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THE WOMEN-LED DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM



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डॉ. वृंदा काल्हेर

“The progress of
humanity is
incomplete without
the empowerment
of women.”

श्री नरेंद्र मोदी

Prime Minister
Shri Narendra Modi



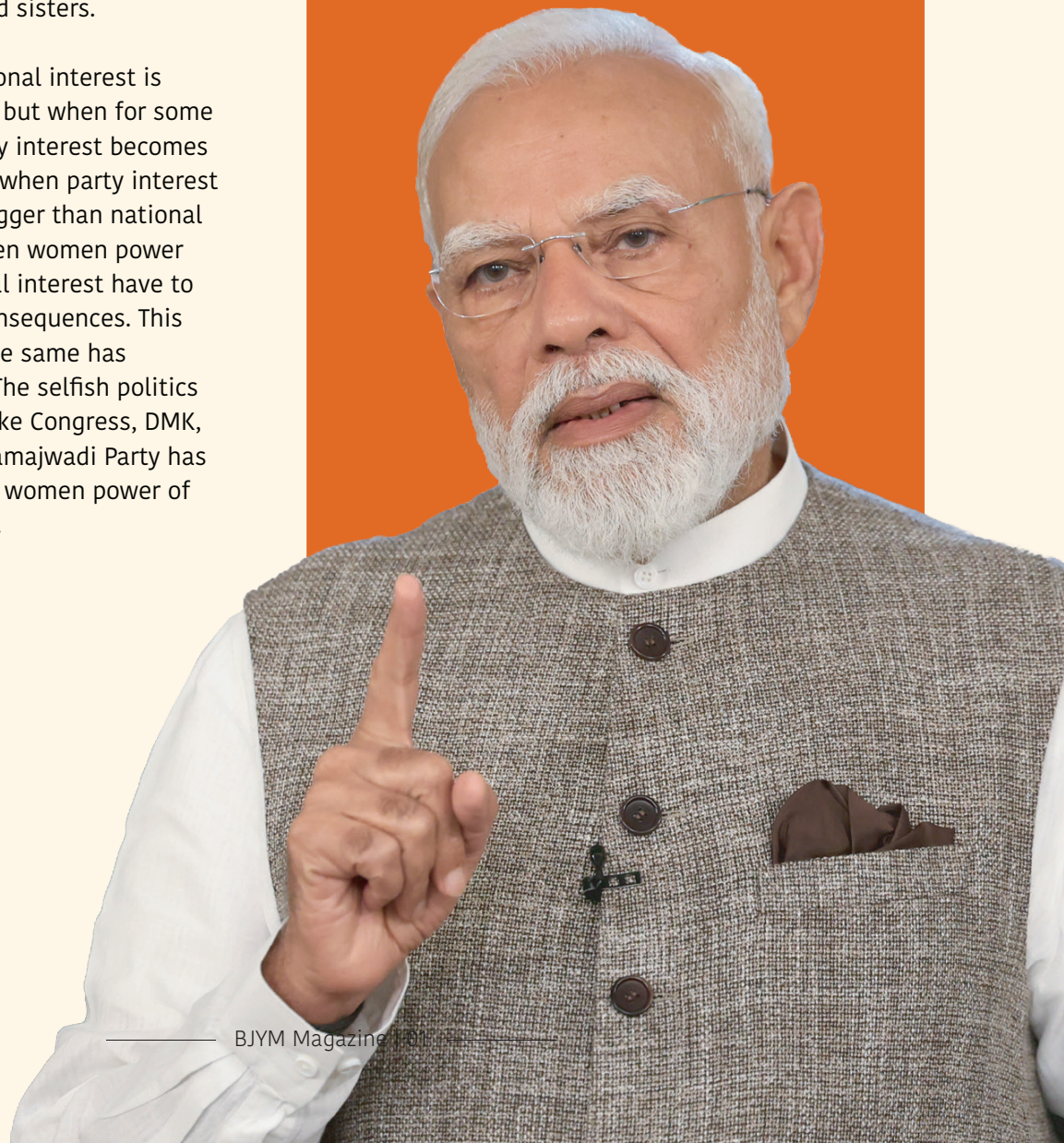
Today I have come to speak on a very important subject, especially to the mothers, sisters, and daughters of the country! Today, every citizen of India is watching how the flight of women's power has been stopped. Their dreams have been ruthlessly crushed. Despite our utmost efforts, we could not succeed; the amendment to the Nari Shakti Vandan Act could not be passed! And for this, I seek forgiveness from all the mothers and sisters.

For us, national interest is paramount, but when for some people party interest becomes everything, when party interest becomes bigger than national interest, then women power and national interest have to bear the consequences. This time too, the same has happened. The selfish politics of parties like Congress, DMK, TMC, and Samajwadi Party has harmed the women power of the country.

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Remarks of
Prime Minister
Shri Narendra Modi
on Nari Shakti
Vandan
Amendment Bill

.....



Yesterday, the eyes of crores of women in the country were on Parliament, the women power of the nation was watching. I too felt very sad to see that when this proposal in favor of women fell, parties like Congress, DMK, TMC, and SP, family-oriented parties, were clapping with joy. By snatching away the rights of women, they were thumping the tables. What they did was not just thumping on the tables, it was a blow to the self-respect and dignity of women. And women forget everything, but they never forget their insult. Therefore, the pain of the behavior of Congress and its allies in Parliament will always remain in the hearts of women. Whenever the women of the country see these leaders in their areas, they will remember that it was these very people who celebrated in Parliament when women's reservation was stopped; they rejoiced. To those parties who opposed the Nari Shakti Vandan amendment in Parliament yesterday, I will say clearly: these people are taking women power for granted. They are forgetting that the women of the 21st century are watching every event in the country, sensing their intentions, and fully understanding the truth. Therefore, for opposing women's reservation, the sin committed by the opposition will surely bring punishment to them. These parties have also insulted the sentiments of the framers of the Constitution, and they will not escape the punishment from the people either.

The Nari Shakti Vandan amendment was not about taking anything away from anyone. The Nari Shakti Vandan amendment was about giving something to everyone; it was an amendment to give. It was about giving women the right that has been pending for 40 years, from the 2029 Lok Sabha elections onwards.

The Nari Shakti Vandan amendment was a great effort to offer new opportunities, a new flight, and to remove obstacles from the path of women in 21st-century India. It was a sacred effort made with clear intent and honesty to give rights to 50% of the

country's population. It was an effort to make women co-travellers in India's journey of development and to include everyone. The Nari Shakti Vandan amendment is the demand of the time. The Nari Shakti Vandan amendment was an effort to equally increase the strength of every state, North, South, East, and West. It was an effort to strengthen the voice of every state in Parliament. Whether the state is small or big, whether the population is less or more, it was an effort to increase everyone's strength in equal proportion. But this honest effort has been subjected to foeticide in Parliament by Congress and its allies, foeticide. Congress, TMC, Samajwadi Party, DMK—these parties are guilty of this foeticide. They are criminals against the Constitution of the country, they are criminals against the women's power of the country.

.....
*For a developed
 India in the 21st
 century, whatever
 decisions, whatever
 reforms are
 necessary, whatever
 decisions the country
 takes, Congress
 opposes them,
 rejects them,
 obstructs them.*

Congress hates the subject of women's reservation; it has always conspired to stop women's reservation. Every time efforts were made in this direction, Congress obstructed them. This time too, Congress and its allies relied on one falsehood after another to stop women's reservation. Sometimes about numbers, sometimes in other ways, Congress and its allies tried to mislead the country. By doing so,

these parties have revealed their true face before the women power of India. They have removed their mask.

Personally, I had hoped that Congress would correct its decades-old mistake. Congress would repent for its sins. But Congress lost the opportunity to create history, to stand in favour of women. Congress has already lost its existence in most parts of the country. Congress is surviving like a parasite, riding on the back of regional parties. But Congress does not even want regional parties to grow stronger, so Congress conspired politically to push the future of many regional parties into darkness by making them oppose this amendment.

Congress, Samajwadi Party, DMK, TMC, and other

parties have, for so many years, every time created the same excuses, the same false arguments, always inserting some technical snag, and they have looted the rights of women. The country has recognised this ugly political pattern and the reason behind it.

One major reason for opposition to the Nari Shakti Vandan Act is fear among these family-oriented parties. They fear that if women become empowered, then the leadership of these family-oriented parties will be in danger. They will never want women outside their families to move forward. Today, in Panchayats and local bodies, thousands and millions of women have proven their capability. When they want to move forward into the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies and serve the country, these family-oriented parties feel insecure. After delimitation, there will be many more seats for women, women's stature will increase, and that is why these people opposed the Nari Shakti Vandan amendment. The women of the country will never forgive Congress and its allies for this sin.

Congress and its allied parties are continuously lying about delimitation. They want to ignite the fire of division under this pretext. "Divide and rule" politics is something Congress inherited from the British. And Congress is still running on that same path today. Congress has always fueled sentiments that create rifts in the country. Therefore, this lie was spread that delimitation would harm some states! Whereas the government has made it clear from the very first day that neither the proportion of participation of any state will change, nor will anyone's representation be reduced. In fact, the seats of all states will increase in equal proportion. Yet Congress, DMK, TMC, and Samajwadi Party were not ready to accept this.

This amendment bill was an opportunity for all parties and all states. If this bill had passed, Tamil Nadu, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, and every state's seats would have increased. But because of their selfish politics, these parties betrayed even the people of their own states. For example, DMK had the chance to make more Tamil MPs and MLAs,

to strengthen Tamil Nadu's voice! But it lost that chance. TMC also had the chance to advance the people of Bengal. But TMC also lost that chance. The Samajwadi Party had the chance to reduce the stain of its anti-women image. But SP missed it too. SP has already forgotten Lohia ji. By opposing the Nari Shakti Vandan amendment, SP trampled all of Lohia ji's dreams underfoot. SP is anti-women reservation, and the women of UP and the country will never forget this.

By opposing women's reservation, Congress has once again proved one thing. Congress is an anti-reform party. For a developed India in the 21st century, whatever decisions, whatever reforms are necessary, whatever decisions the country takes, Congress opposes them, rejects them, obstructs them. This is the history of Congress, and this is Congress's negative politics.

This is the same Congress that opposed the trinity of Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile. Congress opposed digital payments. Congress opposed GST. Congress opposed reservations for the poor in the general category. Congress opposed the law against triple talaq. Congress opposed the removal of Article 370. Our Constitution and our courts have said that the Uniform Civil Code, UCC, is necessary, but Congress opposes that, too. At the very mention of reform, Congress runs with placards of protest. Any work that strengthens the country, Congress puts all its strength into creating obstacles to it. Congress opposes One Nation One Election. Congress opposes the expulsion of infiltrators from the country. Congress opposes the purification of the voter list, SIR. Congress opposes reforms in the Waqf Board.

Congress even opposed the CAA, which provided security to refugees. By lying and spreading rumours, it created a storm in the country. Congress obstructs the country's efforts to end Maoist-Naxalite violence. Congress has had only one pattern: whenever a reform comes, lie, spread confusion. History is witness, Congress has always chosen this negative path.

Whatever decision is necessary for the country,

Congress sweeps it under the carpet. Because of this attitude of Congress, India has not reached the heights of development it deserves. At the time of independence, many other countries were freed along with us. Most of those countries left us far behind, and the reason was that Congress kept blocking every reform. Delay, diversion, obstruction—this was Congress's principle, this was Congress's work culture. Congress delayed border disputes with neighbouring countries. Congress delayed water-sharing disputes with Pakistan. Congress delayed the decision on OBC reservation for 40 years. Congress delayed One Rank One Pension for soldiers for 40 years.

This attitude of Congress has always caused great harm to the country. The nation has suffered from every opposition, every indecision, every deceit of Congress. Generations of the country have suffered. Today, all the major challenges facing the country have arisen from this attitude of Congress. Therefore, this fight is not just about one law; this fight is against Congress's anti-reform mentality, which is filled only with negativity. And I have no doubt that the women and daughters of the country will give a strong reply to this mentality of Congress.

Some people are calling the breaking of the dreams of the women of the country a failure of the government. But this subject was never about success or failure, never about credit. I had said in Parliament too: let half the population get their rights, I will give the credit to the opposition by publishing advertisements with all their photos. But those who look at women with outdated thinking, still stuck to their lies, remained firm!

The fight to give women power and participation has been going on for decades. For years, I, too, have been among those making efforts for it. So many women have raised this subject before me. So many sisters have written me letters explaining everything. My country's mothers, sisters, and daughters, I know you are all sad today. I, too, share in your sorrow. Today, even though we did not get the required 66 per cent of the vote to pass the bill, I know that 100 per cent of the women of the

country have blessed us. I assure every woman of the country: we will remove every obstacle in the path of women's reservation. Our courage is high, our determination unbreakable, and our resolve unwavering. The parties opposing women's reservation will never be able to stop the women's power in this country from increasing their participation in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies. It is only a matter of time. The BJP-NDA's resolve to empower women remains intact. Yesterday we did not have the numbers, but that does not mean we lost. Our inner strength is invincible. Our effort will not stop, our effort will not pause. We will have more opportunities ahead. For the dreams of half the population, for the future of the country, we must fulfil this resolve. Thank you all very much.

Source: PM's address to the Nation, 18 Apr, 2026, pmindia.gov.in

कांग्रेस, TMC, DMK, समाजवादी पार्टी और पूरे विपक्ष ने 'नारी शक्ति वंदन अधिनियम' जैसे महत्वपूर्ण बिल को रोकने का प्रयास कर एक बार फिर देश की माँ-बहनों के विरोध वाला चेहरा जनता के सामने उजागर कर दिया है। लेकिन देश साक्षी है कि आदरणीय प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी जी ने देश से जो भी संकल्प लिया है, उसे हमेशा पूरा करके दिखाया है।

चाहे वह धारा 370 का खात्मा हो, राम मंदिर का निर्माण, तीन तलाक से मुस्लिम बहनों को मुक्ति दिलाना हो या GST जैसा ऐतिहासिक सुधार। जब बात राष्ट्र की सुरक्षा की आई, तो एयरस्ट्राइक, सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक और ऑपरेशन सिंदूर जैसे कड़े प्रहारों से दुश्मनों को उनकी औकात दिखाई गई। चाहे कोरोना जैसी आपदा से देश को निकालने का संकल्प हो, उन्होंने हर संकल्प को सिद्धि तक पहुँचाने का कार्य किया है।

मोदी सरकार ने सदैव माँ-बहनों के सम्मान, सुरक्षा और स्वाभिमान को सर्वोपरि रखा है और अनेकों योजनाओं के माध्यम से इसके प्रयास हम सबके सामने हैं। आज हमारे प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी जी ने इस अधिनियम को पूरा करने का जो संकल्प लिया है, उसे भी हम माननीय प्रधानमंत्री जी के मार्गदर्शन में पूरा करेंगे, क्योंकि मोदी है तो मुमकिन है।

Source: Post on X

Remarks of the BJP President Shri Nitin Nabin



India has always drawn its deepest strength from its women. From the Vedic sages Gargi and Maitreyi to the warrior queen Lakshmibai, from Ahilyabai Holkar to Kalpana Chawla, the story of India is, in its truest sense, the story of its Nari Shakti. And yet, for decades after independence, that story remained incomplete. Women were acknowledged in rhetoric but sidelined in policy. They were celebrated in culture but excluded from consequence. It took a decisive political will, the kind that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi brought to governance in 2014, to fundamentally and permanently change that equation.

Message
from the
BJYM National
President
Shri Tejasvi Surya

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The edition you hold in your hands is a testament to that change. It brings together the voices of some of India's most thoughtful women researchers, entrepreneurs, journalists, academicians, and grassroots leaders who have collectively examined one of the most transformative shifts in post-independence India: the move from women's development to women-led development. This is not a semantic distinction. It is a civilisational one.

Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, the government did not merely design schemes for women. It redesigned the architecture of opportunity itself. When over 55% of Jan Dhan accounts are held by women, that is not a statistic; it is a financial identity. When nearly 70% of Mudra loan beneficiaries are women entrepreneurs, that is not a welfare measure; it is a statement of economic agency. When over 10 crore women are organised into Self-Help Groups to generate sustainable livelihoods, that is not a programme; it is a revolution at the grassroots. And when the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam is passed unanimously by Parliament, reserving one-third of legislative seats for women, that is not just a law. It is a constitutional reckoning with a long-overdue promise.

What makes this moment truly historic is its comprehensiveness. The empowerment of women under this government has not been confined to a single domain. It spans the full arc of a woman's life and aspirations from the Ujjwala cylinder that protects her health, to the Swachh Bharat toilet that restores her dignity; from the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign that affirms her right to be born and educated, to the Stand-Up India scheme that finances her ambition. From the panchayat to the Parliament, from the laboratory to the fighter cockpit Indian women today are not waiting for permission to lead. They are leading.

