

# Women - Led Development @ VIKSIT BHARAT



नरेंद्र मोदी अध्ययन केन्द्र  
Centre for Narendra Modi Studies (CNMS)



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Centre for Narendra Modi Studies (CNMS)

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**Women - Led Development @ VIKSIT BHARAT**

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## Editor's Note



Women's empowerment has always been an important topic in India. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has moved from women's development to women-led development. This book highlights how women have benefited from government policies and have also become key drivers of India's growth and progress. Historically, women in India have faced several challenges, including social restrictions, economic barriers, and political underrepresentation. Over time, many policies and laws have aimed to bridge these gaps, but the real transformation began with a focused approach under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. His vision has been to create a society where women are equal partners in the nation's development, rather than just beneficiaries of welfare schemes.

This Souviner explores the government's initiatives that have empowered women in various fields. From education and healthcare to entrepreneurship and politics, women are now taking leadership roles and making significant contributions to India's growth. The government has launched several programs, such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Ujjwala Yojana, MUDRA loans for women entrepreneurs, and Stand Up India, which have directly impacted millions of women across the country. One of the most important aspects of Modi's governance is legal and constitutional reforms for women's safety and rights. The government has introduced stronger laws against crimes like triple talaq, human trafficking, and sexual harassment at the workplace. Fast-track courts and support systems have been set up to ensure that justice is delivered efficiently. Economic empowerment has been another major focus. The government has encouraged women's participation in the workforce by creating job opportunities, supporting self-employment, and promoting women-led startups. Programs like Skill India and Digital India have provided women with the necessary training to build careers in various industries, including technology and business. In rural areas, schemes like Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana have changed the lives of women by making them financially independent. More women now have access to banking services, loans, and digital transactions through initiatives like Jan Dhan Yojana and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). These steps have given women the power to control their finances and invest in their families' futures. Women's safety has also been a top priority. The government has launched several projects, including women's helplines, one-stop crisis centers, and strict enforcement of laws against domestic violence and sexual assault. Efforts to ensure better public safety, such as improved policing, installation of CCTV cameras in public places, and women-friendly transport services, have made cities and villages safer for women.

One of the most significant changes in recent years has been the rise of women in politics. The Modi government has encouraged greater representation of women in



governance, and many women now hold important positions at different levels, from local governance to national leadership. The reservation of seats for women in local bodies has given them a strong voice in decision-making processes.

Women's contributions to science, technology, defense, and space exploration have also been recognized and encouraged. India has seen women leading ISRO missions, joining the armed forces in combat roles, and excelling in

entrepreneur-ship and innovation.

A special focus of this souviner is the first 100 days of Modi 3.0, where the government has continued its strong commitment to women-led development. From new economic policies to social welfare programs, the first few months of the new term have shown a clear roadmap for how the government plans to further strengthen women's empowerment in the coming years. Another key aspect of this book is how PM Modi has focused on breaking age-old societal barriers that have restricted women's progress. Whether it is through the abolition of discriminatory practices, encouraging financial independence, or ensuring that women have access to equal opportunities, his leadership has created a shift in how society perceives women's roles. This book also explores how Mission 2047, India's long-term development vision, is deeply connected to women's progress. The future of India depends on the active participation of women in all sectors, and this mission aims to create an environment where every woman has the opportunity to reach her full potential without restrictions.

This souviner presents a comprehensive view of how India has transitioned from women's welfare to women-led development. It aims to inspire policymakers, researchers, and citizens to continue supporting this transformation.

It is important to recognize that women's empowerment is a societal responsibility. Every individual, organization, and institution has a role to play in ensuring that women are given equal opportunities to contribute to and benefit from India's growth. This book serves as a valuable resource for understanding the importance of women-led development and how it is shaping India's future. With continued efforts, India can truly become a nation where women are empowered and lead the way toward progress and prosperity.

**Prof Jasim Mohammad**

*Editor*

*profjasimmd@gmail.com*



## Foreword

by  
**Kangna Ranaut**



Women's empowerment has always been an important topic in India. India has moved from developing women to a time where women lead development. This book focuses on how this big change has happened and how women are now shaping the future of India. In the past, women faced many difficulties. They had fewer rights, fewer opportunities, and many restrictions. Over time, different governments worked on helping women, but the biggest changes have come in the last ten years under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. He has always believed that women should be supported and should be equal partners in building the nation. One of the biggest efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has been to create strong policies for women's empowerment. Many new programs and laws have been introduced to help women in education, jobs, safety, business, and even politics. This book explains these efforts in detail and how they have helped millions of women.

Education is the first step to empowerment. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme has encouraged families to educate their daughters. More schools and scholarships for girls have helped in reducing dropout rates. Today, more women are studying in engineering, medicine, and even space research, proving that they can succeed in any field. Economic independence is very important for women. Modi's government has introduced financial schemes like MUDRA Yojana and Stand Up India, which have given loans to women entrepreneurs. Many women have started their businesses and become successful. Digital India and Skill India have also helped women learn new skills and find better jobs. Women's safety has been a priority under PM Narendra Modi's leadership. Strict laws have been made against domestic violence, sexual harassment, and triple talaq. Women now feel safer in workplaces and public spaces. Emergency helplines, fast-track courts, and women-only police stations have also made a big difference. In rural India, women are leading development through Self-Help Groups (SHGs). These groups give women small loans to start businesses like tailoring, farming, and handicrafts. The Jan Dhan Yojana has helped millions of women open bank accounts and manage their own money. This has made them financially strong and independent. One of

the most inspiring changes is in women's participation in politics. More women are now ministers, MPs, and village leaders. The reservation of seats for women in local bodies has given them a strong voice in decision-making. The Modi government has encouraged women to take leadership roles and be part of policy-making.

Women have also made great progress in science, defense, and space research. India's Chandrayaan and Gaganyaan missions have had women scientists in key roles. Women are now joining the armed forces in combat roles and taking up leadership positions in the police and administration. This shows that women can excel in every field. This book also looks at



PM Modi's third term (Modi 3.0) and the first 100 days of his new government. The government continues to bring new policies and reforms for women's growth. The first few months have shown a strong commitment to making women-led development a reality. A major achievement of PM Modi's leadership is breaking old social restrictions that stopped women from growing. Whether it is removing outdated traditions, encouraging financial independence, or making sure women have equal opportunities, the government has changed the way society looks at women's roles. PM Modi's Mission 2047 is linked to women's progress. This vision focuses on making India a developed nation, and women will play a big role in achieving this dream. A country can only grow when its women are strong, independent, and successful.

This souviner explains how India has moved from women's welfare to women-led development. It includes real stories, government policies, and future plans to show how women are changing India. This transformation is about making women the center of progress. Society, families, and workplaces must also support women in achieving their dreams. Every small effort counts, and together, we can make sure women have a bright and equal future. This book will help readers understand how women are leading India's development.

**Kangna Ranaut**

Renowned Actress & Filmmaker



## Afterword



Women-led development within Prime Minister Narendra Modi's era has seen a transformation of our country in ways unprecedented. Women across India, for the first time in history, have been empowered beyond expectations. Women have been leaders across several areas of development from education to entrepreneurship, with policies fostering their growth and leadership. The Government of India's focus on gender equality has provided opportunities for millions of women to increase their human capital assets. The impact of initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao is helpful in the shift over time in attitudes of parents toward the girl child. The attitudes of parents towards the girl child are improving, and can be reflected in the gradual improvement of education and health of girl children in India. The increasing number of girls now in school reflects significant opportunity that was not available generations before. The Government's Sukanya Samridhi Yojana has offered savings schemes to secure the financial future of young girls, and has encouraged multiple generations to save for the future of their daughters. The different sets of schemes that ultimately nurture the potential of all daughters, is what the Government is working towards.

Economic empowerment for women has been the very important, with focused programs like Mudra Yojana where struggling women were able to expand their own businesses into very small enterprises. Millions are self-reliant women entrepreneurs thanks to low-interest loans because of loans specifically working with women across India. Stand-Up India has enhanced the opportunities for women from differently marginalized communities in India to accomplish their entrepreneurial efforts whilst developing the innovation and creating jobs in the process.

Women are more actively engaged in politics and government today than they have ever been. When the government reserved a certain percentage of seats for women in local bodies, it allowed women to be much more active during the decision-making process. Women are now leaders in village panchayats and parliament, and they provide a uniquely feminine voice to the process of policy making and government. Most importantly, there are more women from every strata of society becoming involved representatives, which gives women at every level of decision-



making the ability to have their voices heard.

With respect to women's health and safety, the government has provided initiatives like Ujjwala Yojana that allow women to at least use clean cooking fuel, decreasing health threats. The Nirbhaya Fund has provided safety measures to support women's security, allowing them to spend time in public spaces with a great sense of risk mitigation. Fast-track courts and more rigorous laws against crimes have given women a greater sense of justice and security.

Government funded skills development programs such as Skill India have trained women to use skills in a vocation providing employable skills that allow them to be successful in viable profession in Technology, Textiles and other fields giving women more access to a variety of skills that contribute to the Indian workforce. Digital literacy education has integrated women into a digital economy where they have more independent access to learning new skills and finding opportunities to earn.

Women's journeys in rural India have been significant due to self-help groups (SHGs), which have empowered them to be entrepreneurs. We also have programs such as Deendayal Antyodaya Yojan that have connected SHG with market with has significantly enhanced rural income. Not only has this contributed to their livelihoods but also has improved women's confidence and position in their social orders. The sports sector has inspired the world with women's exemplary achievements, from athletes like PV Sindhu, Mirabai Chanu, and Lovlina Borgohain, who have showcased India's identity to Government support (eg: Khelo India) has provided a platform for young girls who are pursuing sports, therefore creating an environment that breaks down stereotypes that women are incapable of excelling in any field.

