port infrastructure and cruise terminals might increase capacity and boost India's appeal as a cruise destination.

**Domestic market development:** The expansion of coastal and river cruise services aimed at Indian travelers may be aided by the country's growing middle class and interest in domestic travel.

**Sustainability focus:** India's sectoral development may be impacted by global trends toward sustainable cruise tourism, such as environmental norms and community benefit-sharing.

**Technology integration:** Employment trends and skill needs

will change as a result of digitalization, automation, and technology innovation in cruise operations.

**Post-pandemic recovery:** With possible changes in operating methods, health precautions, and customer preferences, the cruise industry worldwide is recuperating from the COVID-19 effects. Gender equality faces both possibilities and threats from these movements. To guarantee that industry expansion results in inclusive employment and that technical advancements do not worsen already-existing gender disparities, deliberate effort is needed.

### Gender Equality as a Catalyst for Development

The cruise industry in India, which is still in its infancy, offers chances to include gender equality right away:

**Policy design:** Rather than retrofitting existing laws and regulations, new ones might integrate gender equality concepts.

**Infrastructure planning:** Gender-specific requirements can be taken into account early on in the design of cruise terminals and other facilities.

**Training system growth:** Gender inclusion may be given top priority in institutional design and curriculum development as maritime training capacity grows.

**Industry norms:** Rather than trying to alter ingrained habits, there is a chance to create inclusive corporate cultures because cruise operations are still in their infancy.

**Models of partnerships:** Coordinated approaches to gender-inclusive development may be produced by cooperation between the government, business, educational institutions, and civil society.

All stakeholders must be proactive in their commitment to realizing these prospects, and gender dimensions must be continuously considered throughout sectoral growth.

### CONCLUSION

In India's cruise business, gender equality is both a major obstacle and a vital opportunity. The information that is currently available has been compiled in this article to show the many interconnected obstacles that prevent women from participating in and advancing in the cruise industry. These obstacles range from work-life conflicts and harassment issues to recruiting prejudices and occupational segregation. These obstacles are a reflection of global trends in gender inequality in the marine and hospitality industries, which are exacerbated in the Indian setting by particular institutional, cultural, and regulatory issues. The analysis shows significant gaps in the data and studies that are currently accessible for the cruise industry in India, which is a reflection of the policy's lack of focus on the gender aspects of the growth of marine tourism. India-specific research is desperately needed to support evidence-based policy and practice, even when global evidence offers useful insights and models.

Despite these obstacles, there are clear paths leading to gender equality. When done in concert, comprehensive legislative changes, industry initiatives, training system transformation, and cultural change initiatives may gradually remove obstacles and establish favorable conditions for women's full involvement. International examples show that when stakeholders commit to consistent

action, even historically male-dominated marine industries may make considerable progress toward gender equality. The argument for gender equality in cruise tourism is based on a number of factors, including basic human rights and justice principles, legal requirements under Indian and international law, proof that gender diversity benefits organizations and the economy, and alignment with sustainable development imperatives. In addition to adhering to equality standards, India would be strategically positioned for competitiveness and sustainability if it developed its cruise industry as a gender-inclusive sector.

There is a crucial chance to include gender equality principles from the beginning as India invests in cruise infrastructure, legislative frameworks, and market growth. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to go beyond rhetoric and take concrete steps, such as gathering and disseminating gender-disaggregated data, setting clear goals and accountability procedures, changing hiring and promotion procedures, funding women's training and development, guaranteeing workplace safety, and questioning cultural norms that limit women's opportunities and aspirations. In addition to passenger numbers, revenue, and infrastructure investments, the cruise industry's expansion in India will be evaluated based on whether or not it results in shared prosperity and inclusive opportunities. In order to fully realize the cruise industry's potential as a catalyst for sustainable, equitable development in coastal India, gender equality is essential to sectoral success rather than incidental.