As the National President of BJYM, I have had the privilege of working alongside some of the most passionate and capable young women in this country. I have seen firsthand how political representation transforms not just institutions, but imagination. When a young girl in a village sees a

woman sarpanch resolve a dispute or a woman MP debate policy on the floor of Parliament, something shifts inside her a quiet but profound expansion of what she believes is possible for herself. That is the ripple effect of representation. That is the multiplier effect of Nari Shakti.

India's ambition of becoming a Viksit Bharat by 2047 will not be realised through infrastructure and investment alone. It will be realised when every Indian woman in every village, every town, every city has access, autonomy, and authority. When she is not merely a participant in India's growth story, but its author.

The articles in this edition make that case with rigour, passion, and lived experience. I commend each contributor for their thoughtfulness and their commitment to this vital national conversation.

When women rise, India rises. That is not a slogan. Under Prime Minister Modi, it has become a policy, a promise, and an enduring reality.

Vande Mataram!

Tejasvi Surya

MP Lok Sabha,
Bengaluru South



There are moments in a nation's journey that do not announce themselves with fanfare but reveal their significance only in hindsight. The shift in India's development thinking from designing policies for women to entrusting the nation's future to women is one such moment. It did not happen overnight. It was built brick by brick, scheme by scheme, amendment by amendment, over a decade of deliberate and determined governance. And today, as India stands at the threshold of its centenary of independence, that shift has crystallised into something irreversible: the era of women-led development.

This edition of the magazine is dedicated to that era. It brings together voices from across India, entrepreneurs and academics, journalists and grassroots leaders, policy researchers and political thinkers, each examining, from their own vantage point, the transformation that is reshaping the nation's social, economic, and democratic fabric. Taken together, their articles do not merely document progress. They make an urgent, evidence-backed, and impossible-to-ignore argument that India's rise as a global power is inseparable from the rise of its women.

The numbers tell part of the story. Female labour force participation, which stood at a troubling 23% in 2017-18, has climbed to over 41% by 2023-24, a near-doubling in under six years that few economists anticipated at that pace. Over 10 crore women are today organised into Self-Help Groups, transforming rural economies from the ground up. Nearly 70% of all Mudra loan beneficiaries are women, signalling a generational shift from dependence to enterprise.

Women now own more than 20% of India's MSMEs, providing livelihoods to over 20 million people. These are not the statistics of a country that treats women as a welfare category. These are the indicators of a nation that has finally begun to treat women as its primary economic engine.

But numbers, however compelling, capture only the visible surface of a deeper transformation. What this edition's contributors illuminate with clarity and conviction is the cultural and institutional shift that underlies the data. For decades, India's policy architecture approached women through the narrow lens of welfare: something to be given, a problem to be managed, a gap to be filled. The Modi government broke decisively from that tradition. In its place, it has built a framework rooted in capability, agency, and leadership. The Jan Dhan account is not merely a banking facility; it is a financial identity. The Ujjwala cylinder is not merely a cooking convenience; it is time freed and health protected. The Swachh Bharat toilet is not merely an infrastructure provision; it restores dignity. Each of these interventions, viewed individually, appears modest. Viewed together, they describe a single coherent arc: the systematic removal of the structural barriers that kept women from participating fully in the life of the nation.

The passage of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam in September 2023 represents the political culmination of this arc. Four previous attempts to legislate women's reservation in Parliament had failed in 1996, 1998, 1999, and 2008, not for lack of consensus on principle, but for lack of will in practice. That the 106th Constitutional Amendment was passed unanimously, ending three decades of deferral in a single parliamentary session, is a fact that deserves to be stated plainly and remembered clearly. It is the most significant democratisation of legislative power since universal adult franchise. When implemented, it will ensure that the Parliament of the world's largest democracy

reflects, for the first time, a composition closer to that of its people.

Yet, as several contributors to this edition rightly note, legislation is only the beginning. The true test of the Adhiniyam will lie not in the seats it reserves, but in the authority those seats confer. The phenomenon of proxy representation, where women hold office while men exercise power, remains a live challenge, particularly in local governance. Bridging the gap between numerical presence and substantive influence requires sustained investment in capacity building, mentorship, and the kind of economic independence that makes a woman's political voice genuinely her own. The SHG network, as research increasingly confirms, is emerging as India's most powerful and underappreciated political training ground, producing women representatives who are more confident, more effective, and far harder to control by proxy.

India in 2025 is a country in the middle of a profound renegotiation with itself about who belongs at the table of power, whose experiences shape policy, and whose ambitions define the national horizon. That renegotiation is far from complete. The gender gap in labour force participation persists. The digital divide disadvantages rural women. Unpaid care work remains structurally invisible. Safety in public spaces is still not guaranteed. These are not footnotes to the progress story. They are its next chapter.

What this edition affirms, above all, is that the conversation has irrevocably changed. Women are no longer asking to be included in India's development narrative. They are writing it. From boardrooms to gram panchayats, from research laboratories to legislative chambers, from startup ecosystems to the cockpits of fighter aircraft, Indian women are demonstrating, every single day, that the nation's potential is only as large as the space it makes for its women to lead.

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Women are no longer asking to be included in India's development narrative. They are writing it. From boardrooms to gram panchayats, from research laboratories to legislative chambers
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From Margins To Mandate

The India That Stopped Asking Permission

Mahamedhaa Nagar

Spokesperson, BJP
Uttar Pradesh

There is a phrase I have heard in villages, town halls, women's self-help group meetings, and conversations on the margins of political rallies across Uttar Pradesh. It arrives quietly, almost matter-of-factly, as though the speaker herself has not quite registered how radical it is. "Pehle hum sochte the sarkar humare liye kya karegi. Ab hum soch rahe hain hum kya kar sakte hain."

I first heard it from a woman in western Uttar Pradesh who had recently started a tailoring unit with the support of a MUDRA loan. She said it simply, almost conversationally. But in that single sentence lies the entire philosophy of what has changed in India over the past decade. The relationship between the Indian woman and her government has undergone a fundamental inversion. She is no longer positioned as a beneficiary waiting at the receiving end of the state's generosity. She has become an agent, an initiator, a builder in her own right.

This is what women-led development actually means. Not a scheme. Not a slogan. A shift in the fundamental premise of governance.



The Poverty of Ambition: What Came Before

To appreciate the magnitude of what has been accomplished, one must be honest about what preceded it. For decades, women's empowerment in Indian political discourse was conducted in the language of welfare and the grammar of distribution. Benefits were announced. Schemes were named. Photographs were taken. But the underlying architecture of power remained unchanged.

Women were consulted rarely. Women were trusted with leadership even more rarely. The prevailing assumption, rarely spoken aloud but deeply embedded in policy design, was that women were the objects of good governance rather than its architects. Empowerment, under this framework, was something done to women, not something entrusted to them.

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam is perhaps the sharpest illustration of this failure. The Women's Reservation Bill was first introduced in 1996. For the twenty-seven years that followed, it became the great deferred promise of Indian democracy. Governments came and went. Coalition partners who treated women's rights as a negotiating chip repeatedly held it hostage. In 1998, the bill was not merely voted down. It was physically torn on the floor of Parliament by a member who apparently believed that contempt for the legislation was a point worth demonstrating theatrically. Congress, which claimed the mantle of women's champions, watched in silence. When the UPA finally held power for a full decade, the Rajya Sabha passed the bill in 2010. The Lok Sabha never saw it introduced. Four years passed. Not once.

Dignity First: The Preconditions That Were Never Optional

What distinguishes the governance philosophy of the past decade is a recognition that empowerment cannot begin in the middle. It must begin at the beginning. And for crores of Indian women, the beginning was not a bank account or a business

loan. It was the far more elemental question of safety, dignity, and the removal of daily indignities that had been accepted as permanent features of rural life.

The Swachh Bharat Mission has built over 12 crore toilets since 2014. That number is often cited as a sanitation statistic. It is, more precisely, a safety and autonomy statistic. The absence of a toilet in the home condemned women to the risk and indignity of open defecation, frequently in darkness, frequently in circumstances of real physical danger. Ending that reality was not a small administrative achievement. It was a prerequisite for everything that followed.

The Jal Jeevan Mission extended tap water connections to over 15.8 crore rural households, a transformation from just 3.23 crore in 2019. For the woman who previously spent three to four hours of every day walking to fetch water, this was not a convenience. It was the return of time: time to work, to study, to participate, to lead. The Ujjwala Yojana provided clean LPG connections to over 10 crore households, freeing generations of women from smoke-filled kitchens and the attendant respiratory illnesses.

.....
India is not building a nation that has made room for its women. It is building a nation where its women are leading.
.....

These are not separate schemes operating in parallel. They are a deliberate sequence. Dignity first. Then economic independence. Then political power. Each layer creates the conditions for the next. This is governance designed by someone who understands that structural change does not announce itself with a single law. It accumulates.

The Economics of Trust

More than 55% of Jan Dhan account holders are women. I want to pause on that figure for a moment because it tends to be treated as an inclusion statistic and then moved past. What it actually represents is financial identity for crores of Indian women who had never, in the entirety of their adult lives, possessed one. A bank account in your own

name is not merely a transactional instrument. It is a declaration that you exist as an economic entity independent of the household, the husband, and the intermediary.

The MUDRA Yojana took that identity and extended it into an enterprise. With 68% of beneficiaries being women, the scheme has quietly produced one of the largest waves of female entrepreneurship in India's post-Independence history. These are not women being absorbed into large corporate supply chains. These are women who have assessed a market opportunity, sought capital, assumed risk, and built something. The small tailoring unit in western Uttar Pradesh. The village pharmacist. The woman-run food processing unit supplies a district town. This entrepreneurial movement is not captured adequately in any single headline because it is distributed, granular, and vast.

The Self-Help Group ecosystem tells a related story. More than 10.05 crore rural women have been mobilised into over 90 lakh SHGs since 2014. Their loan repayment rate stands above 98%. When economists discuss India's credit culture, they rarely lead with this number. They should. It is among the most striking indicators of financial discipline and collective responsibility anywhere in the developing world, and it is being demonstrated by women in villages who were told, for generations, that they could not be trusted with money.

What Power Looks Like From the Ground

I have spent considerable time engaging with women across constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, and one encounter stands out as particularly instructive. During a visit to a rural block, I met a woman pradhan who, in her first term, had made toilet construction and girls' school attendance her two non-negotiable priorities. When I asked what drove those specific choices, she gave me an answer that has stayed with me.

"Yeh hamare ghar ki baat hai," she said. "Ise humse behtar kaun samjhega?" This is the matter of our home. Who understands it better than us?

That sense of ownership, of governance as something personally accountable rather than

abstractly delegated, is what more than 14 lakh women representatives in Panchayati Raj institutions have brought to grassroots democracy. The outcomes are visible. Sanitation infrastructure prioritised. Maternal health outcomes tracked. Girls' attendance monitored. Water access is treated as an urgent rather than a peripheral concern. These are not radical priorities. They are the priorities of people who have lived the consequences of their absence.

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, which ensures 33% reservation in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, is the national scaling of exactly this principle. Currently, women constitute approximately 14% of Parliament and a deeply inadequate 9% of State Assembly members, just 390 women MLAs across 4,123 seats. Once the reservation is implemented, the Lok Sabha is projected to seat approximately 270 women MPs, and State Assemblies are expected to have at least 1,373 women legislators. These are not token increments. They are a structural reconfiguration of who decides, and consequently, what gets decided.

The Changed Mind: A Society in Transition

Policy can build infrastructure. It can create access and expand opportunity. What it cannot do unilaterally is alter the deep assumptions that a society holds about its women. That change is slower, less legible, and more consequential than any scheme. And it is happening.

The Sex Ratio at Birth has improved from 918 per 1,000 boys in 2014-15 to 929 in 2024-25. Female enrolment in higher education is now approaching 50% and, in several indicators, has already surpassed male enrolment. The Maternal Mortality Ratio has declined from 130 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2014-16 to 88 in 2021-23. As of January 2026, over 2,153 child marriages have been prevented, and 60,262 Child Marriage Prohibition Officers have been appointed across the country. Each of these numbers is the downstream effect of a cultural shift that began with the premise that the girl child's life has value.

Women are also entering sectors that were previously inaccessible by convention or by policy.

The Indian Air Force has made its scheme for women fighter pilots permanent. The first batch of female cadets graduated from the National Defence Academy in May 2025. The CISF raised its first All-Women Commando Unit in August 2025. These are not ceremonial milestones. They are permanent expansions of what Indian women are permitted and encouraged to become.

Viksit Bharat 2047: The Arithmetic Is Unambiguous

India's aspiration to be a fully developed nation by 2047 is frequently discussed in terms of infrastructure targets, GDP projections, and manufacturing capacity. These are legitimate conversations. But they are incomplete without addressing a structural reality that every serious development economist has identified: the single most consequential lever available to India for accelerating growth is the fuller participation of women in its economy.

Female labour force participation remains a persistent challenge. The answer is not a single intervention but a compounding of conditions: educated girls who grow into skilled women, healthcare that keeps them present in the workforce, safety infrastructure that makes participation possible, financial identity that makes enterprise accessible, and political representation that ensures their concerns are translated into policy rather than filtered out by systems built without them in mind.

The decade between 2014 and 2024 has precisely compounded these conditions. *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* addressed the foundational question of whether the girl child would exist and be educated. *Jan Dhan* and *MUDRA* addressed financial identity and access to entrepreneurship. *Swachh Bharat* and *Jal Jeevan Mission* addressed the daily indignities that constrained participation. *Ayushman Bharat* addressed health security. The *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam* addresses the issue of political power. The architecture is coherent because the underlying conviction is coherent.

The India That Stopped Asking Permission

There is something worth observing in the 2024 general election data. Female voter turnout reached

65.8% nationally, surpassing male turnout for the first time in India's electoral history. In 19 states and Union Territories, women outvoted men. Exit polls consistently indicated that women voters were exercising independent political judgment, making decisions based on governance quality, personal safety, and the tangible impact of direct benefit schemes, rather than on the instructions of male household members or community leaders.

This is the fullest expression of what a decade of empowerment looks like in democratic practice. A woman who is financially independent, whose health is protected, whose daughter is in school, and whose home has water and clean fuel is a woman whose political choices are her own. She does not need to be told how to vote. She already knows what governance has delivered and what it has not.

I think often about that woman in western Uttar Pradesh and the sentence she said as though it were obvious. "Ab hum soch rahe hain hum kya kar sakte hain." The shift from waiting to acting, from being the subject of someone else's empowerment narrative to authoring your own, is not something that can be manufactured by a speech or a press conference. It is the product of accumulated material change in the conditions of real lives.

India is not building a nation that has made room for its women. It is building a nation where its women are leading. The women who enter legislatures in 2029 as a constitutional right will not be asking for a seat at the table. The table will, in a meaningful sense, be theirs. That is not a slogan. That is the logical conclusion of a decade spent, for the first time, taking women seriously.

Labharthi to Leader

Structural Empowerment of Women in the Modi Era

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The BJP government came to power in 2014, and over the decade that followed, it did not merely launch schemes; it also sought to systematically reframe the relationship between the Indian state and its women citizens. The focus of the government has been to shift from 'women's development' to 'women-led development'. The governance model is not merely focused on charity or political optics but on structural transformation, thus moving women from the margins of policymaking to the center of national development. In order to provide a broad overview of this women's empowerment framework, this article is divided into three interconnected pillars: dignity, economic independence and legal empowerment, each reinforcing the other and together leading towards women-led development.



Dignity as Foundation

Dignity is the first and foremost step towards empowerment. For several years, women in rural India had been dealing with daily life issues related to open defecation, smoke-filled kitchens and no access to banking or any other formal identity. The BJP government prioritised basic human rights and the safety of women through women-focused policy solutions that addressed these ground realities directly. According to the Census of 2011, over 60% of rural households had no access to toilets; women were compelled to defecate in the open, often in the dark, exposing themselves to safety risks and harassment. The Swachh Bharat Mission, launched in October 2014, addressed the crisis of open defecation by constructing more than 10 crore toilets across India. For women, this meant an end to the 'drudgery' of restricted mobility and the health risks associated with poor sanitation. This move directly addressed the safety and health of women who faced harassment and were prone to diseases in open fields. The construction of household toilets was not merely an achievement of a sanitation drive, but also a matter of security and respect for women. Studies indicated that owning a private toilet improved self-respect for 88% of women and reduced fears of harassment.

If Swachh Bharat addressed safety outside the home, Ujjawala Yojana addressed a silent health emergency inside it. The Pradhanmantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), launched in May 2016, addressed the critical health issue of indoor air pollution caused by traditional cooking fuels. For generations, women in poor households cooked over chulhas in poorly ventilated kitchens. The resulting pollution was associated with chronic respiratory illness, cataracts, burns, and early mortality. Women bore the greatest burden of these harmful consequences. According to parliamentary data from December 2025, the scheme provided over 10.33 crore free LPG

connections to poor households and approved an additional 25 lakh new connections for 2025-26. This initiative freed women from the hazards of smoke-filled kitchens, which had caused thousands of premature deaths annually. Since its inception, around 222 crore LPG refills have been delivered to PMUY households. As of March 2026, according to a reply by Shri Suresh Gopi, then Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas of India, the scheme has provided 10.51 crore LPG connections to women from poor households.