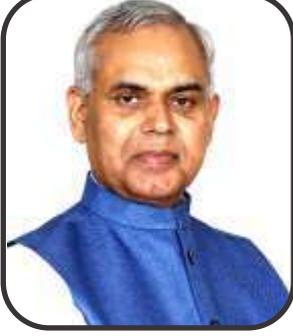
Women have also been an important contributor to nation-building as we live in a society where is full of misinformation and uncertainty as they have been the forefront of Swachh Bharat and Digital India, to help take sanitation in communities to sanitation champions to transforming villagers to be digital leaders in the country, Women are essential to the development narrative in India and they are bringing forward a cleaner, smarter and more inclusive country for all. Going forward, the ongoing vision of women-led development will continue to inspire the spirit of progress. Women are shaping a completely fresh future for India - one filled with opportunities, respect and recognition that are equal. This souvenir illustrates and celebrates these achievements, and our vision of supporting a brighter, more equal tomorrow for all women in India.

**Dr Basant Goel**

Acharya Devvrat  
Governor, Gujarat  
Gandhinagar-382021



आचार्य देवव्रत  
राज्यपाल, गुजरात  
गांधीनगर-३८२०२१



13.1 MAY 2025

## संदेश

यह अत्यंत प्रसन्नता का विषय है कि आदरणीया मां हीराबा मोदी जी की जन्म जयंती के पुण्य अवसर पर सेंटर फॉर नरेंद्र मोदी स्टडीज़ द्वारा Women-Led Development @Viksit Bharat - विषय पर एक स्मारिका का प्रकाशन एवं राष्ट्रीय सेमिनार का आयोजन किया जा रहा है।

यह आयोजन उस नारीशक्ति को समर्पित श्रद्धांजलि है, जिन्होंने सादगी, अनुशासन, मूल्यनिष्ठा और मातृत्व के उच्चतम आदर्शों को जी कर श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी जी जैसे यशस्वी और युगदृष्टा नेतृत्व को संस्कारित किया।

'वुमन-लेड डेवलपमेंट' की यह संकल्पना आज केवल एक विचार नहीं, अपितु प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेंद्र मोदी जी के नेतृत्व में भारत के विकास की केंद्रीय धुरी बन चुकी है। 'बेटी बचाओ, बेटी पढ़ाओ', 'महिला स्वयं सहायता समूहों का सशक्तिकरण', राजनीति और प्रशासन में महिलाओं की नेतृत्व भूमिका- इन सबके माध्यम से भारत में आज सशक्त, स्वावलंबी और निर्णायक नारीशक्ति का उदय हो रहा है।

यह संगोष्ठी और स्मारिका न केवल महिला सशक्तिकरण पर विमर्श को गति देगी, अपितु 'विकसित भारत' के संकल्प को साकार करने में महिलाओं की भूमिका को रेखांकित करने वाला एक महत्वपूर्ण दस्तावेज सिद्ध होगी।

मैं इस पुण्य प्रयास के लिए आयोजकों को हार्दिक बधाई देता हूं और मां हीराबा जी को कोटिशः नमन करता हूं।

  
(आचार्य देवव्रत)



**Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya**

**RAJ BHAVAN  
GUWAHATI**



**MESSAGE**

In the beginning, I pay my rich tributes to Aadarniya Maa Hiraben Modi ji on the occasion of her 102 birth anniversary. I also take the pleasure in extending my profound gratitude to the Centre for Narendra Modi Studies for taking the initiative in organizing a national seminar on 'Women led Development: Channelizing New Horizons of Empowerment for a Developed India'.

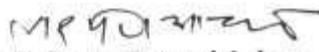
It is heartening that the Centre synchronizing with the seminar is publishing a souvenir titled 'Women led Development @ Viksit Bharat'. I convey my heartfelt congratulations to the entire family of the Centre for Narendra Modi Studies on this occasion.

The role of women in Viksit Bharat is very crucial and transformative. As our country Bharat under the able-leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, envisions itself as a developed nation by 2047, women's participation, leadership, and empowerment are pivotal across various sectors. More women are entering in formal sectors, especially in technology, healthcare, education, and finance. Growing participation of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics is contributing to innovation. Government schemes like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* have increased girl-child enrollment in schools. Moreover, women-led startups and MSMEs are increasing, supported by initiatives like Mudra Yojana and Stand Up India.

In this changing time, women are not just participants but drivers of Viksit Bharat. Empowering them further economically, socially and politically are keys to achieving a truly inclusive and developed Bharat. I hope the deliberations in the seminar besides paying tributes to Aadarniya Maa Hiraben Modi ji will highlight power of Bharatiya Nari in taking our nation to its rightful position that is Viswa Bandhu and Viswa Guru.

My best wishes to resounding success of the seminar and the souvenir.

**Dated: June 03, 2025**

  
**(Lakshman Prasad Acharya)**

आरिफ मोहम्मद खां  
Arif Mohammed Khan



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राज्यपाल, बिहार  
GOVERNOR OF BIHAR



12 जून, 2025

संदेश

यह जानकर प्रसन्नता हुई कि नरेन्द्र मोदी अध्ययन केन्द्र, नई दिल्ली द्वारा माननीय प्रधानमंत्री जी की माँ स्व० हीराबेन की जयंती के अवसर पर 18 जून, 2025 को "महिला नेतृत्व और विकास : विकसित भारत की दिशा में सशक्तिकरण के नए क्षितिज और चुनौतियाँ" विषय पर एक राष्ट्रीय संगोष्ठी का आयोजन किया जाता है।

संगोष्ठी की सफलता हेतु हार्दिक मंगलकामनाएँ।

(आरिफ मोहम्मद खां)



جک"Vh; mnvHkk"kk fodkl i fj "kn~

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### MESSAGE

India is determined to become a developed country by 2047, in which the role of women, along with all other working forces of the country, cannot be ignored. There are many areas in which women can lead the country's development movement. National development under the leadership of women has not only a moral importance but this is also our economic, social and cultural necessity. As women constitute almost half of the country's population, their participation in the national education, workforce, entrepreneurship and decision-making processes is very important to achieve sustainable and inclusive development.

Therefore, in order to realize the potential of development under the leadership of women in developed India, we have to work under a multi-faceted approach. India can achieve its target only through equal representation of women in all segments of the society. In the 21st century, by marginalizing women or underestimating their capabilities, we cannot even dream of Viksit Bharat.

I am very happy that the Center for Narendra Modi Studies (CNMS) is going to organize a seminar on the theme of 'Women-Led Development @Viksit Bharat' to pave the way for women-led development in Viksit Bharat and is also publishing a souvenir on this important topic. I congratulate and wish the Chairman of CNMS, Professor Jasim Muhammad, and his associates and hope that while all other sectors and workforces of the country will play a fruitful role in shaping the bright future of the country, the participation of the Center for Narendra Modi Studies will also be important and remarkable.

(Dr. Md. Shams Eqbal)  
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Dated 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2025



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(केन्द्रीय विश्वविद्यालय / A Central University)



कर्नल (प्रो.) नीलिमा गुप्ता  
Col. (Prof.) Neelima Gupta  
कुलपति / Vice-Chancellor

Ex Vice-Chancellor  
Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University, Kanpur  
Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University, Bhagalpur  
Munger University, Munger (Addl. Charge)



**:: Message ::**

*I am immensely happy to learn that the Centre for Narendra Modi Studies (CNMS) is organizing a National Seminar in commemoration of the 102-birth anniversary of Aadaraniyaa MAA Heeraben Modi Ji on the theme, "Women-Led Development: Channelizing New Horizons of Empowerment during the Narendra Modi Era for Viksit Bharat" on 18 June, 2025 and a souvenir on "Women-Led Development @ Viksit Bharat" will be released alongside this occasion.*

*Under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi and effective governance, women leadership is shaping the development of India. Under various initiatives like Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao, Ujjwala Yojana, Jan Dhan Yojana, Stand Up India, Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana, Matritva Vandana Yojana, appointment of women in military services, increasing participation of women in every field and political representation, women have received respect, opportunity and rights on every front. In Operation Sindoor, two women officers, Colonel Sofiya Qureshi of the Indian Army and Wing Commander Vyomika Singh of the Air Force, led the operation, their leadership, highlighting the roles of women in the country's progress. Today, India's daughters are not just dreamers, but also achievers. They are flying in the sky, protecting the borders, moving ahead in the field of science and playing an important role in democratic leadership.*

*I hope that this seminar will highlight the role of women in shaping a developed India, with a special focus on the initiatives taken during the Narendra Modi era. I am confident that this seminar will bring together scholars, policy makers and thinkers to discuss new avenues for women empowerment and nation building and will certainly provide valuable insights on the issues.*

*India has announced its own theme as 'Nari Shakti se Viksit Bharat', aiming to shift from Women's Development to Women-Led Development. This souvenir "Women-Led Development @ Viksit Bharat" is a testimony to the dedication and hard work of all the authors who have contributed to this theme.*

*I convey my best wishes for the success of the Seminar and grand success for the publication of the Souvenir.*

11<sup>th</sup> June, 2025

  
(Prof. Neelima Gupta)

**Prof. (Dr.) Mohammad Mobin (FRSC)**  
**Vice Chancellor**

Cluster University of Srinagar  
Gogji-Bagh, Srinagar-190008, UT-Jammu & Kashmir



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## MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to convey my warm greetings on the occasion of the national seminar on *'Women-led Development: Channelizing New Horizons of Empowerment for a Developed India'*, being organized by the Centre for Narendra Modi Studies. This initiative reflects our national vision of inclusive growth, and it is encouraging to see Cluster University of Srinagar contributing to this important discourse.