### REFERENCES

1. Baker, M., & Alkoyak-Yildiz, M. (2022). A Real Opportunity or an Illusion? Examining the Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Women's Employment and Leadership in the Blue Economy: A Case Study of India (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 4238343). Social Science Research Network. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4238343>
2. Behera, A. (2024). Examining the Perception of Women's Role in India's Blue Economy: A Systematic Literature Review. Asian Development Bank Institute. <https://doi.org/10.56506/BEKD9215>
3. Challenges and Issues of Woman Employees in Tourism | Request PDF. (2025). In ResearchGate. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372849588\\_Challenges\\_and\\_Issues\\_of\\_Woman\\_Employees\\_in\\_Tourism](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372849588_Challenges_and_Issues_of_Woman_Employees_in_Tourism)
4. Handbook of Research on Gender and Leadership. (n.d.). Retrieved November 7, 2025, from <https://www.e-elgar.com/shop/gbp/handbook-of-research-on-gender-and-leadership-9781035306886.html>
5. Jackman, M. (2022). The effect of tourism on gender equality in the labour market: Help or hindrance? Women's Studies International Forum, 90, 102554. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2021.102554>
6. Kitada, M. (2019). Advancing 'Good Practices' that Promote Gender Equality in the Maritime Sector (pp. 302–317). [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004375178\\_015](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004375178_015)
7. Kitada, M. (2022). Gender and Work within the Maritime Sector (pp. 229–248).

8. Kumar, P. (n.d.). Literature Review. Retrieved November 4, 2025, from <https://www.emerald.com/books/monograph/11212/chapter/81021066/Literature-Review>
9. Mind the Gap: Women in the Boardroom, on Board and in the Port | Request PDF. (n.d.-a). In ResearchGate. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69325-1\\_19](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69325-1_19)
10. Mind the Gap: Women in the Boardroom, on Board and in the Port | Request PDF. (n.d.-b). In ResearchGate. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69325-1\\_19](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69325-1_19)
11. Pastra, A., & Swoboda, M. (2021). Mind the Gap: Women in the Boardroom, on Board and in the Port. In A. Carpenter, T. M. Johansson, & J. A. Skinner (Eds.), *Sustainability in the Maritime Domain: Towards Ocean Governance and Beyond* (pp. 403–414). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69325-1\\_19](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69325-1_19)
12. (PDF) Gender Equity in Hospitality: The Case of India. (n.d.-a). ResearchGate. Retrieved November 11, 2025, from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373769624\\_Gender\\_Equity\\_in\\_Hospitality\\_The\\_Case\\_of\\_India](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373769624_Gender_Equity_in_Hospitality_The_Case_of_India)
13. (PDF) Gender Equity in Hospitality: The Case of India. (n.d.-b). ResearchGate. Retrieved November 11, 2025, from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373769624\\_Gender\\_Equity\\_in\\_Hospitality\\_The\\_Case\\_of\\_India](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373769624_Gender_Equity_in_Hospitality_The_Case_of_India)
14. (PDF) Gender Equity in Hospitality: The Case of India. (n.d.-c). ResearchGate. Retrieved November 18, 2025, from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373769624\\_Gender\\_Equity\\_in\\_Hospitality\\_The\\_Case\\_of\\_India](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373769624_Gender_Equity_in_Hospitality_The_Case_of_India)
15. (PDF) PACWIMA and the Transformation of Fijian Women in the Maritime Sector. (2025). ResearchGate. <https://doi.org/10.36625/sj.v6i2.122>
16. Pratiwi, N. S. N. (2023). PACWIMA and the Transformation of Fijian Women in the Maritime Sector. *Salasika*, 6(2), 113–126. <https://doi.org/10.36625/sj.v6i2.122>
17. Tang, L. (n.d.). (2023). Achieving gender equality in seafaring: An analysis of stakeholders' suggestions. *Maritime Business Review*, 1(8), 2-18. <https://doi.org/10.1108/mabr-08-2022-0042>
18. Tang, L. (2022). (2023). Achieving gender equality in seafaring: An analysis of stakeholders' suggestions. *Maritime Business Review*, 1(8), 2–18. <https://doi.org/10.1108/mabr-08-2022-0042>
19. Vizcaino-Suarez, L. P., Jeffrey, H., & eger, claudia. (2020). *Tourism and Gender-based Violence: Challenging Inequalities*. <https://doi.org/10.1079/9781789243215.0000>