Thus, the most fundamental empowerment of women lies in making women's daily environments safe, healthy, and dignified. All the other factors, economic, legal rights, and political representation are built upon it.

.....
It is necessary to acknowledge that we have done what few nations have managed at scale- build a world-class foundation for women's political participation.
.....

Economic Independence

True empowerment of women must also be anchored in economic independence. This realisation led the BJP government to build an ecosystem of financial inclusion and economic empowerment for women, particularly those in rural and semi-urban areas.

The foundational step in this journey was the launch of Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) in 2014, which sought to bring every unbanked household into the formal banking fold. The scheme not only made it possible for women to open zero balance accounts with interests on deposits made available for all irrespective of the geography, but also provided a RuPay debit card, overdraft facilities, accident insurance cover of ₹2 lakh and direct linkage to critical welfare schemes and initiatives including Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, Atal Pension Yojana and the MUDRA scheme. As of March 2026, over 55.16 crore Jan Dhan accounts have been opened across India, of which 30 crore, approximately 55% of the total, are held by women. The total deposits in Jan Dhan accounts stand at

over ₹2.34 lakh crore, a figure that represents not just savings, but the entry of previously excluded women into a world of financial decision-making.

Furthermore, for women to move from passive savers to active earners and entrepreneurs, access to credit within reach and on equitable terms is equally essential. This gap was successfully addressed by Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) in 2015. The scheme offers collateral-free loans across 4 categories, ranging from ₹50000 to ₹20 lakh, and its impact on women's economic participation has been nothing short of remarkable, as women constitute 68% of the total MUDRA beneficiaries. Millions of women across the country have used MUDRA loans to start or expand ventures in sectors ranging from tailoring, food processing and beauty services to retail, handicrafts and small manufacturing.

The third in line and perhaps the most transformative pillar of women's economic empowerment under the Modi government has been the systematic strengthening and expansion of the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) ecosystem. While SHGs have long served as spaces of mutual support and microfinance for rural women, the current government has reimaged them as unique institutional vehicles that can facilitate as platforms for enterprise, skill development, technology adoption and market access. Building on the foundation of the SHG ecosystem in rural areas, under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), the government launched Lakhpati Didi Yojana in August 2023 as a strong demonstration of the SHG empowerment vision. The scheme aims to define Lakhpati Didi as an SHG member whose household earns over ₹1 lakh annually through sustainable livelihood activities, strengthened skills and improved access to credit and markets. The government has set an ambitious goal of creating ₹6 crore Lakhpati Didis and to accelerate towards this goal, a National Campaign on Entrepreneurship was launched in January 2026. It aimed to train 50 lakh SHG members through 50000 Community Resource Persons. The Digital

Aajeevika Register managed by Digital India Corporation contains digitised income records and has enabled real-time tracking of progress towards Lakhpati Didi status.

Collectively, these three pillars of financial inclusion, credit access and enterprise & market integration through Jan Dhan, MUDRA and SHG-based ecosystems, respectively, represent a structured and collective architecture of women's economic empowerment.

Legal Empowerment

The third pillar, and the most historically consequential, has been legislative reform and the political representation of women. Here, the BJP government acted on two major fronts that the previous government had hesitated to address for decades.

The practice of triple talaq or Talaq-e-Biddat - the instant, irrevocable divorce delivered by uttering a single word 'talaq' three times, whether spoken, written, or sent via WhatsApp - left millions of Muslim women in India vulnerable to the laws of the religion. The BJP government introduced successive bills to criminalise the practice in 2017 and 2018 and promulgated ordinances, but the bills lapsed due to opposition in the Rajya Sabha. Following the Supreme Court verdict of 2017 of Shayara Bano v. Union of India case, the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act was finally passed by both Houses of Parliament on July 30, 2019—a date that the BJP government has since observed as 'Muslim Women Rights Day'. It was a landmark legal intervention undertaken by the Modi Government. By criminalising it, the government extended a constitutional protection to the Muslim female community and did so in the face of significant political resistance. The government also noted that several Muslim majority nations like Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the UAE and Morocco had already abolished this practice long before India. According to the Ministry of Minority Affairs, within a year of this law passing, there has been an 82% decline in Triple Talaq cases.

Another landmark initiative by the Modi government was the Nari Shakti Vandan Ashiniyam. In 1952, women constituted just 4.41% of the Lok Sabha. Seven decades later, the percentage increased but only modestly. As of 2026, India ranks 147th globally for women in Parliament, according to the data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Parline tracker. The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023—officially named the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam—was introduced in the Lok Sabha on September 19, 2023. The Lok Sabha passed the Bill with 454 members voting and only 2 against, while the Rajya Sabha passed it unanimously. The Women’s Reservation Bill became a law after 27 years of repeated failure. This legislation, a great success in favour of women initiated by the BJP government, entered a sharper phase in April 2026, when the government introduced the 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill to accelerate the implementation of this Act. But the bill was defeated in the Parliament by the Congress-led opposition to women empowerment. While full implementation is tied to future census and delimitation exercises, the law is set to transform the political landscape by introducing a new generation of female leaders.

Conclusion

The cumulative impact of these schemes has created a new category of voters known as labharthis (beneficiaries), whose support has been driven mainly by the tangible delivery of welfare. This shift is reflected in a surge of women’s voter turnout in the 2019 & 2024 general elections. The Modi government’s governance model has established a ‘double-engine’ approach in which central and state policies reinforce each other to accelerate delivery. Ultimately, the journey from welfare to leadership is well underway. As Nari Shakti becomes the fulcrum of administrative initiatives, the next chapter of India’s growth will increasingly be written by its empowered women.



Who Governs Shapes What Governance Delivers

The Data Behind Women's Political Power

Surabhi Hodigere

Spokesperson, BJP
Karnataka, and Public
Policy Professional

When the Constituent Assembly debated the draft Constitution, measured voices argued for a gradual expansion of the franchise. Britain, they noted, had taken over a century to get there. However, Ambedkar and the Drafting Committee held the line. India adopted universal adult suffrage in 1950 without distinction of sex, granting women the vote a full twenty-one years before Switzerland and a generation before some of its cantons allowed women to participate in local elections. In terms of creating a gender-just polity, it was perhaps the most radical democratic wager any new nation had made. Seventy-five years later, Indian women have more than honoured it. In the 2024 general elections, women's voter turnout exceeded men's in 19 of 36 states and union territories. In Bihar, female turnout reached 59.4%, up from 53.3% for men. The sex ratio of voters, which stood at 715 women per 1,000 men in the 1960s, has climbed to near parity, a transformation driven entirely by women showing up in greater numbers while male turnout stayed flat. But this commitment has not been matched by representation. The 2024 record turnout helped elect only 74 women out of 543 members, a mere 13.6%. The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) in March 2026 estimated that only 464 of India's 4,666 sitting legislators are women, roughly 10%. The franchise was universal from day one. The representation never caught up.



This matters beyond fairness because who sits in the legislature changes what the legislature produces. India does not need to theorise about this. It has three decades of its own evidence. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of 1993 reserved a third of panchayat and municipal seats for women; 21 states have since raised that to 50%. Today, 46.6% of India's 32.29 lakh elected panchayat representatives are women, and the data from those panchayats is unambiguous. Chattopadhyay and Duflo, using randomised reservation assignments in West Bengal and Rajasthan, found that women-led panchayats directed up to 14 percentage points more of their development funds toward drinking water, a public good that male-led panchayats had consistently underweighted, while also increasing investment in roads and sanitation. Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras found that a 10-percentage point increase in women's representation in state legislatures reduced neonatal mortality by 2.1 percentage points, with women legislators more likely to build health facilities and prioritise immunisation. Study after study, from primary education to inheritance law reform, confirms the same conclusion: women do not merely occupy seats. They change what those seats produce. And the effects reach beyond budgets into something harder to measure but perhaps more consequential: Beaman et al., drawing on over 8,000 surveys across 495 villages, found that in constituencies exposed to a female

leader for two election cycles, the gender gap in parental aspirations for their children closed by 25%, and the corresponding gap among adolescents by 32%. Parents began to imagine different futures for their daughters. That is not a policy output. That is a society beginning to rewrite its own assumptions about what women can be.

Why, then, did it take so long to act? Because the system has no organic incentive to correct itself. As Dr Shamika Ravi's research has demonstrated, politicians respond to the preferences of the electorate that actually exists, and when party structures, candidate selection processes, and the accumulated capital of male incumbency all tilt against women, the system produces no pressure to change. No democracy has closed this gap through goodwill alone. Rwanda embedded a reservation in its constitution and now leads the world at 64%. France required two decades of escalating financial penalties on non-compliant parties before women crossed 37%. India tried four times. Bills to reserve a third of legislative seats for women were introduced in 1996, 1998, 1999, and 2008. The 2008 version passed the Rajya Sabha, then quietly lapsed when the 15th Lok Sabha dissolved under the UPA. The idea commanded consensus across the political spectrum; what it lacked, each time, was the will to see it through. Equally, no previous government was willing to promise in law that existing seats would remain untouched. Under Prime Minister



Narendra Modi, Parliament passed the Nari Shakti Vandana Adhiniyam unanimously in September 2023. Three decades of deferral ended in a single session.

The contrast between the two national parties, however, is not limited to legislative will. Dr Shamika Ravi's analysis of parliamentary data from the 15th, 16th, and 17th Lok Sabhas reveals a striking pattern in how each party treats the women it sends to Parliament. Using a voice ratio—the share of a party's parliamentary interventions contributed by female MPs, divided by the share of seats held by women Ravi found that the BJP has consistently amplified its women members, with a voice ratio above parity in every term: 1.08 in the 15th Lok Sabha, 1.25 in the 16th, and 1.16 in the 17th. The Congress, by contrast, has systematically muted its own women: 0.61, 0.78, and 0.57 across the same three terms. In the 17th Lok Sabha, women held 13% of Congress seats but accounted for barely 7% of the party's debates and questions. Moreover, the concentration of voice among Congress women was far more unequal; a small clique carried most of the female Congress voice while many remained silent, whereas 39 of the BJP's 42 women MPs made at least one parliamentary intervention. Fifteen years of data across two regime changes lead to an inescapable conclusion: seats alone mean nothing if the party that awards them then denies those women a voice. The BJP does not merely give women tickets. It gives them the rightful space to voice their views.

The Adhiniyam, however, did not arrive as an isolated act. Over the preceding decade, policy had been systematically building the material conditions without which political representation risks producing the very proxy leadership that its critics fear. Under the Jan Dhan Yojana, 32 crore of the 57 crore bank accounts opened are held by women, accounting for 56% of the total. Under the Mudra Yojana, women constitute 68% of all beneficiaries across 57 crore collateral-free loans.

The Ujjwala Yojana has provided 10 crore LPG connections to women from below-poverty-line households. These are not isolated welfare measures; read together, they describe a single arc. A woman who had never entered a bank now holds an account in her own name. She takes a Mudra loan and starts an enterprise. A Ujjwala cylinder frees the hours she once spent collecting firewood. She stands for her gram panchayat. The progression that Prime Minister Modi has described as women-led development follows a precise logic: access, then autonomy, then authority. The Adhiniyam addresses the third step because the first two have been substantially built.

Prime Minister Modi's articulation of women-led development is, at its core, a structural wager with democratic implications that extend well beyond gender. The wager is that shifting who occupies power will shift how power is exercised; that representation, once normalised through institutional design and sustained across election cycles, will begin to reproduce itself without the scaffolding that made it possible; and that democracy, when made genuinely representative, will also become more effective, not because women are inherently better

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The progression that Prime Minister Modi has described as women-led development follows a precise logic: access, then autonomy, then authority.
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legislators, but because a system that draws on the full breadth of its population will outperform one that does not. If that wager holds, the implications will mark a reconfiguration of how India thinks about development itself: not as a process of delivery to passive recipients who must be grateful for what they receive, but as a process shaped, directed, and accountable to those who have the most at stake in its outcomes. That is the difference between inclusion and authorship. India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has chosen the latter. That an opposition unable to see beyond personal gain has delayed its implementation does not alter the constitutional fact. The Adhiniyam is law. Its time will come.

From Sankalp to Shakti

Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam Through an Entrepreneur's Eyes

Ritika Jatin Ahuja
COO of Big Boy Toyz, and
Founder of Queens Drive
Club — India's premier
women's supercar club

India's growth story has always drawn strength from its women. Today, with the passing of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, that strength has found structured, constitutional backing. This is a reform and a defining step toward a truly representative and self-reliant India.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has, over the years, nurtured and elevated women leaders who have set benchmarks for governance and leadership. Sushma Swaraj exemplified grace under pressure and people-centric diplomacy, becoming a global symbol of accessible leadership. Nirmala Sitharaman today steers India's economic policy with clarity and resilience at a global level. Smriti Irani has demonstrated the power of determination and grassroots connect in governance, while leaders like Vasundhara Raje and Anandiben Patel have shown how administrative leadership can drive large-scale transformation.

These leaders held positions with grace, and they have shaped narratives. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam builds on this legacy, ensuring that such leadership is no longer exceptional but expected.



As a woman entrepreneur, my journey has been shaped by both opportunity and challenge. In an industry as unconventional as the luxury and supercar world, I have experienced firsthand how representation changes perception. When women are seen leading, it quietly but powerfully reshapes what society believes is possible.

Through my work, including building a community of women supercar enthusiasts, I have seen how confidence transforms when women are given access. Whether it is access to networks, platforms or even something as fundamental as driving. Our initiatives to train and empower underprivileged women in driving are rooted in a simple belief: mobility leads to independence, and independence leads to dignity and opportunity. For many of these women, learning to drive is not just a skill but a gateway to employment, financial stability and self-worth.

This is where political empowerment and economic empowerment intersect. With more women in legislative roles, policy conversations are more likely to reflect real, lived experiences, access to finance for women entrepreneurs, skilling opportunities, safer workplaces and support systems that enable women to participate fully in the economy.

Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Modi, India has moved beyond the idea of women development to women-led development. This shift is rhetorical; it is visible in policy, in intent and now, in this historic legislation. The passage of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam reflects both conviction and commitment. It is an understanding that India cannot achieve its full potential without the equal participation of its women.

What makes this moment truly powerful is its ripple effect. When more women enter Parliament and State Assemblies, they do not just occupy seats, they expand aspirations. They become role models for millions of young girls who will now see leadership as an exception and a path.

At the same time, it is essential that this transformation remains inclusive. The true success

of this Act will lie in its ability to uplift women across rural, semi-urban and underserved communities, ensuring that empowerment reaches every corner of India.

As entrepreneurs and changemakers, we must complement this policy shift with action. By mentoring, investing in, and supporting other women, we can create a multiplier effect, one in which empowerment is not limited to policy but becomes a lived reality.

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam is the foundation of a stronger, more inclusive India. It represents a shift from intent to implementation, from symbolism to structure.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for championing this landmark reform and for consistently placing women at the centre of India's development narrative. This is a moment of pride for every Indian woman and a reminder that when women rise, India rises with them.

The road ahead, however, demands more than legislation alone. It calls for a cultural shift, one where families encourage daughters to lead, institutions create pathways for women to thrive, and communities celebrate female ambition as a strength rather than an anomaly. From boardrooms to gram panchayats, the change must be felt at every level. As women begin to occupy more decision-making spaces, the policies they shape will inevitably be more attuned to the realities of those who have long been left out of the conversation.

For those of us who have chosen to build, lead and advocate in the private sphere, this moment is both a mirror and a mandate. It reflects how far India's women have come and reminds us how much further we must go together. Every woman we mentor, every girl we inspire, every barrier we dismantle adds a brick to this larger architecture of change. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam has lit the torch. It is now upon each of us, in our own corners of influence, to carry it forward.

From Nari Shakti to Aarthik Shakti

Why Bharat's Growth Depends on the Gender Dividend

Bhumi Minesh Patel

Program In charge -
Samanway Pratishtan -
Coordinator of the Gujarat
Women Thinkers' Meet

Redefining the Development Paradigm

India's development narrative has evolved significantly over the last decade or so; it has moved from talking about women's welfare to women-led development. This is not just a semantic shift. It stems from the understanding that no country can grow and thrive in the long term if half of its population is on the economic fringes. As we march towards Viksit Bharat 2047, it's time we broaden our understanding of what a demographic dividend looks like. A youthful population is an opportunity, but by no means ensures success. There's a bigger multiplier that actually translates demographic advantage into long-term prosperity: the gender dividend, which systematically empowers women into the workforce.



Two Dividends, One Growth Story

India has almost 65 per cent of its population in the working-age group today. A window that will not stay open forever. But even if you maximise the number in that group who are working or looking for work, if you don't have workforce breadth, you have a fragile foundation.

Female labour force participation stands at ~37 per cent according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023-24 data (usual status). Progress is being made, but we lag far behind peer nations. Most other high-growth countries have far higher rates of female labour participation.

Closing gender gaps in employment could increase India's GDP by nearly 25 per cent in the long run, according to the World Bank. Suddenly, that stops feeling like a social policy question and becomes a macroeconomic priority.