I also pay my humble tributes to Aadarniya Maa Hiraben Modi ji on her 102<sup>nd</sup> birth anniversary—a life devoted to simplicity, values, and strength. The release of the souvenir titled *'Women-led Development @ Viksit Bharat'* in her honour adds immense value to this seminar, and I commend the organizing team for highlighting the vital role of women in shaping the future of our nation.

Being the part of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, I witnessed that in recent years, the Union Territory has made significant strides in promoting women-led development. Various government initiatives like UMEED (JKRLM), Tejaswini, and SAKHI One Stop Centres have created avenues for economic and social empowerment of women across the region. From self-help groups in rural belts to women entrepreneurs in urban Srinagar, the role of women in building a resilient J&K is more visible than ever before.

Women in Jammu and Kashmir are increasingly participating in higher education, governance, entrepreneurship, and healthcare. Their leadership in sectors like handicrafts, tourism, IT, and education is a testament to their potential. Programs like Mission Youth are supporting young women with training and financial assistance, enabling them to lead with confidence and purpose.

Empowering women in J&K is not just a matter of policy—it is a societal transformation. By ensuring their active participation in every domain, we are laying the foundation of a truly *Viksit Bharat*. I am confident that this seminar will foster meaningful dialogue, inspire action, and honour the enduring spirit of Bharatiya Nari, who will continue to guide our nation toward its rightful place as *Viswa Bandhu* and *Viswa Guru*.

My best wishes for the grand success of the seminar and the souvenir. May it serve as a beacon for continued efforts in women's empowerment, both in Jammu and Kashmir and across the nation.

**Date: June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

  
**Prof.(Dr.) Mohammad Mobin**



माता सुंदरी कॉलेज फॉर वुमेन, नई दिल्ली  
ਮਾਤਾ ਸੁੰਦਰੀ ਕਾਲਜ ਫਾਰ ਵੁਮਨ, ਨਵੀਂ ਦਿੱਲੀ  
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## Message

It is a matter of great honour to contribute to the souvenir being published by the Centre for Narendra Modi Studies on the sacred occasion of Maa Heeraba Modi Ji's birth anniversary. This initiative, focusing on the theme “Women-Led Development @ Viksit Bharat”, is both timely and inspiring. Women have always been the backbone of progress in every society. Today, under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji, the idea of women-led development has taken center stage—transforming the entire landscape of our nation.

Maa Heeraba Ji, with her simplicity, values, and silent strength, nurtured and shaped a leader who is guiding the destiny of modern India. Her life is a true example of the quiet power of womanhood and the lasting impact of a mother's wisdom and values. I strongly believe in the empowerment and upliftment of women through education, values, and leadership.

Empowered women create empowered communities. When women lead, they bring unique perspectives, compassion, and innovation to the table—be it in governance, education, entrepreneurship, or grassroots movements. Promoting women's active participation in every sphere of life is not just a step toward gender equality; it is a strategic imperative for achieving sustainable national development.

This souvenir and the accompanying seminar are powerful platforms to celebrate, reflect upon, and further the cause of women-led development in building a truly developed India.

I extend my heartfelt wishes to the organizers for this noble and meaningful effort.

Warm regards,

*Harpreet Kaur*

Principal  
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## The Evolution of Women's Empowerment in India

India, a land with a rich and diverse history, has seen many ups and downs when it comes to the rights and status of women. For centuries, women in India faced severe discrimination and social barriers. In ancient times, women enjoyed some privileges, but as the years went by, their rights began to diminish. The medieval period saw practices like Sati (the burning of widows), child marriage, and purdah (veiling) becoming prevalent, which restricted women's mobility and freedom. Many women were confined to the household, their roles limited to being wives and mothers.

During British colonial rule, some of these harmful practices were challenged by social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra

Vidyasagar, and others. They worked hard to improve women's status, advocating for reforms such as the abolition of Sati and the legalization of widow remarriage. However, despite these efforts, women's rights were still very limited during colonial times.

Post-independence India, in 1947, brought significant changes. The Indian Constitution, adopted in 1950, granted equal rights to women in areas such as education, employment, and politics. India also became one of the first countries to elect a female Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, in 1966. Despite these advancements, women continued to face challenges, particularly in rural areas, where traditional norms were still dominant.





Over the years, the government implemented several schemes and policies aimed at improving the lives of women. For example, the government introduced laws against child marriage and dowry, and started programs for women's education and health. However, many of these efforts did not reach all parts of the country, especially remote rural areas, where women remained largely marginalized. The gap in gender equality continued to widen due to factors like poverty, illiteracy, and social discrimination.

By 2014, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power, India still had significant challenges in achieving full empowerment for women. Gender-based violence, unequal access to education, and discrimination in the workforce were common issues. The number of women in leadership positions, especially in politics and business, was still low. The challenge was clear: how could India uplift the status of women and ensure their rightful place in society?

Empowering women is a moral obligation and is essential for the overall development of a nation. Women make up nearly half of the world's population, and their contribution is vital for a country's progress. When women are empowered, they contribute to the economy, improve family welfare, and

bring about social change. In India, where the population is vast and diverse, empowering women becomes even more crucial. Educated and financially independent women are more likely to contribute positively to society. They educate their children, particularly girls, leading to the creation of a more equitable society for future generations.

Studies show that countries with higher levels of gender equality have higher levels of economic growth. Women's involvement in the workforce and their ability to make decisions about their health, finances, and education are all factors that contribute to a nation's economic and social development.

Furthermore, when women have access to healthcare, education, and employment, their children's health and education levels improve. This creates a cycle of growth and prosperity that benefits entire communities. Thus, empowering women is not only about improving the lives of women themselves, but also about fostering progress and stability for the entire nation. In India, the need to empower women is especially urgent because the country is home to millions of women who are still struggling to break free from traditional roles. Discrimination, violence, and lack of access to resources hold them back. However,



when empowered, these women can become agents of change, contributing to the growth of their families, communities, and the nation as a whole.

When Narendra Modi became Prime Minister in 2014, he recognized the importance of women's empowerment in building a stronger India. His government made it clear that empowering women would be a key focus, as it was seen as a vital part of India's development strategy. Modi's vision for women's rights and empowerment was simple: to create an environment where women could achieve their full potential and contribute to the country's progress in every sector.

One of the key aspects of the Modi government's approach to women's empowerment is the idea of “Women-Led Development.” This concept emphasizes that women should not only be beneficiaries of development but also active participants and leaders in the process of nation-building. The government believed that by involving women at all levels of decision-making and by creating opportunities for them, India could achieve much greater economic growth and social harmony. Prime Minister Modi often spoke about the need for a “self-reliant India,” and for women to play an essential role in this vision. He recognized that women

in India had immense potential but faced many barriers, including poverty, limited access to education, and lack of financial independence. To break these barriers, the Modi government introduced a range of schemes and initiatives aimed at improving women's access to education, healthcare, financial services, and employment opportunities. In 2015, the government launched the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, which aimed to reduce female foeticide, promote girls' education, and empower women. This was just one of the many initiatives that the Modi government rolled out to address gender inequality in India. Another key initiative was the Ujjwala Yojana, which aimed to provide free LPG connections to women from low-income families. This not only helped improve their health by reducing indoor pollution but also saved time, as women no longer had to collect firewood for cooking. Similarly, the MUDRA Yojana provided financial support to women entrepreneurs, giving them access to loans to start and expand businesses. In addition to these schemes, the Modi government has worked to improve women's safety through the Nirbhaya Fund for women's safety and security, which supports various initiatives to tackle violence against women. The government also introduced stricter



laws to punish offenders in cases of sexual harassment, human trafficking, and domestic violence. Moreover, the Modi government recognized the need for women's representation in politics. In 2019, the BJP passed a bill to provide 33% reservation for women in local bodies and in Parliament, a major step towards achieving political parity. Through these policies and many others, the Modi government sought to transform the lives of women in India. The goal was not just to empower women economically, but also to ensure their social, political, and legal rights were recognized and protected. Women were seen as central to the development of the country, and their contributions were celebrated and

promoted at every level of society. The journey of women's empowerment in India has been long and challenging. From a time when women were often restricted to traditional roles to the present day, when they play important roles in every sphere of life, women in India have come a long way. The Modi government has played a significant part in this transformation, ensuring that women's rights are at the forefront of national development. With continued efforts and focus, the vision of women-led development in India is becoming a reality, and the future looks brighter for women across the country.



## The Modi Government's Vision for Women



The vision of the Modi government for women in India is deeply rooted in the belief that empowering women is not only a matter of human rights but is also essential for the nation's overall development. The government recognizes that the active participation of women in every aspect of society, from the economy to education, politics, and governance, is a vital factor in India's progress. The vision is holistic, aiming to address the multiple facets of women's lives—economic, social, cultural, and political—and create an environment where women

can live with dignity, pursue their dreams, and achieve their full potential.

The Modi government has articulated a clear and focused vision for the empowerment of women, which is reflected in several key policy initiatives and schemes introduced between 2014 and 2024. Unlike the traditional approach that often views women as passive beneficiaries of welfare programs, the government's vision seeks to actively involve women in driving national growth. Women, in this vision, are seen as essential contributors to the economy and society, whose empowerment can bring



about lasting change in the country's trajectory.

At the core of the Modi government's vision is the idea that empowering women is essential for nation-building. The government believes that when women are empowered, not only do they benefit as individuals, but they also uplift their families, communities, and ultimately, the nation. Women's health, education, safety, and participation in the workforce directly affect the country's growth and prosperity. Therefore, the government has designed a set of interlinked policies that work towards overcoming the challenges faced by women and helping them realize their full potential. This vision is not about isolated welfare measures but about creating a comprehensive framework that promotes the inclusion and advancement of women in every sector of life. From promoting women's education to ensuring their economic independence, from providing safety and security to creating opportunities for political participation, the Modi government's policies reflect a wide-ranging commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment.

The vision for women's empowerment under the Modi government has been clearly articulated by Prime Minister Narendra

Modi in numerous speeches. PM Modi has consistently emphasized the central role of women in the nation's progress. He has repeatedly stated that India's growth story is incomplete without women taking an active part in it. His speeches reflect a deep belief that empowering women will not only lead to their personal success but also contribute to the success of the entire nation.

One of the most significant statements by PM Modi came during his speech on Independence Day 2015, when he announced the *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child) initiative. PM Modi said, "If we want to change the country, we need to change the way we treat our daughters." This powerful message highlighted the importance of shifting societal attitudes towards girls and women, encouraging their education, safety, and overall well-being. Through this initiative, the government aimed to address the gender imbalance in education and raise awareness about the importance of the girl child in Indian society.

Another crucial element of PM Modi's speeches has been his emphasis on women-led development. He has consistently stressed that women should not be seen merely as recipients of benefits but as active participants in



the nation's progress. In his words, “Empowered women will empower the nation.” PM Modi has highlighted that women are essential drivers of economic growth, social transformation, and political progress. He believes that when women take charge of their own lives and contribute to the workforce, the entire country benefits. His speeches have focused on shifting the narrative from seeing women as vulnerable victims to recognizing them as powerful agents of change. PM Modi has also emphasized the importance of gender equality as a key driver of national development. In one of his speeches, he stated, “For the country to move forward, we need to ensure that women have equal opportunities in every sector.” This reflects the government's commitment to not only addressing women's immediate needs but also creating an environment where women can compete on an equal footing with men in every field.

In addition to PM Modi, key government leaders such as Smriti Irani, Nirmala Sitharaman, and Sushma Swaraj have played pivotal roles in articulating and advancing the government's vision for women. Smriti Irani, the former Minister for Women and Child Development, has been a vocal advocate for women's

empowerment. In her speeches, she has emphasized the importance of policies that focus on providing women with the resources they need to succeed. She has discussed initiatives such as Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, which provides free LPG connections to poor women, helping them lead healthier and more productive lives. She has also spoken about how the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative has created awareness about the importance of educating and empowering girls.

Nirmala Sitharaman, India's first woman finance minister, has been another influential voice in advocating for women's empowerment. In her speeches, Sitharaman has highlighted the importance of creating financial independence for women. Under her leadership, the government introduced measures aimed at promoting women's participation in the economy, including offering loans, creating business opportunities, and ensuring access to financial services for women entrepreneurs. She has also emphasized how economic policies should reflect gender sensitivity, ensuring that women have access to equal opportunities and resources. Sushma Swaraj, India's late External Affairs Minister, was a strong proponent of women's rights, safety, and empowerment. She often spoke



about the need to ensure that women are protected from violence and exploitation and that they are treated with dignity in all spheres of life.

The principle of “Women-led development” is central to the Modi government's approach to women's empowerment. This concept reflects the belief that women should not just benefit from development policies but should be at the forefront of driving social and economic change. Women, in this vision, are seen not as passive recipients of aid but as active participants who are capable of leading the country towards progress. The idea of women-led development is not limited to just increasing women's participation in various sectors; it also involves creating a conducive environment where women can lead initiatives, make decisions, and shape the future of their communities and the nation. The Modi government's policies are designed to support and encourage women to take leadership roles in politics, business, education, and other areas of society. One of the key policy initiatives reflecting this principle is the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana, which provides micro-loans to women entrepreneurs to help them start and expand their businesses. This initiative is designed to ensure that women have access to

capital and financial resources, allowing them to become self-reliant and contribute to the economy. Another significant initiative is the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, which has played a major role in promoting financial inclusion for women. Through this scheme, millions of women have been able to open bank accounts, save money, and access financial services. Financial independence is seen as a key pillar of women's empowerment, and the government has worked hard to ensure that women are financially included in the formal economy. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao program is another example of the government's commitment to women-led development. By focusing on the education of girls, the government is not only empowering individual girls but is also ensuring that future generations of women will have the skills and knowledge to lead the country. This initiative has been instrumental in increasing the number of girls in schools and colleges, ensuring that they have the opportunity to develop into leaders and contributors to society.

The government has also introduced measures to improve women's safety and security. For example, the Nirbhaya Fund was



created to support initiatives aimed at preventing crimes against women and ensuring that women have a safe environment in which they can thrive. The One-Stop Crisis Centres provide legal, medical, and emotional support to women who are victims of violence, offering a holistic approach to addressing women's safety. Additionally, the Women's Reservation Bill, which aims to reserve one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women, reflects the government's commitment to political inclusion. This initiative is designed to ensure that women have a greater voice in the legislative process and can directly influence the laws and policies that affect them. The Modi government's vision for women is both forward-looking and transformative. By emphasizing the principle of women-led development, the government seeks to ensure that

women are not just the beneficiaries of policies but also active agents of change. The policies introduced between 2014 and 2024 reflect a comprehensive approach to women's empowerment, addressing key areas such as education, financial independence, safety, political participation, and leadership. Through programs such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana, and the Women's Reservation Bill, the government has sought to create a more inclusive and gender-sensitive society where women have equal access to opportunities and resources. By empowering women, the Modi government is not only improving the lives of women but also contributing to the overall development and progress of the nation.

As women continue to break barriers, rise to leadership positions, and contribute to the nation's growth, the vision of a women-led India becomes more and more achievable. The Modi government's commitment to women's empowerment is laying the foundation for a more equitable, inclusive, and prosperous future for all.

## Laws and Constitutional and Legal Provisions for Women and Children in India

India has a comprehensive framework of laws and constitutional provisions designed to protect the rights of women and children. These laws aim to provide gender equality, safeguard against discrimination, and promote the overall welfare of women



and children in society. The legal provisions cover a wide range of issues, from employment rights and family law to protection from abuse and exploitation. In this chapter, we will delve into the key laws enacted by the Government of India and the relevant constitutional and legal provisions aimed at ensuring justice, equality, and protection for women and children.

- ❖ Laws Enacted by the Government of India for Women
- ❖ Legal Practitioners (Women) Act, 1923 This law was enacted to provide opportunities for

women in the legal profession. It allowed women to practice law in India and laid the foundation for gender equality in the legal profession.

- ❖ The Factories Act, 1948 (Amended in 1986) The Act was introduced to regulate the working conditions in factories and to ensure the safety, health, and welfare of workers. The amendment in 1986 included provisions specifically focusing on women's welfare, such as adequate rest rooms, facilities

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- for women workers, and the prohibition of employment of women in hazardous conditions.
- ❖ The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 This Act aims to combat human trafficking and prostitution. It provides the legal framework for the prevention of immoral traffic, the rehabilitation of women involved in prostitution, and the punishment of offenders.
  - ❖ The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 This law provides for maternity leave and benefits for women employees, ensuring that they receive financial assistance during childbirth and recuperation, and safeguards their employment during this period.
  - ❖ The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 The Act prohibits the giving and taking of dowry, aiming to curb the practice of dowry-related harassment and violence. It criminalizes the demand for dowry and provides legal recourse to victims of dowry harassment.
  - ❖ The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994 (PCPNDT) This law aims to regulate the use of prenatal diagnostic techniques to prevent sex-selective abortions. The Act aims to curb the practice of female feticide and promote the health and well-being of women.
  - ❖ Offences mentioned under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860 The IPC includes various provisions related to crimes against women, such as rape (Section 375), assault, domestic violence, dowry deaths, and trafficking. The IPC is a comprehensive code that addresses a range of offenses, with specific provisions ensuring women's safety and dignity.
  - ❖ The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 This Act mandates equal pay for equal work, ensuring that women are paid the same wage as men for performing the same work in any organization, thus promoting gender equality in the workplace.
  - ❖ The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 This law prohibits the indecent representation of women in advertisements, publications, or on screen. It aims to prevent the



exploitation of women's image and to promote dignity and respect for women in media.

- ❖ The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 The Act was enacted to prevent the practice of sati (the immolation of widows). It criminalizes the glorification, encouragement, and involvement in the practice of sati, providing for stringent punishments.
- ❖ The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 This law protects women from domestic violence, including physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse. It offers legal protection and support for women, allowing them to seek relief through the legal system.
- ❖ The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 This Act makes the marriage of children below the age of 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys illegal, thus protecting minors from child marriage and its associated harms.
- ❖ The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 This law was a response to the brutal 2012 Delhi gang rape case. It significantly

broadened the definition of rape, enhanced punishments for sexual assault, and expanded the scope of offenses related to sexual violence and harassment.

- ❖ Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition & Redressal) Act, 2013 This Act mandates that every workplace must have an internal complaints committee to address sexual harassment. It ensures a safe working environment for women and provides a legal framework for complaints and redressal.
- ❖ Constitutional and Legal Provisions for Women and Children

The Constitution of India is a guiding document that guarantees fundamental rights to all citizens, including special provisions for women and children. These provisions are designed to protect the dignity, rights, and welfare of women and children, ensuring their equal status in society.

- ❖ Article 14 – Equality before Law Article 14 guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the law to all citizens, irrespective of sex,



caste, religion, or race. This fundamental right ensures that women and men are treated equally under the law.