Women as Economic Force Multipliers

Numbers are important, but the case for the gender dividend runs deeper than headcounts. Studies have proven time and again that women put a greater share of their income back into supporting household welfare through education, nutrition, and health. This generates multiplier effects in the form of social returns.

India's policy architecture has begun to reflect this understanding:

- Jan Dhan Yojana has opened over 48 crore accounts, with women as the majority holders, bringing them into the formal financial system for the first time.
- Mudra Yojana has directed nearly 70 per cent of its loans to women entrepreneurs, seeding grassroots enterprise at scale.
- Self-Help Groups (SHGs) now connect over 10 crore women, building economic networks that strengthen rural livelihoods and local resilience.

The NFHS-5 data adds a further dimension: women

with financial access participate significantly more in household decision-making. Economic empowerment and social agency reinforce each other.

From Welfare to Capability

The deeper shift has been ideological from entitlements to capabilities. Initiatives like Ujjwala Yojana (clean cooking fuel), Swachh Bharat Mission (sanitation, dignity) and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (young girls' education and awareness) sought to overcome structural constraints that held women back from participating, even before jobs and income were on the horizon.

These aren't siloed initiatives. They create a framework to eliminate hurdles so women can pursue education, engage with labour markets and enter the public sphere with greater ease. Women as entrepreneurs, institutional leaders, and decision-makers in their communities are the results we see.

Structural Barriers That Remain

There has been real progress. But then there are constraints. And those, too, are real. And articulating them plainly is the first step to tackling them. Informality/informal work, along with underemployment, still describes the work situation of most employed women. Across sectors, but especially in farming and family businesses, women's work hours are of immense economic value but remain statistically invisible and financially unprotected.

Uneven responsibility for unpaid care work is like a tax on women's time. Research that tracks how people allocate time each day finds that Indian women spend over 5 hours on unpaid household chores and care work, twice as much as men. Care work isn't a sidebar: it's a structural barrier to women's participation in the formal economy. Safety and mobility influence where women can work and whether they can work at all. This is especially true for women entering the job market in cities and manufacturing hubs. Insecurity isn't

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India's aspiration to be a developed economy by 2047 rests on three pillars: inclusive growth, human capital, and innovation.
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just a woman's problem; it makes us pay the price through lost opportunities and restricted choices.

Skills building and digital connectivity have increased across segments, but remain unequal. Rural women workers are far less likely to have the skills or digital connectivity to engage with more productive work.

A Policy Agenda for the Gender Dividend

Realising the gender dividend requires deliberate, sustained policy action not parallel to mainstream economic policy, but integrated within it.

Labour market reform should prioritise flexible and remote work frameworks, incentives for formal-sector hiring of women, and investment in safe public transportation, particularly for the last mile. The care economy needs to be recognised as infrastructure. Affordable, quality childcare and eldercare are not welfare expenditures; they are productivity investments that free women to participate in the workforce. Women-led enterprises need a graduation pathway. Microfinance access is established; what's needed now is connectivity to formal credit markets, digital supply chains, and export ecosystems for women-owned MSMEs. Skilling must align with

where the economy is heading, manufacturing, green energy, digital services, not where it has been. Closing the digital gender divide is foundational to this. Political representation matters because governance shapes everything else. The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam creates structural space for women's voices in legislative processes, a long-overdue correction with downstream policy consequences.

The Strategic Imperative

India's aspiration to be a developed economy by 2047 rests on three pillars: inclusive growth, human capital, and innovation. Women are central to all three. The recent improvement in female labour force participation is a positive signal. Sustaining it requires moving from isolated scheme-level interventions to a coherent, economy-wide strategy that treats women's participation as a structural variable, not a target. The gender dividend is not a supplement to India's demographic dividend. It is the mechanism that makes the demographic dividend work.

When women lead, the nation accelerates. When women prosper, Bharat transforms.



From Representation to Power

Women Who Rule, Not Just Represent

Divya Singh

Journalist & Researcher

As of May 2026, the debate on women's role in Bharat's success story has undergone a decisive shift. It has transcended from the paternalistic notions of 'women as beneficiaries' to 'women-led development.' Thus, women are no longer viewed as mere passive recipients of the state but are the primary architects of the same. Yet, the socio-political landscape in the world's largest democracy presented a contrast in this aspect. With over 1.45 million elected women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions, approximately 46% of total members, it has built the largest grassroots women's leadership infrastructure globally. Several states have pushed beyond the one-third reservation to 50%, creating the most robust pipeline of local women leaders.



Yet at Parliament's doors, the numbers thin sharply. Women constitute roughly 14% of the 18th Lok Sabha and 17% of the Rajya Sabha. The proportion of women contesting national elections, while growing, from 3% in 1957 to 10% in 2024, still reflects a worrying asymmetry that we can no longer afford to treat as gradual progress. Thus, this gap between participation and representation remains a critical concern. While numerical representation of women has expanded significantly in an array of sectors like public services, environment activism, academia and corporate culture, amongst others, in the intervening years, the exercise of real power often continues to be constrained by socio-cultural, traditional and institutional barriers.

The Gap Between the Seat and the Power

Increased participation does not automatically guarantee empowerment. Across several states, a corrosive phenomenon persists: proxy representation where the elected women representatives are directed, pressured, or outright controlled by male family members. The woman holds the office; the man exercises the authority. This is what the scholars have observed to be 'empowerment impersonation.' Field evidence from Karnataka illustrates how elected women often remain present in administrative processes without exercising substantive control. The infamous instances of Sarpanch Pati in the rural and peri-urban belts of Northern India is yet another example.

To address these challenges, targeted interventions have been introduced. Capacity building initiatives such as the Sashakt Panchayat Netri Abhiyan aim to strengthen leadership skills and enhance institutional understanding among women representatives. Training programs focusing on financial management, governance processes, and digital tools have helped many women transition from symbolic participation to active engagement.

Where women exercise genuine authority, the governance outcomes speak for themselves. Women leaders at the village level are consistently seen to prioritise water, sanitation, healthcare, and education which are foundational infrastructure of a dignified life. Research shows that female citizens engage more actively in governance processes when they see women in leadership roles as it generates resonance, reciprocity, and reification.

The Architecture of Real Change

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments did not merely reserve seats; they also restructured the nature of Indian democracy, making local governance more participatory, inclusive, and responsive. Representation generates participation, participation generates ownership, and ownership generates a democracy that actually belongs to its people. This foundation enabled 1.45 million women to enter public life and thus remains one of the most celebrated democratic reforms in post-independence history.

Building on that foundation, the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, mandated one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. This is the most significant democratisation of legislative power since universal adult franchise. It ensures that the Parliament of Bharat, the supreme institution of a nation, will, by law, reflect its people more completely than ever before. Its implementation, tied to delimitation and census processes, must be pursued with the same political urgency that secured its passage.

The financial architecture has reiterated this vision. In FY 2026, approximately 9.37% of the Union Budget was allocated to gender equality programmes in pursuit of gender parity and a sustainable economic strategy. Gender-responsive budgeting is the mechanism that converts political commitment into tangible outcomes, directing resources where they

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It is necessary to acknowledge that we have done what few nations have managed at scale- build a world-class foundation for women's political participation.



build the most durable change.

This support ecosystem extends further. Mission Shakti, a legal framework governing workplace harassment, and digital grievance redressal platforms reduce the structural barriers women face in sustaining careers outside households. Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats are prototyping what governance designed with women, not merely for them, looks like in practice.

Perhaps the most underappreciated engine of this transformation is the Self-Help Group network. With over 10 crore women organised under DAY-NRLM, SHGs are not just livelihood instruments. They are leadership incubators, building the economic independence, collective confidence, and institutional familiarity that translate, for millions of women, into the capacity and the courage to enter public life. Data shows that women with SHG experience who enter electoral politics are demonstrably more effective, more confident, and harder to proxy-control than those without it. The SHG is, quietly, Bharat's most powerful political training ground.

What Women's Leadership Delivers for the Nation

Empirical studies across democracies, including India, establish a consistent pattern that higher representation of women in governance correlates with reduced corruption, stronger institutional efficiency, and greater prioritisation of welfare and social infrastructure. Women's economic

participation, enabled by their growing political agency, is projected to be among the strongest drivers of GDP growth in the upcoming century. McKinsey Global Institute estimates that advancing women's equality in India could add \$770 billion to GDP by 2025.

This is Bharat's most underleveraged strategic asset, i.e. the leadership potential of almost half its population. A nation that utilises this fully develops more equitably and with greater resilience than any competitor. It is necessary to acknowledge that we have done what few nations have managed at scale— build a world-class foundation for women's political participation. The 73rd Amendment, the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, the SHG network, and Mission Shakti are not merely talking points. These are structural achievements that have altered the landscape of Indian democracy.

What must now be secured is the step that gives all this its meaning. Women must not only occupy positions of governance. They must exercise, fully, freely, and without proxy, the authority those positions were designed to confer. When this circle is complete, Bharat will not merely have fulfilled a constitutional mandate but also realise one of the cornerstones of our civilizational lessons – one in which Shakti is not invoked in temples alone, but is indispensable in every panchayat, every legislature, and every chamber of national power.

“ Empowering women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation. When women are empowered, a society with stability is assured.”

- Dr A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

Shakti to Statecraft

When Women Lead, Bharat Rises

Kushika Madan

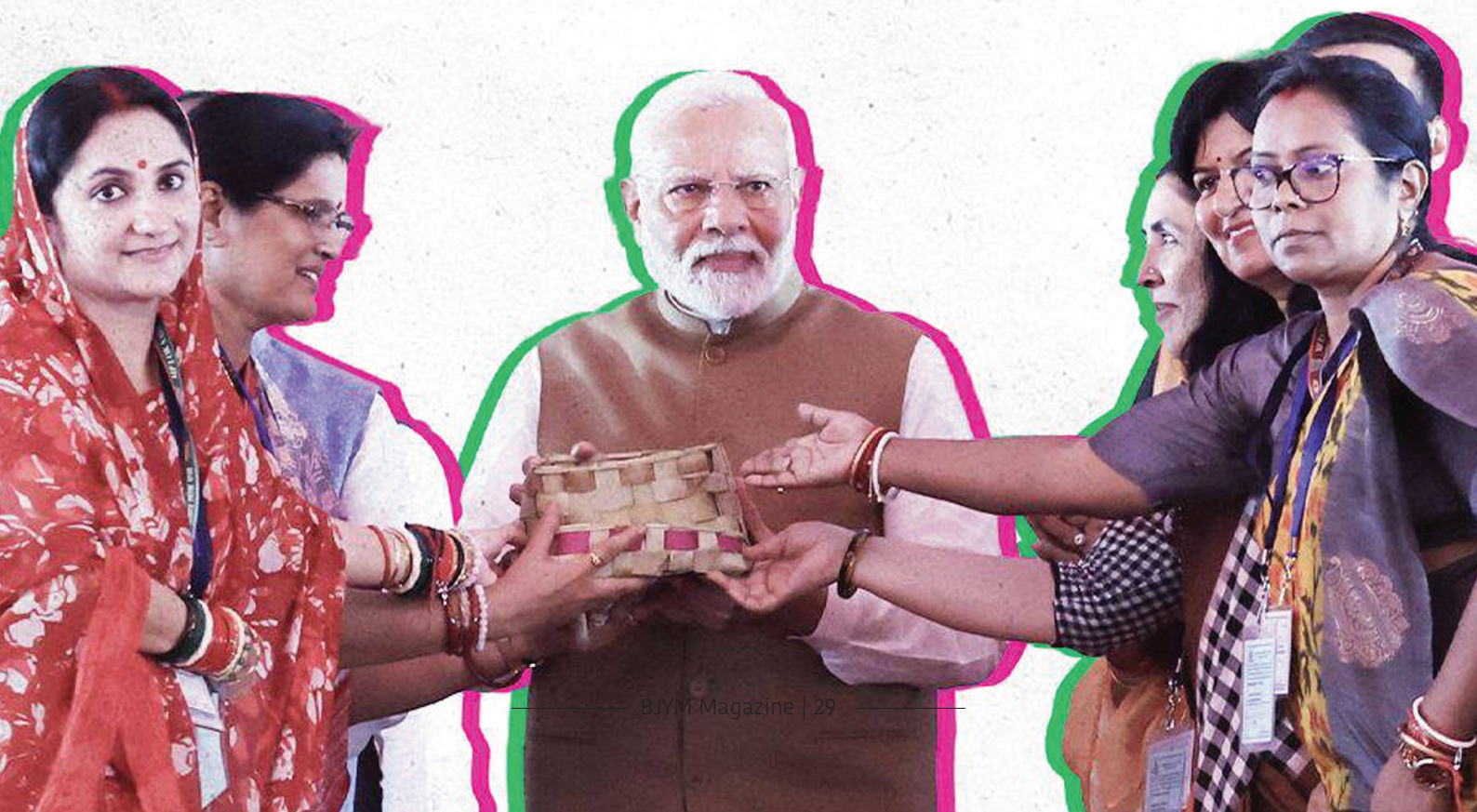
Political and Geopolitical Researcher engaged in Analysing Structures of Power and Policy Dynamics

Women Who Redefined the Nation

Written thousands of years ago, in the Devi Mahatmyam of the Markandeya Purana, we find that, when the combined might of all the Devatas proved inadequate, it was Shakti, the primordial feminine force, who restored the cosmic order. From the 27 women sages recorded in the Rigveda to the intellectual giants of the Upanishads and the Bhakti movement, women like Gargi, Maitreyi, Vak Ambhrini, Akka Mahadevi, among many others, have always stood at the frontier of India's most profound inquiries - sovereign, fearless, and undiminished.

Bharat has long understood a truth the modern world is just discovering: when feminine power leads, the nation does not just survive; it flourishes. With women making up nearly half the population, empowerment is more than a social goal; it is the primary engine of national evolution. On the path to Viksit Bharat @ 2047, placing women at the heart of the national architecture is a constitutional mandate and a long-overdue social re-engineering.

This truth is no longer confined to philosophy. It is being written into law and encoded in policy.



India's current trajectory is not merely a march toward 'modernity'; it is a profound civilizational homecoming. We are returning to our original heartbeat, where the feminine was the foundational strength of the land. The icons of our past and present have done far more than break glass ceilings; they have rebuilt the ceiling itself.

When we look at the late Sushma Swaraj, we see a leader who fundamentally redefined global diplomacy. She proved that a nation's strength is best expressed through a "human touch" and a commitment to its people across borders. Her legacy, alongside the poised leadership of President Droupadi Murmu, the first tribal woman to hold the nation's highest constitutional office, embodies Bharat's promise that no identity is too marginal to lead. Similarly, Nirmala Sitharaman, steering the world's sixth-largest economy through consecutive Union Budgets, has made it unambiguous that economic stewardship is gender-neutral.

Our reach for the stars was sparked by the courage of Kalpana Chawla, whose journey from Karnal to the Cosmos remains aspirational for every Indian child. Today, that legacy is carried forward by the "Rocket Women," Ritu Karidhal, Muthayya Vanitha, and Nandini Harinath, who engineered Chandrayaan's triumphs and set a global benchmark. In the realm of strategic deterrence, Dr. Tessy Thomas, the "Agni Putri" of India, laid the bedrock of national security by pioneering the guidance systems for the Agni missile series. Her work ensures that India's borders are safeguarded by indigenous technology.

In the industrial space, visionaries like Sudha Murty, Falguni Nayar, and Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw have introduced the world to "compassionate capitalism," proving that ethical and empathetic leadership can build empires that uplift entire communities. In culture and environment, Lata Mangeshkar and Saalumarada Thimmakka ensured that Bharat's growth never loses its soul.

From the fierce clarity of Palki Sharma Upadhyay reclaiming the global narrative in geopolitical discourse to the record-breaking grit of P.V. Sindhu and Mithali Raj, these women have dismantled barriers on the world stage. They have shown that an Indian woman can navigate and dominate any arena. This spans from the Olympic podium to the Supreme Court, where Justice B.V. Nagarathna is set to mark a historic milestone as the first female Chief Justice of India.

Ultimately, this ascent is fueled by the foundational strength of homemakers, the quiet architects of our values whose stewardship allows the next generation to dream without limits. Together, these women have not merely participated in Bharat's journey; they have defined its direction.

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From financial inclusion to rural livelihood programs, women are being integrated into the economic mainstream in ways never seen before.

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The Architecture of Inclusion in New Bharat

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (2023), which reserves 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislatures for women, is the most significant democratisation of political power in the history of independent India. It aims to ensure that the governance of Bharat is as diverse and representative as its people.

Even on the ground, the policy ecosystem has been equally transformative. The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana has channelled approximately 70% of all sanctioned loans to women, providing the foundational seed capital for millions of sustainable livelihoods. Under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana, over 10 crore women have been organised into SHGs, thereby creating a grassroots economic revolution of unprecedented scale. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao has driven a measurable improvement in the Sex Ratio at Birth across critical districts, while PM Ujjwala Yojana, with over 9.6 crore LPG connections distributed, has reclaimed hours of productive time for rural women from the burden of biomass cooking.