- ❖ Article 15 – Prohibition of Discrimination Article 15 prohibits discrimination by the state against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. It also provides that the state may make special provisions for women and children, ensuring their protection and welfare.
- ❖ Article 15(3) – Special Provisions for Women and Children This provision empowers the state to make special laws or provisions in favor of women and children. It is a positive discrimination measure to uplift these vulnerable groups and safeguard their rights.
- ❖ Article 16 – Equality of Opportunity in Public Employment Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity in public employment. No citizen can be discriminated against in matters of public employment on the grounds of sex, religion, race, caste, etc.
- ❖ Article 21A – Right to Education This article ensures that the state provides free and compulsory education to all children aged 6-14 years, promoting education as a fundamental right. This is essential for empowering children, especially girls, and providing them with opportunities for a better future.
- ❖ Article 24 – Prohibition of Child Labor Article 24 prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in factories, mines, or other hazardous employments, safeguarding children from exploitation and abuse.
- ❖ Article 39(a) – Right to Livelihood This provision ensures that the state directs its policies towards securing equal rights for men and women to earn a livelihood. It aims to ensure that women have the same economic opportunities as men.
- ❖ Article 39(d) – Equal Pay for Equal Work Article 39(d) guarantees that both men and women are paid equally for the same work, ensuring gender equality in wages and economic independence for women.

- ❖ Article 39 – Protection of Workers' Health This provision directs the state to ensure that the health and strength of workers, including women, are not abused. It aims to protect workers from being forced to undertake work that is unsuited to their physical strength or age.
- ❖ Article 39(f) – Protection of Children's Rights Article 39(f) directs the state to ensure that children are provided with opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner, in conditions of freedom and dignity, and to protect them from exploitation.
- ❖ Article 42 – Provision for Just and Humane Conditions of Work Article 42 enjoins the state to make provisions for ensuring just and humane working conditions, including maternity relief for women workers.
- ❖ Article 45 – Early Childhood Care and Education This provision aims to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they reach the age of six years, which is crucial for the holistic development of children, particularly girls.

- ❖ Article 46 – Promotion of Educational and Economic Interests of Weaker Sections Article 46 mandates the state to promote the educational and economic interests of weaker sections, including women and children, and protect them from social injustice and exploitation.

India has made significant strides in enacting laws and constitutional provisions to protect the rights of women and children. These laws serve as a safeguard against various forms of exploitation, discrimination, and abuse, and promote gender equality and social justice. The constitutional provisions, coupled with legislative measures, ensure that women and children are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness, offering them the opportunity to lead a life of freedom and security. While progress has been made, it remains crucial to continue monitoring the implementation of these laws and to raise awareness about the rights of women and children to create a society that truly ensures their well-being and equality.

## Development Via Women During Modi Era



The strength, determination, creativity, and decisiveness of women in India are qualities that have become emblematic of the nation's identity. These attributes, along with their ability to tirelessly work towards set goals, define the essence of “Nari Shakti” (women power) in India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeatedly highlighted these qualities as a central part of India's identity, stressing that women's contributions shape the nation's progress. These attributes are not new; rather, they have deep historical roots. For instance, Lord Krishna, in his teachings to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra,

acknowledges several important qualities such as courage, intelligence, and wisdom, which are all associated with the feminine form. This demonstrates that the recognition of women's power is an ancient and respected tradition in Indian thought.

Looking at India's cultural history, we find that women have always held significant positions in society. In many ancient traditions, there was an emphasis on the matriarchal roles of women. Even the divine figures in Hinduism often carry the names of their mothers or wives, as seen in figures like “Devakinandan Krishna” or “Siya Ram.” Women were



not only central in family and social structures but also played intellectual and judicial roles. For example, the great debate between Adi Shankaracharya and Mandan Mishra is well-known, where the wife of Mandan Mishra, Bharati, intervened as the judge when the debate was about to be won by Shankaracharya, arguing that her presence was essential as she was the “Ardhangini” or better half. This illustrates how women were not just participants but critical decision-makers in intellectual discourses.

However, with the invasions by Islamic and later British forces, the status of women began to decline. These invasions systematically eroded women's rights, dignity, and positions in society, which were previously held in high regard. One significant indicator of this regression was the composition of the constituent assembly after India gained independence, which only had 15 women members out of 389. Despite this, India saw its third Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, being a woman, just two decades after independence. This shows that even during difficult times, women managed to rise to leadership positions.

Following independence, India made strides toward economic and social progress, but women's contributions and rights were often sidelined. It wasn't until the Modi government took office in 2014 that

there was a systematic and concentrated effort to recognize the value of women in nation-building. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the government launched numerous initiatives focused on empowering women. The “Nari Shakti Abhiyan” was a central program, which encompassed a range of legislative reforms aimed at improving the lives of women. Notable among these reforms were the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act of 2017, which extended maternity leave for working women, and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2018, which enhanced the punishment for crimes against women, making their safety a priority. Moreover, in 2017, the government decriminalized adultery and passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, giving legal protection to Muslim women against practices like triple talaq.

In addition to legislative measures, the government has made efforts to integrate women into roles that were previously considered male-dominated. A significant move was the induction of women as fighter pilots in the Indian Air Force in 2022, which became a permanent scheme, marking a historic moment for women in defense. Finally, one of the most significant steps was the introduction of the Women Reservation Act in 2023, which aims to increase women's



representation in legislative bodies, further solidifying the government's commitment to creating a more inclusive political landscape. These actions, when combined, highlight the Modi government's comprehensive approach toward women's empowerment, ensuring that women have greater opportunities for personal, professional, and political growth.

#### Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017: Empowering Women for Work-Life Balance

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, women are an essential part of India's history, culture, and society. The representation of Bharat (India) as a Mother Goddess symbolizes this truth. From ancient Hindu Vedic traditions to their critical role in India's fight for independence and their contribution to India's rapid economic growth today, women have continually shaped the nation's destiny. While various governments have worked toward women's development, the current leadership under Prime Minister Narendra Modi continues this legacy by assigning women key responsibilities in shaping the country's future. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, famously said, "I measure the progress of a community with the degree of progress women have achieved." This perspective resonates deeply with Prime Minister Modi's approach, as he has

implemented transformative policies that have significantly impacted the lives of millions of women. Over time, there has been a shift from focusing solely on women's development to encouraging Women-Led Development. However, increasing women's participation in all sectors of life—whether in institutions, industries, or even in entire countries—is not an easy task. For this to happen, there must be a strong institutional framework, with rules and policies designed to support the welfare of women. Achieving this requires collaboration among the government, judiciary, and society. The Government's approach post-2014, especially through the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, exemplifies this effort.

The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 was proposed in the Rajya Sabha in 2016 by the then Minister of Labour and Employment, Bandaru Dattatreya. Its purpose was to address the challenges faced by women during childbirth and provide maternity benefits to support their employment. The roots of this Act can be traced back to the original Maternity Benefit Act of 1961, which was passed by Parliament to regulate the employment of women in establishments before and after childbirth. It was designed to provide maternity benefits, ensuring that women could take time off during and after pregnancy without losing their



wages.

The original law applied to all types of establishments, including factories, mines, and plantations. In 1973, the law was extended to cover government establishments and those that employed people for specific performances, like acrobatics or equestrian shows. It also repealed the earlier Mines Maternity Benefit Act, 1941.

As India evolved culturally, structurally, and technologically, the government recognized the need to update this law to reflect the modern needs of women. In 1961, when the Maternity Benefit Act was first introduced, India was operating in a different social and economic context. The nation had not yet seen the rise of computers or advanced technology, and the socialist economic model was in place. However, the situation drastically changed after the introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1990, which opened India's markets to the world through globalization. This created a favorable environment for entrepreneurship and business, resulting in the growth of the private sector. This shift also transformed the role of women in Indian society.

Women in India play multiple roles—mothers, daughters, and wives. With these evolving roles, the government realized the need for

policies that would provide better support for working women. The Modi government, from 2014 onwards, took significant steps in this direction. The amendments to the Maternity Benefit Act were among the first major changes made to support women's participation in the workforce.

Previously, under Section 5(3) of the Maternity Benefit Act, women were entitled to twelve weeks of maternity leave, with six weeks before and six weeks after childbirth. However, this was deemed insufficient, as many women required more time to recover from childbirth. In response, the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act of 2017 increased the maternity leave duration to 26 weeks. This includes eight weeks of leave before childbirth and 18 weeks after, giving women more time to recover and adjust to their new role as mothers. This extended leave provides job security while retaining pay, allowing women to return to work after pregnancy, which promotes gender equality in the workplace. However, the leave extension applies only to the first two children, while women with three or more children are entitled to only 12 weeks of maternity leave.

One of the groundbreaking aspects of this amendment is the recognition of the roles of “commissioning mothers” (surrogate mothers) and adoptive mothers. For the first time, the government



acknowledged that women who adopt a child under three months old are entitled to maternity benefits, which was a significant step toward inclusivity.

Additionally, the amendment introduced the concept of “Creches” in Section 11A(1). Any establishment with fifty or more employees must provide a creche facility, either on Its premises or nearby, where working mothers can leave their children while they work. The law also allows mothers to visit the creche up to four times a day, including during their rest intervals. The term “creche” refers to a facility where young children are cared for while their parents are at work, study, or engaged in other activities. Section 11A(2) of the amendment also mandates that employers provide written information to women employees regarding the maternity benefits they are entitled to under the Act.

The changes introduced by the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 have significantly improved working conditions for women in both organized and unorganized sectors. The amendments make it easier for women to balance their roles at home and at work, which contributes to a more gender-balanced society. These reforms have empowered women, making it possible for them to take on various roles with confidence, whether as caregivers at home or professionals in the workforce.