The Rising Economic Force

The contribution of women to India's development

has evolved from a series of anecdotal success stories into a data-driven economic powerhouse. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2023-24, the female Labour Force Participation Rate surged from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 41.7% by 2023-24 which is a near-doubling in under 6 years. Rural women led this charge, with their participation rising from 24.6% to 47.6%, among the fastest shifts in any major emerging economy. This is not a statistical blip. The fact that the female Worker Population Ratio has correspondingly doubled suggests that real opportunities are being created.

- **The Entrepreneurial Surge:** Female self-employment has climbed from 52% to over 67%. Today, women own more than 20% of India's MSMEs, providing livelihoods for over 20 million people and proving that ethical, grassroots leadership drives long-term resilience.
- **The GDP Catalyst:** While women currently contribute about 18% of India's GDP, the untapped potential is staggering. Experts suggest that even a 10% increase in participation could boost the national GDP by a massive 16%.
- **Skill and Stability:** From the Skill India Mission, where female graduate employability has reached nearly 48%, to rural employment schemes where women perform nearly half of all workdays, the female workforce is now indispensable at every level of the economy.

Women are no longer just entering the workforce. They are fundamentally reshaping the nature of Bharat's growth. By continuing to dismantle barriers like unpaid domestic labour and limited access to high-tier opportunities, India, while pursuing social equity, is unlocking its most potent engine for long-term, resilient national progress.

Road Ahead

India stands at a decisive crossroads. With a massive demographic dividend and a growing pool of skilled women comprising nearly half the population, the nation offers a distinctive global dividend. However, realising this potential requires a fundamental mindset shift. The focus must move

beyond viewing women as mere participants to recognising them as the primary drivers of growth, innovation, and sustainability. A truly gender-balanced workforce does more than just fill seats; it sharpens the nation's competitive edge and accelerates the journey toward becoming a developed power.

Thus, India must navigate structural reforms emboldened by cultural revisionism. This begins with an aggressive expansion of access to higher education, specialised skilling, and digital literacy, specifically targeting high-growth STEM frontiers like green energy, technology, and entrepreneurship. Fortunately, the current policy landscape shows a genuine commitment to this vision. From financial inclusion to rural livelihood programs, women are being integrated into the economic mainstream in ways never seen before. This is not just about individual empowerment; it is a ripple effect that transforms families, strengthens communities, and builds local economies from the ground up.

When the ancient women of Bharat followed their vision to seek the truth, they did not petition for permission to think. They simply thought, and in doing so, extended the frontier of what was believed possible. Today, Bharat must institutionalise that same spirit: moving beyond the 'inclusion' of women as participants and recognising them as the architects and authors of our national destiny.

India's civilizational identity was never constructed for the exclusion of its women; it was built on their Shakti. To honour that inheritance and fulfil the promise of Viksit Bharat @ 2047, the nation must ensure that every woman, from Panchayats to Parliament, from the research laboratory to the global boardroom, finds not just opportunity but belonging.

Ultimately, the rise of her women is not a project for Bharat to complete; it is the realisation of what Bharat has always been. In this journey toward 2047, empowering the feminine is, quite simply, the act of empowering the nation's soul.

The 2047 Equation

No Viksit Bharat Without Empowered Women

Dr Monika Kumari

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Political empowerment forms a crucial pillar of women-led development, as it ensures that women have a direct role in shaping policies and governance structures. One of the most significant institutional developments in this regard is the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, which provides for the reservation of seats for women in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies.

This legislation represents more than a policy reform; it is a transformative step toward institutionalising gender equality within the political system. By ensuring greater representation of women, it addresses the long-standing underrepresentation and creates opportunities for women to participate in high-level decision-making.

The significance of this reform can be understood at multiple levels. First, it enhances descriptive representation, ensuring that legislative bodies reflect the demographic composition of society. Second, it promotes substantive representation, as women representatives are more likely to prioritise issues related to health, education, gender justice, and social welfare. Third, it contributes to the creation of a sustainable leadership pipeline, encouraging more women to enter politics and public life.



From a public administration perspective, increased participation of women in governance leads to improved policy outcomes and administrative efficiency. Research on decentralised governance, particularly in Panchayati Raj Institutions, has shown that women leaders often adopt a more inclusive, community-oriented approach, focusing on long-term developmental goals.

Moreover, political empowerment has a multiplier effect; it not only strengthens democratic institutions but also challenges existing gender norms, inspiring greater participation of women across all sectors. Thus, the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam can be seen as a landmark step in advancing women-led development and deepening democratic governance in India.

Economic Empowerment: The Foundation of Independence

Economic empowerment lies at the core of the women-led development paradigm, as financial independence is a prerequisite for autonomy, decision-making, and social mobility. Over the past decade, a range of policy initiatives has significantly strengthened women's economic agency in India.

One of the most transformative interventions has been the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, which has enabled large-scale financial inclusion by integrating millions of women into the formal banking system. Access to bank accounts has not only facilitated direct benefit transfers but has also enhanced women's control over financial resources. Similarly, the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana has promoted entrepreneurship by providing collateral-free loans, enabling women to establish micro and small enterprises.

In addition, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), particularly under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), have emerged as powerful instruments of collective economic empowerment. These groups function as platforms for savings, credit, and enterprise development, while also fostering solidarity,

leadership, and social awareness among women.

From a theoretical perspective, this shift aligns with Amartya Sen's capability approach, which emphasises expanding individuals' freedoms and opportunities. Economic empowerment enhances women's capabilities, enabling them to participate more actively in both household and public decision-making processes.

Today, women are increasingly emerging as micro-entrepreneurs, innovators, and contributors to economic growth. This transformation is particularly visible in rural India, where SHGs have not only strengthened local economies but also acted as catalysts for social change. Thus, economic empowerment serves as the foundation for broader processes of women-led development.

Social Transformation: Dignity and Capability

Women-led development extends beyond economic participation to encompass broader dimensions of dignity, capability, and quality of life. Social transformation is a critical component of this paradigm, as it addresses the structural and cultural barriers that have historically constrained women's agency.

Several flagship initiatives have played a significant role in this transformation. The Swachh Bharat Mission has improved sanitation facilities, particularly benefiting women by ensuring privacy, safety, and dignity. The Ayushman Bharat scheme has expanded access to healthcare, reducing families' financial burden and improving women's health outcomes. Similarly, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign focused on addressing gender disparities in education and promoting the value of the girl child.

These initiatives collectively enhance women's capabilities, in line with Naila Kabeer's framework, which emphasises the importance of resources, agency, and achievements in the empowerment process. By improving access to education,

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beyond policies, schemes, and institutional frameworks, women-led development is ultimately about voice, identity, dignity, and the freedom to shape one's own destiny.

healthcare, and basic amenities, these programs create an enabling environment where women can exercise their rights and realise their potential.

Thus, social transformation is not merely about welfare provision; it is about restructuring societal norms and institutions to ensure that women can live with dignity, security, and equal opportunity.

Women in Governance and Administration

The increasing participation of women in governance and administration represents a significant advancement in the realisation of women-led development. Over the years, there has been a notable expansion in women's representation at various levels of governance, particularly in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), civil services, and policy-making bodies.

The constitutional mandate for the reservation of women in local governance has played a pivotal role in this transformation. Women representatives at the grassroots level have demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing community-specific issues such as health, education, sanitation, and welfare. Their leadership often reflects a participatory, inclusive approach, enhancing the effectiveness of governance.

Empirical studies in public administration suggest that women leaders tend to prioritise long-term developmental outcomes and adopt more transparent and accountable practices. Their involvement also helps break traditional gender stereotypes and encourages greater participation by women in public life.

Furthermore, the growing presence of women in the civil service and in administrative leadership positions signifies a shift toward more gender-balanced governance structures. This not only improves policy responsiveness but also strengthens institutional legitimacy.

In this context, women in governance are not merely participants—they are key drivers of administrative innovation and social transformation.

Women-Led Development and Viksit Bharat 2047

The vision of a developed India by 2047, Viksit Bharat, is intrinsically linked with the concept of women-led development. As India aspires to become a global economic and political power, the role of women becomes increasingly critical in leveraging the country's demographic dividend.

Women constitute nearly half of India's population, and their active participation in the workforce and governance structures is essential to achieving sustainable, inclusive growth. Empowering women leads to higher labour force participation rates, improved household welfare, better educational outcomes for future generations, and stronger institutional frameworks.

From a policy perspective, women-led development ensures that growth is not only rapid but also equitable and socially inclusive. It aligns with global development goals, including gender equality and inclusive growth, while also reinforcing India's commitment to democratic and participatory governance.

Thus, the realisation of Viksit Bharat 2047 depends on the effective integration of women across all spheres of development, making them equal partners in nation-building.

Critical Perspective: Challenges Ahead

Despite the significant progress achieved in recent years, several challenges continue to hinder the full realisation of women-led development. One of the most persistent issues is the gender gap in labour force participation, which remains relatively low compared to global standards. Structural barriers, such as unpaid care work, unsafe working environments, and limited access to skill development opportunities, continue to restrict women's economic engagement.

Social norms and cultural practices also play a crucial role in limiting women's mobility, decision-making power, and access to resources. Patriarchal attitudes often reinforce gender inequalities, making it difficult for women to fully exercise their rights and capabilities.

In addition, the digital divide poses a significant challenge in the contemporary era, where access to

technology is increasingly linked with opportunities for education, employment, and entrepreneurship. Women, particularly in rural areas, often face barriers in accessing digital tools and platforms.

Addressing these challenges requires a multidimensional approach that involves policy innovation, institutional strengthening, and societal transformation. It also necessitates a shift from scheme-based interventions to a more holistic, sustained strategy that integrates the economic, social, and political dimensions of empowerment.

Ultimately, women-led development must evolve from a policy framework into a deeply embedded social process that transforms both institutions and mindsets.

Conclusion

Women-led development represents a transformative paradigm shift in India's governance and development model. It moves beyond the conventional welfare-based approach and redefines empowerment by placing women at the centre of economic participation, political representation, and social transformation. In this evolving framework, women are not passive beneficiaries but active leaders, decision-makers, and drivers of national progress.

The vision of Nari Shakti, strongly emphasised under the leadership of Narendra Modi, goes far beyond mere inclusion. It is rooted in leadership, agency, and transformation, recognising that a nation's true strength lies in empowering its women. Today, Indian women are not only contributing to development, they are shaping its direction, from grassroots governance to entrepreneurship, from education to innovation.

As India moves forward on the path of becoming a developed nation under the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, women will play a decisive and defining role in shaping its future. Their participation ensures that growth is not only rapid but also inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. Empowered women strengthen families, uplift communities, and build resilient institutions, thereby laying the foundation

of a stronger nation.

However, beyond policies, schemes, and institutional frameworks, women-led development is ultimately about voice, identity, dignity, and the freedom to shape one's own destiny. It is about creating a society where every woman has the confidence to dream, the courage to act, and the opportunity to lead. It is about breaking barriers, challenging stereotypes, and ensuring that empowerment becomes a lived reality for every woman in India.

This spirit of empowerment and self-realisation is best captured in the following lines:

Let Me Live as I Am

*Let me be the way I am,
Let my voice be heard and echo.
I, too, want to fly in the sky,
I want to live like a free bird.*

*I want to explore new paths,
To choose the sky of my own dreams.
I want to walk those roads
Where my courage lights the way,
Where my dreams are filled with belief.*

*Do not mold me into those shapes
Where my dreams suffocate,
Where my identity fades away,
And my desires fall apart.*

*I do not want to be someone's shadow,
I do not want to be a prisoner of
someone else's dreams.*

*Let me be the way I am,
Let my voice be heard and echo
Let me live as I am.*

Nari Shakti to Nation Shakti

Women as the Engine of Viksit Bharat

Menka Bharati

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A significant milestone in India's journey towards women-led development has been the enactment of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, aimed at reshaping the structure of political representation. Moving beyond symbolic inclusion, the legislation provides for the reservation of one-third seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, thereby institutionalising their presence in key decision-making bodies.



Its importance lies not merely in numerical representation, but in correcting a long-standing structural imbalance in Indian politics. For decades, women's participation in legislature remained limited due to socioeconomic barriers and unequal access to political opportunities. This reform addresses that gap by creating a framework for sustained and meaningful inclusion.

Evidence from grassroots governance, especially Panchayati Raj institutions, has already shown the impact of women's leadership. Women representatives have consistently prioritised issues such as health, education, sanitation, and basic welfare, often bringing greater responsiveness and accountability to local administration. This experience demonstrates that political inclusion is not only a matter of fairness, but also of governance quality.

Seen in this context, the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam extends this transformation from the local to the national level. It helps build a pipeline of women leaders and gradually normalises their role in public life, strengthening democratic participation.

At its core, the reform reflects a broader shift in governance thinking under the leadership of Narendra Modi from viewing women as beneficiaries to recognising them as active contributors to nation-building.

Economic Empowerment: Women as Growth Drivers
Economic empowerment lies at the core of women-led development, reshaping women from passive recipients into active contributors to India's growth story. Over the past decade, policy efforts have focused on removing structural barriers that limited women's access to finance, markets, and entrepreneurship. The emphasis has gradually shifted from welfare-based support to enabling women to build enterprises, generate employment, and participate meaningfully in economic activity.

A major driver of this change has been financial inclusion, driven by initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana. By integrating millions of women into the formal banking system, it has

enabled them to access savings, credit, and government transfers. Financial identity has thus become the first step toward economic independence, turning women into account holders and decision-makers within the formal economy.

This progress has been strengthened by the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, which has expanded access to collateral-free credit for small entrepreneurs. Across rural and semi-urban areas, women are establishing retail shops, service units, and home-based enterprises. This has not only encouraged self-employment but also contributed to local economic circulation and grassroots job creation.

Equally important has been the rise of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which have become a strong foundation of collective economic action. Through savings discipline and internal credit systems, SHGs have enabled women to move from subsistence work to micro-enterprises in sectors such as dairy, handicrafts, food processing, and digital services. In many regions, these groups are now integrated into broader livelihood and value-chain activities.

A notable shift is also visible in the growing integration of women into digital and market-linked ecosystems. With access to mobile banking, digital payments, and e-commerce platforms, women entrepreneurs are no longer confined to local markets. Even small enterprises can now connect with broader consumer bases, expanding both income opportunities and economic visibility.

Overall, these developments reflect a clear transition: women are steadily moving from the periphery to the centre of economic activity. While challenges such as labour force participation and scale of enterprise remain, the trajectory is unmistakable: women are emerging as creators of wealth, generators of employment, and key stakeholders in India's journey toward a self-reliant and developed economy.

Social Transformation: Dignity, Health and Education

Women-led development in India is not only reflected in economic participation or political

representation, but also in the quieter, everyday shifts that have reshaped dignity, health, and education. Over the past decade, focused public policy has addressed long-standing structural constraints that limited women's autonomy in both households and communities.

A major step in restoring dignity has been the expansion of sanitation coverage under the Swachh Bharat Mission. For years, the lack of household toilets exposed women to insecurity and poor health conditions. The large-scale construction of toilets has significantly improved hygiene and safety, while also restoring privacy and self-respect, especially in rural areas. This intervention has quietly but decisively altered everyday gendered experiences of space and dignity.

In a similar way, the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana has transformed household life by providing clean cooking fuel to millions of families. It has reduced dependence on traditional biomass fuels, thereby lowering indoor air pollution and related health risks. At the same time, it has eased the daily burden of fuel collection, giving women more time for education, income-generating work, and community engagement.

Education has further strengthened this transformation. Rising enrolment of girls, improved school infrastructure, and sustained awareness efforts have gradually reshaped social attitudes. Education is increasingly seen not just as access, but as a pathway to empowerment and independence. As more girls complete higher education, their participation in family decisions and public life continues to grow.

Together, these changes point to a deeper social shift—where women are moving beyond traditional constraints and asserting greater control over their lives. This growing sense of dignity and capability is steadily weakening entrenched barriers and laying the foundation for a more balanced and progressive society.

Women in Governance & Leadership

A defining feature of women-led development in contemporary India is the steadily growing presence of women in governance and leadership at multiple levels. This change goes beyond numerical representation; it reflects a deeper reordering of participation, authority, and public responsibility within the democratic framework.

At the grassroots, women have become key decision-makers in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Reservation provisions have enabled lakhs of women to enter local governance and directly shape priorities in health, education, sanitation, and rural development. In many cases, their leadership has strengthened community-focused planning, improved accountability, and brought greater attention to everyday governance issues.

Beyond the village level, women's participation in administrative services and public institutions has also increased steadily. From civil services to policy bodies, women are now occupying positions that influence governance at district, state, and national levels. This expanding presence has contributed to more diverse perspectives in decision-making and more balanced policy outcomes.

In the political sphere, initiatives such as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam have further reinforced the structural push toward greater representation. Such reforms are significant not only for increasing numbers but for ensuring continuity of women's participation in legislative processes.

This transition is supported by wider changes in education, public policy, and social attitudes. As barriers gradually reduce, more women are stepping into leadership roles across sectors. The result is not just increased participation, but a more inclusive style of governance that values responsiveness and collective engagement.

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*Within the
governance vision of
Shri Narendra Modi,
women-led
development has
gained a clear policy
focus, linking dignity
with opportunity and
empowerment with
economic
contribution.*
.....

In essence, the rise of women in governance is reshaping leadership itself—making it more representative, grounded, and participatory, and strengthening the democratic fabric of the country. **The Road Ahead: Institutionalising Women-Led Development**

Women-led development in India cannot be sustained through isolated schemes alone; it has to become an integral part of the governance architecture. The progress achieved so far needs to be embedded in a more stable institutional framework that integrates gender considerations at every stage of policymaking and implementation.

A key step in this direction is strengthening gender-sensitive governance. Institutions must go beyond welfare delivery and actively identify and address the structural barriers that limit women's participation in economic and public life. Alongside this, digital empowerment must be expanded meaningfully so that women in both rural and urban areas can fully access digital platforms, financial services, and new opportunities in education and employment.

Equally important is the development of strong leadership pipelines. Empowerment is incomplete without representation in decision-making spaces. Systematic efforts in training, mentoring, and skill development are required to prepare women for roles in governance, administration, and enterprise. In essence, institutionalising women-led development means shifting from symbolic inclusion to real, outcome-driven empowerment. It demands alignment between policy intent, administrative practice, and social attitudes. As India progresses toward the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 under the leadership of Narendra Modi, the focus must remain on building systems in which women are not just participants in development but its active shapers.

From Nari Shakti to Nation Shakti

Women-led development in India is not just a policy direction; it marks a deeper shift in the country's development thinking. From the margins of welfare approaches, women have steadily moved into the centre of governance, the economy, and social

change. This transition is not limited to inclusion; it reflects structured, long-term empowerment.

As India moves toward the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, women are emerging as active contributors to national progress. From villages to cities, and from entrepreneurship to public service, their role is increasingly shaping the country's development trajectory. This participation strengthens not only households and communities but also the broader institutional framework of the nation.

Within the governance vision of Shri Narendra Modi, women-led development has gained a clear policy focus, linking dignity with opportunity and empowerment with economic contribution. It reflects the understanding that national progress becomes stronger when every section of society participates meaningfully.

In essence, "Nari Shakti to Nation Shakti" captures this evolving reality. A nation progresses when its women progress, and India's path toward becoming a developed and inclusive society will rest firmly on this foundation of shared responsibility and collective growth.

From Custody to Confidence

Women-Led Rehabilitation Inside India's Prisons

Aachal Jain

Founder of Kadam

A Step Forward NGO, and has worked as a Field Investigator with the National Commission for Women

India's vision of women-led development under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is often discussed in terms of entrepreneurship, political participation, or economic empowerment. However, one of the most important yet least discussed dimensions of this transformation lies behind prison walls, the rehabilitation and reintegration of women prisoners.

A nation truly moves towards inclusive development when even the most marginalised women are given an opportunity to rebuild their lives with dignity. During field-based impact assessment work associated with the rehabilitation of women prisoners across five states, I witnessed how policy interventions and welfare schemes are gradually transforming correctional spaces from centres of punishment into spaces of rehabilitation, skill development, and self-reliance.



A large number of women prisoners in India come from socially and economically vulnerable backgrounds. Many are undertrials. Several have experienced domestic violence, abandonment, poverty, trafficking, or lack of education before entering prisons. For many women, incarceration is not just a legal crisis but also a social and emotional collapse. Therefore, rehabilitation becomes essential not only for correction but also for restoring dignity and confidence.

One of the most visible changes inside correctional institutions has been the growing focus on skill development and livelihood generation. Through initiatives aligned with the government's larger vision of the Skill India Mission and women's empowerment, several prisons have introduced vocational training programs, including tailoring, handicrafts, beauty and wellness training, food processing, digital literacy, and embroidery for women inmates. These programs aim to help women become financially independent after release and reduce the possibility of social exclusion.

During interactions inside prisons, it became evident that such training programs were not merely occupational activities. For many women, they became a source of emotional healing and self-worth. Women who once considered themselves socially abandoned began to regain confidence through participation, productivity, and financial learning. Rehabilitation becomes meaningful when women begin to see themselves not as prisoners alone, but as individuals capable of rebuilding their future.

Another important intervention has been the implementation of health, hygiene, and sanitation-related reforms. Campaigns inspired by the broader objectives of Swachh Bharat Mission and menstrual hygiene awareness have improved access to sanitation facilities and healthcare support for women inmates in several correctional institutions. Many prisons have also strengthened counselling support, awareness programs, and educational initiatives to address mental health concerns and emotional distress among

incarcerated women.

Financial inclusion has also emerged as an important component of rehabilitation. The larger ecosystem created through schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana and women-centric self-help group models has strengthened conversations around financial literacy and economic participation for vulnerable women. Rehabilitation today is increasingly being connected with employability, entrepreneurship, and self-reliance rather than dependency alone.

Women-led development is not limited to welfare schemes alone; it is also about ensuring representation, participation, and leadership opportunities for women across every section of society. The passage of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam reflects the government's commitment towards strengthening women's participation in decision-making and governance. This broader vision of empowerment also influences institutional approaches towards vulnerable women, including women prisoners, by focusing on rehabilitation, inclusion, and reintegration rather than exclusion alone.

Rehabilitation is not merely a correctional process; it is a process of restoring confidence, dignity, and social belonging. During field interactions, it became clear that when women are provided access to skill development, counselling, healthcare, and financial awareness, they begin to rebuild not only their livelihoods but also their sense of identity. Such reforms demonstrate that governance becomes truly transformative when it creates opportunities for vulnerable women to reintegrate into society with dignity and self-reliance.

India's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 can only become a reality when development includes every woman, irrespective of her social or personal circumstances. The journey from custody to confidence is not easy, but through rehabilitation-oriented reforms, skill development initiatives, and dignity-centred governance, India is taking meaningful steps towards ensuring that even the most vulnerable women become participants in the nation's growth story.

The entire world, status, history, family hierarchies, Puranas and Upanishads of Indian systems have always discussed about the equality of genders, but somehow, there are biases created by the societal psychologies. When a census is conducted in a region, the entire population, irrespective of gender, is counted as part of the country's total population. It is therefore obvious that opportunities, regardless of gender, should be available to eligible candidates. However, the imbalance in society is intentionally created, sometimes unknowingly, as noted by the Modi-led government after 2014, which led to the economic empowerment of women who were deprived of it post-independence.

Loans, Lakhpatis & Leadership

How Modi's Schemes Built Women's Economic Identity

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Basically, the schemes introduced by the Modi government encouraged self-employment and entrepreneurship, provided bank loans for starting new businesses known as greenfield enterprises, and promoted the economic empowerment of marginalised groups.

One of them is the flagship program called the Stand-Up India Scheme. Under this scheme, bank branches provide loans ranging from ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore for businesses in manufacturing, services, trading, and allied agricultural sectors. The scheme requires that at least 51% of the ownership and controlling stake in the enterprise be held by a woman or an SC/ST entrepreneur. It also ensures that each bank branch supports at least one SC/ST borrower and one-woman entrepreneur, thereby strengthening financial inclusion and economic empowerment. With provisions such as credit guarantee support and a repayment period of up to 7 years, the scheme plays an important role in generating employment, encouraging self-reliance, and promoting inclusive economic growth in India. According to the latest official data available, the Stand-Up India Scheme has benefited a large number of entrepreneurs since its launch in 2016. By October 2025, banks had sanctioned loans worth about ₹62,800 crore to nearly 2.75 lakh (about 275,000) beneficiaries across the country. Of these, the majority are women entrepreneurs, with additional beneficiaries from the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) categories. Earlier data from March 2025 also shows around 2.69 lakh loan accounts sanctioned, indicating steady growth in outreach. Overall, the scheme has significantly expanded over time, both in the number of beneficiaries and the total loan amount, reflecting its role in promoting inclusive entrepreneurship and economic empowerment in India.

Apart from providing loans, which is considered empowerment and a milestone in Women's economic upliftment, the existing self-help groups were bolstered with greater financial literacy, skill development, and livelihood assistance. SHGs started by a group of village women in the entire country were turned into the 'Lakhpathi Didi Scheme'. Lakhpathi Didi is a member of an SHG

earning an annual household income of one lakh or more over at least four agricultural seasons/business cycles. The Lakhpathi initiative facilitates diversified livelihood activities by ensuring convergence across all Government departments/Ministries, the private sector, and Market players.



Fig: The working method of the Lakhpathi Didi Scheme

This scheme proceeds by identifying potential Lakhpathi Didis (women capable of earning ₹1 lakh+ annually), developing a pool of Master Trainers and Community Resource Persons (crps), provides training and capacity building to stakeholders like shgs, their federations, crps, trainers, and support staff, organizing training programs, skill development, and exposure visits for selected Didis on different livelihood models, ensuring access to learning materials and resources for self-study, Preparing individual Lakhpathi plans for each household and combine them into cluster-based business strategies, promoting product/service clusters, value chain support, and linkages with government schemes and private partners, assigning Community Resource Persons to provide continuous guidance and support to Didis and maintaining a Digital Aajeevika Register to track income and livelihood activities periodically (every 6 months or per business cycle).

The Lakhpathi Didi initiative has significantly impacted rural communities by mobilising a large network of trained individuals and potential beneficiaries. The scheme has trained 6,611 Master Trainers and 3 lakh Community Resource Persons

(CRPs), who are crucial in guiding and supporting rural women towards financial independence. Furthermore, the scheme has identified and nurtured 2.47 crore Potential Lakhpati Didis (PLDs) across the country. Additionally, 44 lakh individuals have been registered in the Digital Aajeevika Register, further enhancing the scheme's digital outreach and support mechanisms. This collective effort underscores the transformative potential of the scheme to empower women and foster sustainable livelihoods. Lakhpati Didi serves as an inspiration to the community, not solely for their income, but for their transformation journey through adopting sustainable livelihood practices (farm, non-farm or service), effectively managing resources, and achieving a decent standard of living. In the domains of science and space, Indian women are making remarkable strides and achieving new heights. They contributed significantly to the success of Chandrayaan-3, showcasing both India's scientific strength and its commitment to gender inclusion. India also has the highest number of female pilots globally and ranks among the top countries for women graduating in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). This reflects the emergence of a strong, confident, and ambitious Nari Shakti in the country.

Driven by the vision of inculcating self-confidence in women and fostering self-identity, Narendra Modi's vision is guided by impactful reforms that directly improve their daily lives.

- The abolition of Triple Talaq has ensured dignity and legal protection for Muslim women.
- The proposal to raise the legal marriage age for women from 18 to 21 aims to support better education and employment prospects.
- Extending maternity leave to 26 weeks has positioned India among progressive nations in supporting working mothers.
- Additionally, the removal of Article 35A has granted women in Jammu & Kashmir equal property and legal rights, correcting long-standing inequalities.

Overall, a combination of policy reforms, financial support, skill development, and social empowerment has significantly improved the status of women in India. These initiatives not only promote economic independence but also build confidence and leadership among women. As more women participate in entrepreneurship, science, and decision-making, India moves closer to achieving true gender equality and inclusive development, reflecting the rising strength of Nari Shakti.





From Beneficiary to Builder

The Modi Model of Women-Led Growth

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“Any nation that ignores the strength of its women limits the strength of its future.” In modern India, this idea has found its strongest political expression under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Over the last decade, women empowerment has not remained confined to symbolic speeches or welfare promises; it has become deeply integrated into India’s economic vision, governance structure, and developmental strategy. Modi’s approach toward women empowerment is significant because it treats women not merely as beneficiaries of government support, but as active architects of India’s transformation. This shift from “women’s development” to “women-led development” has redefined policy thinking in contemporary India.

The importance of this transformation becomes clearer when viewed against India's social reality. For decades, millions of women remained excluded from financial systems, property ownership, education, healthcare access, and formal employment. In rural India, especially, women carried immense responsibility without receiving economic recognition or institutional support. Narendra Modi's political understanding recognised that no nation aspiring to become a global economic power could succeed while half its population remained structurally underrepresented. Therefore, women empowerment under his government was designed not only as a social reform agenda, but also as an economic growth strategy.

One of the most important policy interventions in this direction was financial inclusion. Through Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, crores of women entered the banking system for the first time. This was more than an administrative achievement; it altered power structures within households. A woman with a bank account gains financial identity, transactional freedom, and direct access to state benefits. The introduction of Direct Benefit Transfers ensured that subsidies and welfare support reached women without middlemen or leakages. Economically, this expanded India's formal financial ecosystem, increased savings participation, and strengthened rural consumption patterns. Politically, it signalled the emergence of women as independent economic stakeholders within the democratic framework.

The Modi government also understood a critical reality often ignored in policy debates: dignity itself is an economic factor. The Ujjwala Yojana and Swachh Bharat Mission were not merely welfare schemes but structural interventions aimed at improving women's productivity, health, and safety. Earlier, rural women spent hours collecting firewood and cooking in smoke-filled kitchens,

leading to severe respiratory diseases and loss of productive time. By providing LPG connections, the government improved public health while simultaneously increasing women's efficiency and participation in economic activities. Similarly, access to toilets under Swachh Bharat strengthened women's safety and privacy, as well as girls' school attendance. Such reforms demonstrate that infrastructure linked to women's dignity directly contributes to human capital development and economic productivity.

Another defining feature of Modi's governance model has been the emphasis on women entrepreneurship. Through Mudra Yojana, Stand Up India, and support for self-help groups, women received institutional encouragement to become job creators rather than passive dependents. Across villages and small towns, women began establishing small enterprises in textiles, food processing, handicrafts, beauty services, and digital commerce. This grassroots entrepreneurial expansion produced a multiplier effect: increased household income, stronger local markets, and enhanced rural purchasing power. In developmental economics, such localised economic participation is essential for sustainable growth because it decentralises opportunity and strengthens domestic demand from the bottom upward.

Perhaps the most politically significant aspect of Modi's women empowerment agenda has been its ideological framing. Earlier governments often approached women's issues primarily through welfare language. Modi reframed the discourse around aspiration, capability, and national strength. The phrase "Nari Shakti" became more than rhetoric because it positioned women at the centre of India's future ambitions. Whether through promoting women in STEM fields, encouraging female participation in the armed forces, or supporting women-led start-ups, the government projected empowerment as a symbol of national

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confidence rather than social charity. This ideological shift matters because societies evolve not only through policies but through narratives that redefine public imagination.

The passage of the Women's Reservation Bill further reflected this broader political vision. Increasing women's representation in legislative institutions is not simply about numerical inclusion; it changes policy priorities and democratic culture itself. Greater representation ensures a stronger focus on education, healthcare, sanitation, nutrition, and local governance issues that directly shape grassroots development. Modi's support for this reform signalled recognition that political empowerment remains incomplete without institutional participation in decision-making structures.

Critics may debate implementation gaps or uneven outcomes, which is natural in a democracy of India's scale and complexity. However, the larger direction of policy under Modi remains unmistakable: women's empowerment has been integrated into the national development narrative at every level, economic, political, social, and cultural. This integrated approach distinguishes his governance

model from the fragmented welfare politics of the past.

The long-term significance of this transformation lies in its economic implications. Economists worldwide agree that higher female participation in education, entrepreneurship, and the workforce directly strengthens GDP growth, innovation, and social stability. India's rise as a global economic power, therefore, depends substantially on the rise of Indian women. By linking women empowerment with national development, Narendra Modi attempted to create a model where social justice and economic growth reinforce each other rather than exist as separate policy goals.

In many ways, the story of women empowerment under Narendra Modi is ultimately the story of India redefining its developmental identity. It is a recognition that the future of the nation cannot be built through infrastructure alone, but through the empowerment of human potential. And among the greatest reservoirs of that potential are the millions of Indian women who are no longer waiting to participate in India's progress they are leading it.

From Panchayat to Parliament

How Women Are Reshaping Indian Democracy

**Shrilakshmi
Matadamoole**

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The progress of any nation depends not only on economic growth or technological advancement, but also on the equal participation of all its citizens in governance and decision-making. Women constitute nearly half of society, and therefore, their active involvement in leadership, administration, and public life is essential for sustainable nation-building. A country cannot aspire to become strong, inclusive, and prosperous if women remain underrepresented in positions of power. In recent years, India has witnessed a significant transformation in this area, with increasing participation of women in governance and leadership. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, several reforms and initiatives have aimed at empowering women politically, socially, and economically, thereby strengthening the foundations of good governance.



PANCHAYAT BHAWAN

Women and Governance: A New Era of Participation

Governance is the process through which decisions are made and implemented for the welfare of society. For governance to be effective and democratic, it must reflect the voices of all sections of society, including women. Historically, women in many countries, including India, faced barriers such as social norms, limited education, financial dependence, and lack of political opportunities. However, modern India is gradually overcoming these challenges.

Over the last decade, women's participation in public life has expanded significantly. Women are now more visible as lawmakers, administrators, entrepreneurs, educators, police officers, and community leaders. Their growing presence has heightened sensitivity to issues such as health, sanitation, education, child welfare, nutrition, and safety. Women leaders often focus on grassroots concerns and long-term social development, which are crucial to nation-building.