### **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018**

The teachings of the Ramcharitmanas, such as the verse:”Janni Sam janhin par nari, dhanu parav bis te bis bhari

Je harshahin par sampati dekhin, dukhit hohin par vibati visheshi” teach us the way a society should treat women and others. The essence of this verse, which advocates for treating women like one's own mother and feeling empathy towards others, reflects the kind of moral society we should aim for. This moral society, deeply rooted in the philosophy of Ram-Rajya (the ideal rule of Ram), should not only be an ideal but also a law of the land. Mahatma Gandhi, who envisioned a stateless society, also believed in a moral and ethical life, and this moral vision needs to be reflected in the behavior of individuals and in the laws of society.

However, as time passed, the decline of Hinduism and a focus on statehood led to the erosion of moral values, which increased crime rates in Indian society. Basic crimes, like theft, evolved into more severe forms, such as robbery and dacoity. Among these crimes, the most brutal and heinous was rape. The country witnessed horrific cases such as the 1992 Ajmer rape case, where a group of men exploited young girls through blackmail and sexual assault, and the 1996 Priyadarshini



Mattoo case, where a young girl was raped and murdered by her college senior. Perhaps the most shocking case in recent memory was the 2012 Nirbhaya case, in which a young woman was gang-raped in a moving bus in Delhi.

These dreadful incidents and the subsequent protests across the nation pushed the government to introduce various amendments to the law, including the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, to address these issues. However, cases like the Kathua and Unnao rape cases, which shocked the nation further, led to the introduction of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018, to strengthen laws related to sexual offenses and crimes against women and children.

Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018 – Key Changes

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018, brought significant changes to the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), and the Indian Evidence Act (IEA), particularly in the punishment for rape cases. These changes were aimed at making the laws stricter and more effective in addressing sexual crimes, especially those committed against minors.

One of the key amendments introduced was the increase in the

minimum punishment for the rape of girls in different age groups. Previously, the punishment for the rape of a girl below the age of twelve years ranged from ten years to life imprisonment. After the amendment, the minimum punishment was increased to twenty years, and the maximum punishment could either be life imprisonment or even the death penalty. Similarly, in the case of gang rape, the law now provides for life imprisonment as the minimum sentence, with the death penalty being the maximum punishment.

For cases involving girls below the age of sixteen, the punishment was also increased, with the minimum sentence set at twenty years of imprisonment and the maximum being life imprisonment. In gang rape cases involving minors, the law mandates life imprisonment as the minimum sentence. For victims above sixteen years of age, the punishment was increased from seven years to a minimum of ten years, with the maximum punishment being life imprisonment.

In addition to these changes in punishment, the amendment also made significant changes to the Criminal Procedure Code. It barred anticipatory bail for the accused in cases involving the rape of a minor girl below sixteen years of age. It also directed that investigations into cases of child rape must be concluded within two months,



a reduction from the previous three-month period.

The amendment to the POCSO Act also specified that the punishment which is more severe, whether under the IPC or the POCSO Act, will apply in cases of rape involving minors. This ensured that there was a clear and stricter punishment framework for crimes involving children.

#### A Case of Justice: The Story of a 14-Year-Old Girl

A striking example of how the amendments to the law helped in delivering justice is the case that a special public prosecutor handled. The case, registered under various sections of the IPC and the POCSO Act, involved the brutal kidnapping and rape of a 14-year-old girl by three criminals. The girl was kidnapped near a railway track, raped, and severely tortured, including having her eyes gouged out and facial bones broken.

The gravity of the case was evident during the trial. The girl, who had survived the ordeal, narrated her traumatic experience, stating that she felt like a “living corpse.” Despite the brutal assault, the victim survived, and the case was pursued with determination. The special public prosecutor, working tirelessly with her team, ensured that the two adult criminals were sentenced to death. This was the first such case in the region under the POCSO Court, where a

victim of such a heinous crime survived, and the perpetrators were punished with the death penalty.

The case was particularly significant because of the role that the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018, and the POCSO Act amendments played in securing justice. The severity of the crime, combined with the updated legal provisions, helped deliver the maximum punishment available under the law, providing justice to the victim and sending a clear message to society that crimes of this nature would not be tolerated.

#### Conclusion: A Step Towards Justice and Safety for Women

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018, was a landmark change in India's legal system, aiming to make the punishment for crimes like rape more severe. It was designed not only to punish the perpetrators but also to create a deterrent effect, preventing such crimes in the future. The amendments introduced through this law were especially significant for crimes against children, ensuring that the punishment for such offenses would be more stringent.

In the case of the 14-year-old girl from Pratapgarh, the amendments helped deliver justice, showing how the law can change the lives of victims and survivors. It is essential that these laws continue to evolve and be enforced in a manner that not only punishes

offenders but also prevents such crimes, ensuring that women and children feel safe in society. The changes brought about by the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018, reflect the government's commitment to protecting the dignity and safety of women, ultimately making the society a better and safer place for all.



### **Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019**

The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019 came into the spotlight due to practices like Triple Talaq and Nikah Halala that were being followed among some Muslims in India. These practices have a long history and have been controversial for many years. In fact, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a key figure in India's history, raised concerns about such practices. He noted that the social reforms in countries like Turkey were revolutionary and that if Islam did not

prevent reforms in those countries, why should it hold back progress in India? These concerns were particularly directed towards practices like Triple Talaq (where a husband can divorce his wife by uttering 'Talaq' three times) and Nikah Halala (a practice where a woman must marry another man and divorce him before remarrying her first husband).

Even in the Quran, Talaq is not seen as something good. The Quran mentions that Talaq is an unforgivable sin and encourages marriage continuation (Quran 4:32 and 4:128). It also says in Quran 2:32 that

r e c o n c i l i a t i o n between husband and wife is purer and better than divorce. The Quran and Islamic teachings discourage divorce and advocate for finding ways to preserve the relationship. When it comes to divorce, Islamic law provides several ways it can occur, depending on the situation. In this chapter, we focus on how a husband can pronounce divorce, as that is the main area of concern with regard to the practice of Triple Talaq.

There are two main forms of divorce in Islamic law that the husband can initiate: Talaq-E-Sunnat and Talaq-E-Biddat.



### Talaq-E-Sunnat:

Talaq-E-Sunnat is a traditional form of divorce based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. It is considered the most approved form of divorce in Islam. The Quran views Talaq as something evil, but it recognizes that in certain situations, it may be necessary. Talaq-E-Sunnat is a revocable form of divorce, meaning that once pronounced, it can be revoked by the husband within a certain period known as the Iddat. This period lasts for three menstrual cycles, and during this time, the husband can change his mind and take back the divorce, either by expressing it clearly or by resuming marital relations with his wife. If the husband does not revoke the divorce within this period, the divorce becomes final.

There are two subtypes of Talaq-E-Sunnat:

**Talaq-E-Ahsan:** This is the most preferred form, as it involves only a single pronouncement of Talaq during the woman's Tuhr (a period between two menstrual cycles). The husband can change his mind within the Iddat period, and this option is the most approved by Islamic scholars. It focuses on revocation and reconciliation.

**Talaq-E-Hasan:** In this form, the husband pronounces Talaq three times, but the pronouncements are spaced out over three menstrual cycles. The

husband can revoke the divorce during the first or second pronouncement. However, once the third pronouncement is made, the divorce is final and cannot be undone. This form of divorce allows some space for reconciliation but eventually leads to a final break if the reconciliation is not successful.

### Talaq-E-Biddat (Triple Talaq):

Talaq-E-Biddat is a much more controversial form of divorce, also known as Talaq-Ul-Bain. This is the type of divorce that became the focus of public debates and legal action. It involves a husband pronouncing Talaq three times in one sitting, often without any chance for reconciliation. This form of divorce is widely disapproved in Islamic teachings, as the Prophet Muhammad never approved of any form of divorce that does not allow room for reconciliation. This practice, however, became common around the 2<sup>nd</sup> century of Islam, especially under the influence of political rulers who found the Prophet's method inconvenient. Talaq-E-Biddat is primarily followed by Sunni Muslims and not by Shia Muslims.

Despite its disapproval in Islamic texts, Triple Talaq continued to be practiced, and it was officially recognized under Muslim Personal Law in India through the Muslim Personal Law Act of 1937, which gave men the authority to divorce their wives



by simply pronouncing Talaq three times. Over time, this led to significant injustice for Muslim women, as they were left abandoned without support.

Countries with Muslim-majority populations, such as Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Pakistan, Iraq, Malaysia, and Bangladesh, started banning Triple Talaq as early as 1929. However, the issue remained unresolved in India, especially after independence in 1947, due to the refusal to implement a Uniform Civil Code. The rejection of such a code was partly why Dr. B.R. Ambedkar resigned from his position in the Constitutional Assembly. In 1985, the Shah Bano case became a landmark judgment where the Supreme Court ruled in favor of a Muslim woman, but the Rajiv Gandhi Government overturned this decision to appease the Muslim community, leading to the enactment of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, which re-imposed the laws as they were before.

Despite this legal setback, the practice of Triple Talaq continued, and in 2017, a new legal challenge came from Shayara Bano, who filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of Triple Talaq, Polygamy, and Nikah Halala. Shayara Bano, who had been divorced via Triple Talaq, argued that the practice violated her fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the Indian Constitution under Articles 14, 15, and

21. She further claimed that these practices were not protected under the Right to Freedom of Religion (Articles 25-28).

In 2017, the Supreme Court created a Constitutional Bench to address these issues. The court ruled in favor of Shayara Bano, declaring Triple Talaq unconstitutional in a 3:2 majority. The judgment was a landmark moment in India's legal and social history, but even after the ruling, the practice continued to be followed in some communities, leading to further legal action. In response, the government introduced the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, which made Triple Talaq a cognizable offense, punishable by up to three years in prison. The law also ensured that women affected by Triple Talaq could not be coerced into reconciliation and that the accused could not be granted bail without considering the intent of the woman involved.