The government led by Narendra Modi has repeatedly emphasised the slogan "Women-led Development" rather than merely "Women Development." This shift in language reflects a deeper vision: women are not only beneficiaries of welfare schemes, but active architects of India's future.

Women as Leaders in Local Bodies

One of the strongest examples of women's leadership in India can be seen in Panchayati Raj Institutions and urban local bodies. Reservation policies for women in local governance enabled lakhs of women to enter public life. Today, women sarpanches, councillors, and mayors are making important contributions in villages, towns, and cities.

Many women representatives have improved drinking water systems, sanitation facilities, school infrastructure, roads, and health awareness in their communities. Their leadership often leads to more

transparent and people-centred administration. Women leaders at the grassroots level are also inspiring younger generations to participate in politics and public service.

The central government has supported this trend through programs that promote rural development, digital governance, and financial inclusion. Schemes like Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana enabled millions of women to open bank accounts, giving them greater financial independence and the ability to participate confidently in public affairs. Similarly, Swachh Bharat Mission improved sanitation in rural areas, a matter closely connected to women's dignity and health.

Women in Administration and Civil Services.

Women are increasingly entering India's civil services, judiciary, armed forces, police departments, and public administration. Their growing representation in these sectors has enriched governance with professionalism, empathy, and discipline. Women officers have demonstrated excellence in disaster management, law enforcement, policy implementation, and social welfare administration.

The present government has introduced reforms that create more opportunities for women in institutions once considered male-dominated. Women are now serving in combat roles in the armed forces, flying fighter aircraft, and joining military academies in greater numbers. Such changes symbolise a modern India that values talent over stereotypes.

In policing, the government has encouraged the recruitment of women personnel to improve public safety and gender-sensitive law enforcement. The expansion of women's help desks, fast-track legal mechanisms, and awareness campaigns also reflects the importance of women's perspectives in administration.

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Under the leadership of Narendra Modi, women's empowerment has received renewed momentum through structural reforms and targeted schemes.
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Women in National Institutions and Politics

At the national level, India has seen several women occupy high offices, including the President, the Finance Minister, the Governors, the Speakers, and the Cabinet Ministers. This demonstrates the growing acceptance of women as capable leaders in key institutions, and today, we have created history by having the first-ever women-led FTA, which is a landmark moment for the whole of Bharath.

Under Narendra Modi, the Union Cabinet has included women ministers handling important portfolios, including finance, textiles, women and child development, and external affairs. Their presence sends a powerful message that governance must be inclusive and merit-based.

One of the most significant recent reforms has been the proposal of the Women's Reservation Bill, widely known as Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. This landmark legislation aims to reserve seats for women in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies. It is considered a historic step toward ensuring stronger female representation in lawmaking institutions. By creating space for women in legislatures, the reform could transform policymaking and deepen democracy.

Policy Reforms Enabling Leadership Pathways.

True leadership emerges when social barriers are removed and opportunities are expanded. In this regard, policy reforms play a critical role. The Modi government has introduced several schemes that empower women in education, health, entrepreneurship, and financial independence each of which contributes to leadership development.

Education and Skill Development.

Education is the foundation of leadership. Campaigns like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao promoted awareness about the value of the girl child and girls' education. Increased enrollment of girls in schools and higher education creates a pipeline of future leaders. Skill development initiatives, digital literacy programs, and entrepreneurship training have enabled women to participate in the modern economy. Educated and skilled women are more

likely to enter governance, administration, and business leadership roles.

Economic Empowerment.

Financial independence strengthens confidence and decision-making power. Schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana have supported women entrepreneurs by providing access to credit. Self-help groups and rural livelihood missions have also empowered millions of women economically.

When women earn, save, and manage businesses, they gain greater influence within families and communities. Economic empowerment often becomes the first step toward social and political leadership.

Health and Dignity

Women can lead effectively only when they enjoy health, safety, and dignity. Programs such as Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana provided LPG connections to millions of households, reducing the burden of smoke-filled kitchens on women. Maternal health schemes, nutrition drives, and sanitation campaigns have improved the quality of life for women across India.

Healthy women are better able to pursue education, careers, and public responsibilities. Thus, welfare policies indirectly strengthen leadership pathways.

Women as Nation-Builders.

Nation-building is not limited to politics or administration. It includes shaping society, values, economy, and future generations. Women contribute to nation-building as teachers, scientists, doctors, soldiers, entrepreneurs, artists, farmers, and homemakers. Their unpaid care work sustains families, while their professional achievements drive national growth. India's rise as a global power requires harnessing the talent of every citizen. Women's leadership adds diversity of thought, a stronger social focus, and ethical decision-making. Countries with higher women's participation in governance often perform better in areas such as education, healthcare, and community development. The vision of Viksit Bharat, a developed India, cannot be realised without women at the centre of progress.

Recognising this, the present government has increasingly celebrated women achievers in science, sports, startups, diplomacy, and defence. Such recognition motivates society to break old stereotypes.

Good Governance and Women Empowerment

Good governance means transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, responsiveness, and justice. Women's participation naturally strengthens these values. When women are included in governance, policies become more balanced and representative. Issues once neglected receive attention, and institutions become more humane. The leadership of Narendra Modi has often highlighted that women's empowerment is not a side issue but a national priority. Whether through financial inclusion, sanitation, housing ownership, entrepreneurship support, or political

representation, many initiatives have aimed to bring women into the mainstream of governance and development.

While challenges such as gender bias, unequal opportunities, and safety concerns still remain, the direction of reform has been positive. Continued efforts in education, mentorship, legal reforms, and social awareness are necessary to ensure that more women rise to positions of leadership.

So to conclude, Women in governance, leadership, and nation-building are not merely symbols of equality; they are engines of progress. Their growing participation in local bodies, administration, and national institutions is reshaping India into a more inclusive and dynamic democracy. Policy reforms that expand education, economic independence, health, and political representation are opening new leadership pathways for millions of women. India's recent progress in this field reflects a broader commitment to good governance and inclusive development. Under the leadership of Narendra Modi, women's empowerment has received renewed momentum through structural reforms and targeted schemes. As more women lead villages, cities, ministries, and institutions, they strengthen not only democracy but the very spirit of nation-building. A truly developed India will be one where women do not merely participate in governance, but help define its future.



Half the Nation, Full Potential

The Economic Case for Women-Led Development

Shambhavi Shree
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“ It is not possible for a
bird to fly on one wing;
similarly, there is no
chance of the welfare of
the world unless the
condition of women is
improved.”

– Swami Vivekananda



Can a nation truly develop if half of its population remains underrepresented in shaping its future? As India marches towards the ambitious goal of Viksit Bharat 2047, this question becomes central to its development narrative. The answer lies in a transformative shift from viewing women as beneficiaries of welfare or merely recipients of state support to recognising them as leaders of change, as active agents driving economic and social transformation. Global institutions, like the World Bank and the United Nations, emphasise that nations that actively integrate women into decision-making and the economic framework achieve more sustainable and equitable outcomes. In the Indian context, this shift is increasingly reflected in targeted policy interventions and grassroots initiatives. As the nation enters Amrit Kaal, women are no longer at the margins of development; they are steadily emerging at its forefront, shaping the trajectory of a confident and self-reliant Bharat.

Why Women Led Development accelerates National growth

Women-led development is not merely a question of social justice; it is fundamentally an issue of economic efficiency and development maximisation. In a country like India, where nearly half the population is women, their limited participation in economic structures represents underutilised human capital. Studies suggest that increasing female labour force participation can enhance GDP growth. When women gain access to income, education, and decision-making power, they are more likely to invest in family health, nutrition and education. This creates a cycle of human capital formation that strengthens the very foundation of long-term national development. Thus, women are not just contributors to the economy but architects of future sustainability.

Furthermore, women's participation introduces a form of developmental diversification. Economies dominated by homogeneous decision-making structures often suffer from inefficiencies and blind

spots. The inclusion of women in entrepreneurship, governance, and innovation ecosystems enhances diversity of thought and perspective, leading to more resilient and adaptive economic models. Research highlighted by UN Women indicates that gender-balanced institutions tend to achieve better governance outcomes, greater transparency, and more inclusive policy design. Another critical dimension is that India is at a pivotal moment, with its working-age population expanding, but this advantage can only be realised if women are actively involved in the workforce. Women-led development will ensure that the demographic potential is fully harnessed, translating population strength into productive capacity.

Thus, women-led development must be understood not just as a policy goal, but as a central pillar of India's growth strategy. When women rise, the household stabilises; when millions rise, the nation transforms.

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The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 will not be realised through infrastructure and innovation alone, but through inclusion, participation, and shared progress.

Government Initiatives: From Policy to Practice

India's policy framework on women-led development reflects a decisive shift from symbolic empowerment to structural transformation. Through the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, which has enabled millions of women to access banking services, the government has thus initiated financial inclusion of women through financial autonomy. Building on this, the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana has expanded access to credit, allowing women to establish and scale micro, small, and medium enterprises, thus strengthening their role as economic agents rather than dependents.

At the grassroots level, the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) has transformed rural women into organised Self-Help Groups, enhancing collective entrepreneurship and localised economic growth. Similarly, initiatives such as Startup India are enabling the enhancement of women founders in

innovation-driven sectors, gradually diversifying India's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Schemes like Ujjwala Yojana and Swachh Bharat Mission focus on essential aspects of health, sanitation, and safety. These interventions create enabling conditions for women to participate more actively in social and economic life.

These initiatives are not just welfare interventions; they are instruments of structural transformation. By enhancing economic participation, strengthening decision-making power, and ensuring social dignity, they are positioning women at the centre of India's development trajectory and reinforcing the foundation of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Challenges and Road Ahead

Despite significant progress in recent years, achieving women-led development in India still faces several challenges. One of the major issues is the low participation of women in the workforce. Many women are engaged in unpaid domestic work, and there is often a gap between their skills and available job opportunities. Safety concerns in public spaces and workplaces also act as barriers to women's full participation in economic activities. While government schemes have improved access to resources such as bank accounts and loans, many women still lack digital literacy, financial awareness, and adequate market access, which restricts the growth of their businesses. Looking ahead, it is important to focus on practical solutions. Skill development programs need to be aligned with current industry demands, and more efforts should be made to improve digital access for women. Encouraging education, especially in technical and professional fields, can open new opportunities. At the same time, society needs to work towards changing mindsets and promoting gender equality.

The future of women-led development depends not only on providing opportunities but also on ensuring that women have the confidence, support, and freedom to use them.

Conclusion

As India stands at the threshold of a historic transformation, the journey toward Viksit Bharat

2047, compels us to rethink a fundamental question, not whether women should be included in development, but whether development itself can exist without their leadership. The answer is clear: a nation cannot reach its full potential while half its population remains on the margins of decision-making and economic growth.

Women-led development is not just a policy direction; it is a redefinition of India's growth story. From financial inclusion to entrepreneurship, from grassroots leadership to emerging sectors, Indian women are steadily reshaping the contours of the nation's progress. Their contributions extend beyond economic metrics; they strengthen families, build resilient communities, and create a more balanced and equitable society.

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 will not be realised through infrastructure and innovation alone, but through inclusion, participation, and shared progress. In this journey, women are not passive beneficiaries; they are the driving force of transformation.

Ultimately, the rise of India will be measured not just by how fast it grows, but by how inclusively it grows and that story will be written, led, and sustained by its women.

नारी शक्ति, राष्ट्र शक्ति

मोदी सरकार का नारी शक्ति दृष्टिकोण और विकसित भारत

शिवांगी खारवाल

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अखिल भारतीय विद्यार्थी परिषद
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भारत के विकास विमर्श में पिछले एक दशक में एक महत्वपूर्ण परिवर्तन देखने को मिला है। पहले महिलाओं को मुख्यतः कल्याणकारी योजनाओं की लाभार्थी के रूप में देखा जाता था, लेकिन आज उन्हें विकास की सक्रिय भागीदार, परिवर्तन की वाहक और राष्ट्र पुनर्निर्माण की केंद्रीय शक्ति के रूप में स्थापित किया जा रहा है। यह परिवर्तन केवल नीतिगत नहीं अपितु दृष्टिकोण का बदलाव है यह बदलाव है महिला विकास से महिला-नेतृत्व विकास की ओर का।



प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व में “नारी शक्ति” को केवल सामाजिक न्याय या कल्याण के दायरे में सीमित नहीं रखा गया, बल्कि उसे आर्थिक, राजनीतिक, सामाजिक और राष्ट्रीय विकास के केंद्र में रखा गया। आज महिलाएं केवल योजनाओं की प्राप्तकर्ता नहीं बल्कि निर्णय लेने वाली, उद्यमी, जनप्रतिनिधि और नेतृत्वकर्ता के रूप में उभर रही हैं। यही सोच विकसित भारत 2047 के संकल्प को मजबूत आधार प्रदान करती है।

महिला-नेतृत्व विकास : कल्याण से नेतृत्व तक:-

महिला-नेतृत्व विकास का मूल भाव यह है कि महिलाओं को केवल सशक्त नहीं किया जाए, बल्कि उन्हें विकास प्रक्रिया का नेतृत्व सौंपा जाए। यह सोच परंपरागत कल्याणकारी मॉडल से आगे बढ़ती है, जहां महिलाएं योजनाओं की उपभोक्ता मात्र होती थीं। अब उन्हें नीति निर्माण, उद्यमिता, प्रशासन और सामाजिक परिवर्तन की अगुवाई करने वाली शक्ति माना जा रहा है।

प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने बार-बार इस बात पर जोर दिया है कि भारत की प्रगति नारी शक्ति की भागीदारी के बिना अधूरी है। यही कारण है कि सरकार की नीतियों में महिलाओं को केंद्र में रखते हुए शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, वित्तीय समावेशन, उद्यमिता और नेतृत्व से जुड़े कई संरचनात्मक सुधार किए गए

आज महिलाएं स्वयं सहायता समूहों के माध्यम से गांवों की अर्थव्यवस्था बदल रही हैं, स्टार्टअप के जरिए नवाचार ला रही हैं, पंचायतों और शहरी निकायों में निर्णय ले रही हैं और राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर नेतृत्वकारी भूमिकाएं निभा रही हैं। यह परिवर्तन भारत के सामाजिक ढांचे में गहराई तक असर डाल रहा है।

नारी शक्ति वंदन अधिनियम : राजनीतिक प्रतिनिधित्व में ऐतिहासिक बदलाव:-

महिला-नेतृत्व विकास के संदर्भ में नारी शक्ति वंदन अधिनियम एक ऐतिहासिक कदम है। यह केवल आरक्षण का प्रावधान नहीं, बल्कि भारतीय लोकतंत्र में महिलाओं की निर्णायक भागीदारी सुनिश्चित करने का संवैधानिक प्रयास है।

संसद और राज्य विधानसभाओं में महिलाओं के लिए 33 प्रतिशत आरक्षण का प्रावधान लंबे समय से लंबित मांग थी। इस अधिनियम ने महिलाओं को नीति निर्माण और शासन में व्यापक अवसर देने का मार्ग प्रशस्त किया है। इससे राजनीतिक प्रतिनिधित्व मात्र नहीं बढ़ेगा, बल्कि निर्णयों में महिलाओं के दृष्टिकोण, अनुभव और प्राथमिकताओं को भी स्थान मिलेगा।

राजनीति में महिलाओं की बढ़ती भागीदारी का असर शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, पोषण, सुरक्षा और सामाजिक न्याय जैसे मुद्दों पर भी पड़ेगा। यह अधिनियम आने वाले दशकों में भारत के लोकतांत्रिक चरित्र को अधिक समावेशी और संतुलित बनाने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभा

सकता है।

महिलाओं का आर्थिक सशक्तिकरण : आत्मनिर्भरता से नेतृत्व तक:-

महिला सशक्तिकरण की सबसे बड़ी आधारशिला आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता है। मोदी सरकार की कई पहलें महिलाओं को आर्थिक रूप से मजबूत बनाने पर केंद्रित रही हैं।

जन धन योजना के माध्यम से करोड़ों महिलाओं को बैंकिंग व्यवस्था से जोड़ना वित्तीय समावेशन की दिशा में क्रांतिकारी कदम रहा। बैंक खाते, प्रत्यक्ष लाभ अंतरण और डिजिटल भुगतान ने महिलाओं को आर्थिक निर्णयों में अधिक सक्षम बनाया है।

मुद्रा योजना के जरिए लाखों महिलाओं को बिना गारंटी ऋण मिला, जिससे वे छोटे व्यवसाय, स्वरोजगार और उद्यमिता की दिशा में आगे बढ़ सकीं। महिला उद्यमियों के लिए यह केवल वित्तीय सहायता नहीं, बल्कि आत्मविश्वास और नेतृत्व का माध्यम बना।