In a speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi strongly condemned the practice of Triple Talaq, stating that those who support this practice are doing an injustice to Muslim women. His words emphasized the importance of empowering Muslim women and ending the centuries-old injustice they had faced under such practices.

The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019 is a



significant step towards gender justice, equality, and the protection of Muslim women's rights in India. The law aims to protect women from the arbitrary and unjust practice of Triple Talaq, ensuring that Muslim women have the right to live with dignity and security, free from the fear of being unjustly divorced by their husbands.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021\*

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971, was initially introduced to legally permit the termination of pregnancies under certain circumstances, ensuring the process was carried out by medical professionals to protect women's health. However, the landscape of healthcare, women's rights, and medical advancements evolved over time, necessitating revisions to the law to adapt to these changes. The most significant change came in 2021, when the Modi government introduced an Amendment to the MTP Act, addressing various critical issues concerning pregnancy termination, women's rights, and medical procedures. This amendment aimed at making abortion procedures safer, more accessible, and more inclusive, while safeguarding women's privacy and health. Let's dive deeper into the context, provisions, and importance of this MTP Amendment Act, 2021.

Understanding the Historical

Context

Section 312 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) already contained provisions related to the criminalization of abortion under specific circumstances. The section stipulated that anyone who deliberately caused a woman to miscarry (without valid medical reasons) could face severe legal consequences, including imprisonment. The law set the punishment for abortion based on the intent and circumstances. If the miscarriage was done to save the life of the woman, it would be exempt from punishment. However, when performed with malicious intent or for reasons not grounded in the woman's well-being, the law prescribed a punishment of imprisonment ranging from three years to seven years, with a possibility of a fine as well.

Despite the strict provisions in the IPC regarding illegal abortion, a gap existed in terms of legitimate medical procedures for pregnancy termination, especially when required for the woman's physical or mental health. The MTP Act of 1971 filled this gap by allowing registered medical practitioners to perform abortions under certain prescribed conditions. It aimed to provide a legal framework for abortion procedures, enabling medical professionals to safely carry out the termination of pregnancies for legitimate medical reasons, thereby ensuring women's health and safety.



However, as years passed, global standards for reproductive health evolved, and so did India's societal context. The World Health Organization (WHO) and various human rights organizations recommended that laws governing abortion be updated to ensure that women's rights to make decisions about their reproductive health were fully protected. These changes were necessary due to developments in medical technology, increasing awareness about women's rights, and the need to provide more accessible and safe abortion services. The MTP Act needed to be amended to reflect these shifts.

The MTP Amendment Act, 2021, introduced several key changes that are considered historic and progressive for the reproductive rights of women in India. These changes reflect the government's commitment to improving women's healthcare, ensuring their privacy, and bringing abortion laws in line with international standards. Let's explore the significant provisions introduced in the Amendment.

#### 1. Introduction of the Medical Board

One of the first and most important changes introduced by the amendment is the creation of a Medical Board under Section 2(aa) of the Act. This board will be responsible for

reviewing cases of pregnancy termination and ensuring that the procedure is carried out in compliance with legal guidelines and medical standards. The Medical Board is a critical component in ensuring the safety and legality of the termination process. It consists of qualified professionals, including:

Gynecologists, who specialize in women's reproductive health.

Pediatricians, who deal with the health of infants and children.

Radiologists or Sonologists, who perform imaging procedures like ultrasounds to assess the health of the fetus.

Other medical professionals who may be appointed by the state or central government, based on their expertise.

The Medical Board's primary role is to review cases of pregnancy termination and ensure that abortions are performed within the legal framework, keeping the woman's health and safety in mind. This system aims to reduce unsafe, unregulated abortions and make sure that they are carried out under the supervision of competent professionals.

#### 2. Defining 'Termination of Pregnancy'

The amendment introduced a formal definition of the term "Termination of Pregnancy", clarifying



that abortion can be performed through medical or surgical methods. This definition was crucial as it addressed unsafe and outdated practices that continued to occur even after the original MTP Act of 1971.

In India, prior to this amendment, some unsafe practices for pregnancy termination were still being used. One example was the “Amniotic Sac rupture”, which involved puncturing the sac inside the womb with a sharp object. This procedure could result in severe internal injuries or even death in some cases. Another dangerous practice involved injecting harmful substances such as toxic chemicals or plant poisons into the woman's body, which often led to fatal outcomes. The amendment clearly prohibits such practices and ensures that only safe, medically approved methods are used.

By defining termination methods, the government is now better equipped to ensure that women receive safe, regulated medical procedures for abortion and that harmful practices are eliminated.

### 3. Extension of the Legal Timeframe for Abortion

One of the most significant changes made by the MTP Amendment Act, 2021, is the extension of the permissible time limit for medical abortion. Under the previous law, abortions were allowed up to 12 weeks

of pregnancy. However, the new amendment extends this limit to 20 weeks for most cases.

In certain exceptional circumstances, such as cases of rape or incest, the time limit can extend up to 24 weeks, but only after consultation with at least two registered medical practitioners. This change was introduced to address cases where the pregnancy is detected late, and the woman faces severe mental or physical health risks. For example, in cases of rape, it may take time for the woman to come to terms with the trauma and seek medical attention. Extending the legal time frame for abortion allows women more time to make informed decisions about their reproductive health.

### 4. Rights of Unmarried Women

Before the 2021 amendment, the law did not clearly address the reproductive rights of unmarried women. This situation left unmarried women vulnerable, as they were often subjected to societal stigma and legal barriers in seeking abortion services. The amendment rectified this injustice by ensuring that unmarried women have the same rights as married women when it comes to terminating a pregnancy.

This is a landmark change, as it recognizes the rights of women to make decisions about their reproductive health, regardless of their marital status. The amendment removes a



significant barrier to accessing abortion services for unmarried women, empowering them to make decisions that are best for their health and well-being.

#### 5. Protection of Women's Privacy

The amendment also addressed the right to privacy, a fundamental aspect of women's autonomy. It introduced a provision that protects the identity of women who seek abortion services. Section 5A of the amendment ensures that the name, identity, or any other personal details of a woman who has undergone a pregnancy termination cannot be disclosed to the public. Violating this privacy can result in a punishment of up to one year in prison or a fine or both. This provision is essential for safeguarding the dignity and privacy of women, who should not be subjected to public scrutiny or stigma for making personal health decisions.

#### 6. Powers and Functions of the Medical Board

The amendment also outlines the powers and functions of the Medical Board in Section 6. The board will review cases of abortion, ensure compliance with the legal framework, and make recommendations for any necessary action. The board is empowered to carry out the essential medical assessments and give approval for abortion procedures based on a woman's health and circumstances.

This system ensures that abortion services are not only provided safely but also remain under strict medical supervision, reducing the chances of unsafe or illegal practices.

The MTP Amendment Act, 2021, represents a major step forward in ensuring that women in India have access to safe, legal, and regulated abortion services. By extending the time limits for abortion, ensuring privacy protection, including unmarried women's rights, and strengthening medical oversight through the creation of the Medical Board, the government has made significant strides in improving reproductive rights and healthcare in India. These reforms mark a progressive shift in India's approach to women's health, making it more inclusive, compassionate, and aligned with global standards. The amendment represents a commitment to safeguarding women's rights, health, and dignity.

#### Induction of Women in Combat Roles in the Indian Air Force

In 2022, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh made a historic decision to transform the Indian Air Force's (IAF) experimental program for women fighter pilots into a permanent one. This decision was a clear demonstration of the empowerment of women, showing the capability of India's women and reflecting Prime



Minister Narendra Modi's dedication to advancing women's rights and equality.

The story of Indian women's involvement in aviation goes back a long way, with some pioneering milestones. For instance, in 1932, Urmila Parikh became the first Indian woman to obtain a pilot's license. This was an extraordinary achievement at a time when airplanes were still a new technology, and the idea of a woman becoming a pilot seemed very unusual, not just in India, but worldwide. In 1948, Prem Mathur became the first woman commercial pilot in India and began flying for Deccan Airlines. Later, in 1985, Captain Sudamini Deshmukh made history by commanding the first all-women flight crew on the Calcutta-Silchar route using an Indian Airlines Fokker Friendship F-27 aircraft. Another milestone came in 1990, when Nivedita Bhasin, at just 26 years old, became the youngest pilot in civil aviation history to command a jet airliner.

Women's entry into the Indian Armed Forces came a bit later. In 1992, the Indian military began accepting women for short-service commissions, allowing them to serve in various roles. The following year, in March 1993, seven women cadets were commissioned into the Indian Armed Forces. By 1994, Flight Lieutenant Marita Kaur Deol became the first woman in the Indian Air Force (IAF) to perform a solo flight. However, women

at this time were still restricted to flying helicopters and transport aircraft and were not allowed to take part in combat roles.

The situation started to change in October 2015 when the Indian government introduced an experimental scheme for the induction of women as fighter pilots in the IAF. This scheme allowed female pilots to be trained for combat roles, and the then Defence Minister of State, Rao Inderjit Singh, issued a statement confirming that all women pilots in the IAF were cleared to participate in operational roles, which included air maintenance, para drop, low-level tactical flying, and special heliborne operations (SHBO). The female trainees would undergo Stage-1 training at the Air Force Academy, after which their suitability for the fighter stream would be assessed. Those who were found suitable and willing would progress to Stage-II training in the fighter pilot stream. After successfully completing these stages, the women would be officially inducted into the fighter pilot corps.