स्वयं सहायता समूहों (SHGs) ने ग्रामीण भारत में आर्थिक और सामाजिक बदलाव की नई कहानी लिखी है। लाखों महिलाएं इन समूहों के माध्यम से बचत, उत्पादन, विपणन और सामुदायिक नेतृत्व में सक्रिय भूमिका निभा रही हैं।

आज महिला-नेतृत्व स्टार्टअप, कृषि-आधारित उद्यम, हस्तशिल्प, डिजिटल सेवाएं और सूक्ष्म उद्योग भारत की अर्थव्यवस्था में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दे रहे हैं। इससे महिला श्रम भागीदारी और आर्थिक आत्मनिर्भरता दोनों को नई गति मिली है।

सामाजिक परिवर्तन : सम्मान, स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा का नया आधार:-

महिला-नेतृत्व विकास केवल आर्थिक या राजनीतिक आयाम तक सीमित नहीं है। सामाजिक गरिमा, स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा भी इसके प्रमुख स्तंभ हैं। स्वच्छता और सम्मान के क्षेत्र में शौचालय निर्माण जैसे कदमों ने करोड़ों महिलाओं के जीवन में बदलाव लाया। यह सुविधा केवल स्वच्छता का विषय नहीं, बल्कि गरिमा, सुरक्षा और स्वास्थ्य से जुड़ा मुद्दा है। उज्वला जैसी लोक कल्याणकारी योजनाओं ने महिलाओं को धुएं से मुक्ति देकर उनके स्वास्थ्य और जीवन-स्तर में सुधार किया है। मातृ स्वास्थ्य, पोषण, टीकाकरण और स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं तक पहुंच में भी व्यापक सुधार देखने को मिला है। शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में बेटियों की भागीदारी बढ़ाने और स्कूल छोड़ने की दर कम करने के प्रयासों ने सकारात्मक प्रभाव डाला है। उच्च शिक्षा, कौशल विकास और डिजिटल शिक्षा तक पहुंच ने नई पीढ़ी की महिलाओं के लिए अवसरों के नए द्वार खोले हैं। सबसे महत्वपूर्ण बदलाव सामाजिक सोच में आया है जहाँ महिलाओं को अब केवल पारिवारिक भूमिकाओं तक सीमित देखने की मानसिकता धीरे-धीरे बदल रही है बल्कि समाज में उन्हें नेतृत्वकर्ता, निर्णयकर्ता और

कल्याण योजनाओं की सीमित सोच से आगे बढ़कर महिलाओं को नेतृत्व, निर्णय और विकास के केंद्र में रखने का प्रयास भारत की नई दिशा को दर्शाता है।

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परिवर्तनकारी शक्ति के रूप में स्वीकार्यता बढ़ी है।

शासन, नेतृत्व और राष्ट्र निर्माण में महिलाओं की बढ़ती भूमिका:-

भारत में महिलाओं की भागीदारी अब केवल निजी या सामुदायिक क्षेत्र तक सीमित नहीं रही। शासन और सार्वजनिक जीवन में उनकी भूमिका लगातार मजबूत हो रही है। पंचायती राज संस्थाओं और स्थानीय निकायों में महिलाओं की भागीदारी ने जमीनी लोकतंत्र को नई दिशा दी है। कई स्थानों पर महिला प्रतिनिधियों ने जल प्रबंधन, शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और सामाजिक सुधारों में प्रभावी नेतृत्व दिया है।

प्रशासनिक सेवाओं, सुरक्षा बलों, न्यायिक संस्थाओं और नीति निर्माण में भी महिलाओं की उपस्थिति बढ़ी है। यह संकेत है कि महिला नेतृत्व अब अपवाद नहीं, बल्कि नई सामान्य स्थिति बन रहा है। नीतिगत सुधारों ने महिलाओं के लिए नेतृत्व के अवसरों का विस्तार किया है। यह केवल प्रतिनिधित्व का प्रश्न नहीं, बल्कि राष्ट्रीय विकास की गुणवत्ता और समावेशिता का भी प्रश्न है। जब निर्णय प्रक्रिया में महिलाओं की भागीदारी बढ़ती है, तो नीतियां अधिक संतुलित, संवेदनशील और प्रभावी बनती हैं।

महिला-नेतृत्व विकास और विकसित भारत 2047 का विजन:-

विकसित भारत 2047 का लक्ष्य केवल आर्थिक महाशक्ति बनने तक सीमित नहीं है। यह एक ऐसे भारत का विजन है जो समावेशी, समानतापूर्ण और अवसर-आधारित हो। इस विजन के केंद्र में महिलाओं की भागीदारी अनिवार्य है।

भारत की जनसांख्यिकीय शक्ति का बड़ा हिस्सा महिलाएं हैं। यदि यह शक्ति शिक्षित, स्वस्थ, आर्थिक रूप से सक्षम और नेतृत्वकारी बने, तो राष्ट्रीय विकास की गति कई गुना बढ़ सकती है।

महिला-नेतृत्व विकास का प्रभाव बहुस्तरीय होता है। एक सशक्त

महिला केवल अपना जीवन नहीं बदलती, वह परिवार, समुदाय और आने वाली पीढ़ियों को भी प्रभावित करती है। इसलिए महिलाओं में निवेश वास्तव में राष्ट्र के भविष्य में निवेश है।

विकसित भारत 2047 की दिशा में महिला-नेतृत्व विकास:-

सामाजिक न्याय, आर्थिक उत्पादकता, लोकतांत्रिक भागीदारी और राष्ट्रीय स्थिरता—चारों को मजबूत करता है। यही इसे भारत की विकास रणनीति का केंद्रीय तत्व बनाता है।

भारत में महिला-नेतृत्व विकास केवल एक नीति अवधारणा नहीं, बल्कि एक परिवर्तनकारी राष्ट्रीय दृष्टि के रूप में उभरा है। t

नारी शक्ति वंदन अधिनियम से लेकर आर्थिक सशक्तिकरण, सामाजिक सम्मान, शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और शासन में बढ़ती भागीदारी तक—यह स्पष्ट है कि महिलाएं अब विकास की दर्शक नहीं, बल्कि उसकी निर्णायक चालक हैं।

यह परिवर्तन केवल महिलाओं के लिए नहीं, पूरे राष्ट्र के लिए महत्वपूर्ण है। क्योंकि जब नारी शक्ति नेतृत्व करती है, तो विकास अधिक समावेशी होता है, समाज अधिक संतुलित बनता है और राष्ट्र अधिक सशक्त होता है।

विकसित भारत 2047 का सपना तभी साकार होगा जब भारत की नारी शक्ति केवल सहभागी के साथ-साथ उस यात्रा की अग्रणी बने। आज महिला-नेतृत्व विकास उसी मजबूत भविष्य की आधारशिला रख रहा है।

सहभागी नहीं, नेतृत्वकर्ता मोदी युग में महिला-नेतृत्व क्रांति

डॉ. वृंदा काल्हेर

प्रदेश प्रमुख, पॉलिसी एंड रिसर्च
भाजपा युवा मोर्चा, हरियाणा

भारत आज एक ऐतिहासिक परिवर्तन के दौर से गुजर रहा है—एक ऐसा परिवर्तन, जहाँ विकास की धारा केवल महिलाओं तक पहुँच नहीं रही, बल्कि महिलाएँ स्वयं उस धारा की दिशा तय कर रही हैं। यह नया भारत है, जहाँ नारी अब “सहभागी” नहीं, बल्कि “नेतृत्वकर्ता” है। प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व में “महिला-नेतृत्व विकास” का यह विज़न न केवल नीतियों तक सीमित है, बल्कि यह एक व्यापक सामाजिक क्रांति का रूप ले चुका है।

आज देश की करोड़ों महिलाएँ—गाँव से लेकर शहर तक—आर्थिक, सामाजिक और राजनीतिक क्षेत्रों में अपनी पहचान बना रही हैं। वे निर्णय ले रही हैं, उद्यम खड़े कर रही हैं, शासन चला रही हैं और राष्ट्र निर्माण की प्रक्रिया को नई दिशा दे रही हैं। “सशक्त नारी, सशक्त भारत” अब केवल एक नारा नहीं, बल्कि विकसित भारत 2047 की सबसे मजबूत आधारशिला बन चुका है।



महिला-केन्द्रित से महिला-नेतृत्व विकास तक का परिवर्तन

स्वतंत्रता के बाद दशकों तक महिलाओं के लिए बनाई गई नीतियाँ मुख्यतः कल्याणकारी (Welfare-Oriented) रही हैं। इनका उद्देश्य महिलाओं को सहायता देना था, लेकिन उन्हें निर्णय लेने वाली शक्ति के रूप में स्थापित करने की दिशा में सीमित प्रयास हुए।

मोदी सरकार ने इस सोच को बदलते हुए महिलाओं को “राष्ट्र निर्माण की सक्रिय भागीदार” के रूप में स्थापित किया। “सबका साथ, सबका विकास, सबका विश्वास और सबका प्रयास” के मंत्र में महिलाओं की भागीदारी को केंद्र में रखा गया।

आज महिलाएँ केवल योजनाओं की लाभार्थी नहीं हैं, बल्कि:

- उद्यमी (Entrepreneurs)
- नीति निर्धारक (Policy Makers)
- नवप्रवर्तक (Innovators)
- और सामाजिक नेतृत्वकर्ता (Community Leaders)

बनकर उभर रही हैं।

यह परिवर्तन केवल नीतिगत नहीं, बल्कि मानसिकता का भी है — जहाँ नारी को “कमजोर वर्ग” नहीं बल्कि “शक्ति का स्रोत” माना जा रहा है।

आर्थिक सशक्तिकरण: आत्मनिर्भर नारी से आत्मनिर्भर भारत

किसी भी समाज में वास्तविक सशक्तिकरण का आधार आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता होती है। मोदी सरकार ने इस दिशा में कई ऐतिहासिक कदम उठाए हैं।

(i) वित्तीय समावेशन: जन धन से जन सशक्तिकरण तक

प्रधानमंत्री जन धन योजना के अंतर्गत 50 करोड़ से अधिक बैंक खाते खोले गए, जिनमें लगभग 55% से अधिक खाते महिलाओं के नाम पर हैं। यह केवल बैंकिंग सुविधा नहीं, बल्कि आर्थिक पहचान और स्वतंत्रता का प्रतीक है।

(ii) मुद्रा योजना और महिला उद्यमिता

प्रधानमंत्री मुद्रा योजना के तहत दिए गए कुल ऋणों में से लगभग 68-70% लाभार्थी महिलाएँ हैं। इससे लाखों महिलाओं ने छोटे व्यवसाय शुरू किए — जैसे:

- सिलाई केंद्र
- ब्यूटी पार्लर
- फूड प्रोसेसिंग यूनिट
- डिजिटल सेवाएँ

यह आंकड़ा स्पष्ट करता है कि महिलाएँ आज job seekers नहीं, job creators बन रही हैं।

(iii) स्वयं सहायता समूह (SHGs) की क्रांति

भारत में आज 8 करोड़ से अधिक महिलाएँ स्वयं सहायता समूहों से जुड़ी हैं। इन समूहों ने ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था को नई ऊर्जा दी है।

“लखपति दीदी” जैसे अभियान ने महिलाओं को सालाना 1 लाख रुपये से अधिक आय अर्जित करने की दिशा में प्रेरित किया है।

(iv) महिला श्रम भागीदारी में वृद्धि

हाल के वर्षों में महिला श्रम भागीदारी दर (FLFP) में उल्लेखनीय सुधार हुआ है। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में यह वृद्धि विशेष रूप से देखने को मिली है, जहाँ महिलाएँ कृषि, पशुपालन, और सूक्ष्म उद्योगों में सक्रिय भूमिका निभा रही हैं।

सामाजिक परिवर्तन: गरिमा, स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा का नया युग

महिला सशक्तिकरण केवल आर्थिक क्षेत्र तक सीमित नहीं है, बल्कि सामाजिक परिवर्तन इसका महत्वपूर्ण आधार है।

(i) गरिमा और स्वच्छता: शौचालय से सम्मान तक

स्वच्छ भारत मिशन के तहत देश में 11 करोड़ से अधिक शौचालयों का निर्माण हुआ। इसका सबसे बड़ा लाभ महिलाओं को मिला:

- खुले में शौच से मुक्ति
- सुरक्षा और गरिमा में वृद्धि
- स्वास्थ्य संबंधी जोखिमों में कमी

(ii) उज्ज्वला योजना: धुएँ से मुक्ति

प्रधानमंत्री उज्ज्वला योजना के तहत 9.5 करोड़ से अधिक गैस कनेक्शन दिए गए। इससे महिलाओं को:

- धुएँ से होने वाली बीमारियों से राहत
- समय की बचत
- और बेहतर जीवन गुणवत्ता मिली

(iii) स्वास्थ्य और पोषण

- आयुष्मान भारत योजना के तहत करोड़ों महिलाओं को मुफ्त स्वास्थ्य सेवाएँ मिलीं
- मातृत्व लाभ योजना ने गर्भवती महिलाओं को आर्थिक सहायता दी
- पोषण अभियान ने कुपोषण के खिलाफ लड़ाई को मजबूत किया

(iv) शिक्षा और सामाजिक दृष्टिकोण

“बेटी बचाओ, बेटी पढ़ाओ” अभियान ने समाज में एक सकारात्मक संदेश दिया।

आज:

- बालिका शिक्षा दर में वृद्धि हुई है
- उच्च शिक्षा में लड़कियों की भागीदारी लगातार बढ़ रही है

यह केवल आंकड़ों का बदलाव नहीं, बल्कि समाज की सोच में बदलाव है — जहाँ बेटी अब “बोझ” नहीं बल्कि “भविष्य” मानी जा रही है।



शासन और नेतृत्व में महिलाओं की बढ़ती भूमिका

महिलाओं का सशक्तिकरण तब पूर्ण होता है जब वे निर्णय लेने की प्रक्रिया का हिस्सा बनती हैं।

(i) स्थानीय निकायों में नेतृत्व

पंचायती राज संस्थाओं में 33% से बढ़ाकर कई राज्यों में 50% तक आरक्षण ने महिलाओं को नेतृत्व का अवसर दिया। आज लाखों महिलाएँ:

- सरपंच
- जिला परिषद सदस्य
- पार्षद के रूप में प्रभावी भूमिका निभा रही हैं।

(ii) संसद और विधानसभाओं में भागीदारी

संसद और विधानसभाओं में महिलाओं की भागीदारी महिलाओं की राजनीतिक सहभागिता को सशक्त करने की दिशा में हालिया प्रयास एक महत्वपूर्ण मील का पत्थर हैं। इससे लोकतांत्रिक संस्थाओं में महिलाओं की उपस्थिति और भूमिका और अधिक मजबूत होगी, जिससे भारत का लोकतंत्र अधिक प्रतिनिधित्वपूर्ण और समावेशी

(iii) प्रशासन और राष्ट्रीय संस्थानों में योगदान

आज महिलाएँ:

- सिविल सेवाओं में
- सशस्त्र बलों में
- न्यायपालिका में महत्वपूर्ण पदों पर कार्य कर रही हैं।

फाइटर पायलट से लेकर वैज्ञानिक तक, हर क्षेत्र में महिलाओं ने अपनी क्षमता का परिचय दिया है।

नारी शक्ति: विकसित भारत 2047 की आधारशिला

भारत का लक्ष्य है – 2047 तक एक विकसित राष्ट्र बनना। यह लक्ष्य तभी संभव है जब देश की आधी आबादी पूरी क्षमता से योगदान दे।

महिला-नेतृत्व विकास:

- आर्थिक वृद्धि को गति देता है
- सामाजिक समरसता को मजबूत करता है
- और लोकतंत्र को अधिक प्रतिनिधिक बनाता है

एक अध्ययन के अनुसार, यदि महिलाओं की श्रम भागीदारी पुरुषों के बराबर हो जाए, तो भारत की GDP में 27% तक की वृद्धि संभव है। यह आँकड़ा नारी शक्ति की वास्तविक क्षमता को दर्शाता है।

महिला-नेतृत्व विकास अब एक सरकारी पहल भर नहीं रहा, बल्कि यह एक व्यापक राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन का रूप ले चुका है। यह आंदोलन हर घर में आत्मविश्वास जगा रहा है, हर गाँव में नई संभावनाएँ पैदा कर रहा है और हर शहर में महिलाओं को अपने सपनों को साकार करने का मंच दे रहा है। आज महिलाएँ केवल भागीदार नहीं, बल्कि बदलाव की वाहक बन चुकी हैं—चाहे वह शिक्षा हो, अर्थव्यवस्था, विज्ञान, राजनीति या सामाजिक नेतृत्व। उनका सशक्तिकरण ही भारत के उज्ज्वल भविष्य की सबसे मजबूत नींव है।

अब समय है कि हम सभी इस परिवर्तन के सहभागी बनें—नारी शक्ति को सम्मान दें, अवसर दें और उनके नेतृत्व को सशक्त करें। क्योंकि जब हर महिला आगे बढ़ेगी, तभी भारत सच्चे अर्थों में विकसित और आत्मनिर्भर राष्ट्र बनेगा।

BHARATIYA JANATA YUVA MORCHA