In March 2021, the Supreme Court ruled that female officers who met the necessary criteria, such as achieving a minimum of 60% marks on their merit-based exams and being medically fit, would be eligible for a permanent commission in the Indian Air Force. This decision was a significant step towards equality, as it



allowed female officers to receive the same permanent commission as their male counterparts, subject to certain criteria such as disciplinary and vigilance clearances, and standardized benchmarks.

By 2022, the government made the decision to turn the experimental scheme of 2015 into a permanent program, officially allowing women to serve as fighter pilots in the Indian Air Force. Since the beginning of this scheme, 16 women have been commissioned as fighter pilots. These women are now actively participating in combat roles, serving as an inspiration for other women in India to follow their footsteps. For example, Flight Lieutenant MP Shumathi and Flight Lieutenant Alka Shukla have been trained to operate the Mi-8, a twin-engine helicopter, used for utility and medium-sized assault operations.

The traditional reluctance to allow women in combat roles was more about social perceptions than any real limitations based on science or capability. In reality, any challenges related to women flying fighter jets can be effectively addressed through training, technology, and careful selection processes. These female fighter pilots not only serve in demanding combat roles but also represent the true meaning of “Nari Shashaktikaran” (empowerment of women), showing that women are capable of achieving excellence in even

the most challenging and dangerous professions. Their success in combat roles has already inspired many other women to pursue similar careers, breaking down long-standing barriers and proving that women's empowerment is not just a slogan, but a reality.

\*Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Empowerment Bill)\*

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Empowerment Bill) is a significant milestone in the journey toward achieving gender equality and empowering women in India. This bill has a long and complex history, deeply rooted in the debates and struggles that have shaped India's political landscape. Let's take a detailed look at the long journey leading to this momentous bill and how it reflects the nation's commitment to empowering its women.

The late Sharad Yadav, a Member of Parliament, in his speech in 1997 while discussing the Women Reservation Bill, made a statement that would become part of the historical narrative of women's empowerment in India. He emphasized that women should not be excluded based on superficial traits such as short hair. This was in response to the Constitutional Amendment Bill of 1996, which aimed to reserve a certain percentage of seats for women in the Parliament. The bill was introduced by the government led



by Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, with the backing of Law Minister Ramakant D. Khalap. However, it faced opposition even from members within the coalition government, which led to it being sent to a joint committee for further review. Despite modifications, the bill could not be passed due to political disagreements, especially on the issue of caste-based reservations.

The debate over women's reservation in the legislature was not new; it dated back to the very formation of India's Constitution. Dr. BR Ambedkar, one of the chief architects of the Constitution, supported the idea of reservations for women, but this was opposed by some members, including Dakshayani Velayudan, a Dalit woman in the Constituent Assembly. She argued against any form of reservation, and so did other members like Renuka Ray, although she strongly advocated for women's rights and equality. Ray believed that women should be treated equally without gender bias and trusted the Constitution and the Indian people to safeguard women's rights.

After independence, the debate over the representation of women in politics continued, gaining momentum in the 1970s. This period saw an increasing call for the improvement of women's status, which eventually led to the formation of a committee focused on the "status of women." The committee recommended reservations

for women in state legislatures and Parliament. In 1983, Karnataka became the first state to introduce a 25% reservation for women in Panchayat elections. Over the years, various recommendations for reservation for women followed. In 1988, the National Commission for Women recommended 30% reservation for women, but the bill faced resistance and opposition when introduced in Parliament. The opposition's stand against it, particularly due to concerns about caste-based reservations, hindered the bill's progress.

Despite the challenges, the idea of empowering women through reservation persisted. In 1992, the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments provided reservation for women in Panchayat and Municipal elections, marking a significant victory for women's participation in local governance. However, the path to women's participation in the national Parliament remained blocked.

When the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government came into power between 1998 and 2004, it made concerted efforts to push the Women's Reservation Bill. However, the opposition parties, particularly the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and Samajwadi Party (SP), fiercely opposed the bill, leading to its rejection in Parliament. The bill was reintroduced multiple times, including in 1999 and 2000, but faced continuous



roadblocks from the opposition. The government remained steadfast in its efforts to increase women's representation in Indian politics, understanding the need for a transformative change.

By 2004, when the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government came to power, the Women's Reservation Bill was again brought to the forefront. Despite facing opposition from its own allies, such as the RJD, the bill was reintroduced in 2008 and passed in the Rajya Sabha in 2010. Unfortunately, it failed to pass in the Lok Sabha, and the dream of women's full representation in Parliament remained unfulfilled.

The consistent failure of the Women's Reservation Bill in the years following independence, despite multiple attempts by successive governments, led to frustration. However, the Modi government, which has been a strong advocate for women's empowerment since its inception, took a bold step in 2023. The government introduced the Constitution (128<sup>th</sup> Amendment) Bill, 2023, commonly known as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, as the first bill in the newly inaugurated Parliament building, which was part of the ambitious Central Vista Project. This was seen as a clear indication of the government's commitment to women's empowerment and their active participation in the political process.

The bill proposes reserving one-third of seats in Parliament and State Legislatures for women, a significant step toward achieving gender equality. This reservation will be implemented after the completion of the delimitation process and will be valid for 15 years, with the possibility of continuation through laws passed by Parliament. The bill also stipulates the rotation of seats after each delimitation, ensuring that women from various parts of the country and from different backgrounds will be able to participate in policy-making.

The Introduction of this bill was welcomed not only in India but across the world. The UN Women's organization hailed it as a remarkable and transformative change in the dynamics of women's political participation. Susan Ferguson, the India Country Representative of UN Women, emphasized that achieving a critical mass of 30% representation of women in Parliament is known to yield positive outcomes for women's empowerment.

In conclusion, the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam represents a significant achievement in India's ongoing efforts to empower women and elevate their role in the country's political landscape. The bill marks a pivotal moment in the journey toward gender equality and the empowerment of women in India, reflecting the government's unwavering commitment



to strengthening women's rights and dignity. This bill is a testament to the progress that has been made, and it offers hope for a future where the rights and voices of women are celebrated, safeguarded, and integrated into the decision-making process at every level

of governance. Through this historic move, India continues to move closer to the vision of a society where gender equality is a fundamental principle and where every woman can contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of the nation.



## National Commission for Women (NCW)



The National Commission for Women (NCW) was established on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1992 as a statutory body to safeguard and promote the rights of women in India. Its primary responsibility is to investigate and address issues related to the violation of women's rights, offer relief to affected women, and recommend measures for the effective implementation of laws safeguarding women's rights. The Commission also reviews laws impacting women, suggests amendments, and addresses complaints regarding women's rights violations. Additionally, NCW engages in

research studies, collaborates with authorities for gender sensitization, and participates in planning for women's socio-economic development.

The NCW processes complaints through collaboration with various authorities such as the State Police, Women's State Commissions, and Legal Service Authorities. The Commission also provides suggestions on improving conditions for women in jails and remand homes to ensure humane treatment and well-being. From January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, the NCW registered a total of 34,998 complaints. The complaints



were analyzed based on their nature and state distribution. To address the rising number of complaints, NCW organizes Mahila Jan Sunwai in collaboration with District Legal Service Authorities (DLSA) and local police. The Commission also launched a 24x7 Helpline (7827170170) in July 2021, which has received over 2,72,807 calls between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, and March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. This helpline provides women in distress with online support and connects them with appropriate authorities. The NCW's NRI Cell addresses complaints related to NRI marriages, such as domestic violence, desertion, dowry demands, child custody issues, and more. The Commission adopts a convergent approach, working with ministries such as Women and Child Development, External Affairs, and Home Affairs to expedite legal proceedings and provide relief to affected women. During the mentioned period, the NRI Cell received 638 complaints and conducted 17 hearings for follow-up and resolution.

NCW takes suo motu cognizance of serious violations of women's rights based on media reports and complaints. Action Taken Reports (ATR) are sought from relevant authorities, and the Commission

closely monitors the progress of these cases. From January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, 351 matters were taken up, 670 ATRs were received, and 167 cases were closed. NCW has conducted consultations and reviews on important legal issues affecting women, including:

- ❖ Review of The Family Courts Act, 1984
- ❖ Review of Muslim Personal Law for Women's Rights
- ❖ Review of Marriage and Divorce Laws across Communities
- ❖ Review of Women's Rights under Property Law

The NCW conducted multiple seminars and awareness programs in the North East region to address various women-centric issues. Some of the key seminars include:

- ❖ “Women and Health, A Holistic and Life-cycle Approach” (May 2023, Assam)
- ❖ “Women in Health” (Nov 2023, Meghalaya)
- ❖ “Safety of Domestic Workers” (July 2023, Mizoram) These initiatives were aimed at raising awareness and empowering women in the region.



The NCW collaborates with government, research organizations, and universities to implement gender-specific research studies and seminars. The approved themes for the 2023-24 financial year include topics such as women in decision-making roles, health, and the challenges faced by women farmers and daily wage laborers. The NCW regularly inspects jails, psychiatric homes, and other custodial institutions to ensure that women are treated humanely. The Commission formulates recommendations based on these inspections to improve conditions and provide a better quality of life for women housed in such institutions.

#### Capacity Building and Women Welfare

##### Legal Awareness Programmes:

The National Commission for Women in collaboration with National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has organized awareness camps at

Taluka level to impart practical knowledge about the basic legal rights and remedies provided under various women related laws, thereby making them fit to face the challenges in real life situations. A total of 524 camps have been organised for women at taluka level in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Haryana from 12<sup>th</sup> July to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023 wherein approximately 31,000 women participated. The Commission launched Legal Awareness Programme “Vidhaan Se Samadhan” for women at Block level in collaboration with NALSA. The program was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Justice Dr. D.Y. Chandrachud in the presence of Hon'ble Minister of State of Law and Justice Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal. The objective of the program is to impart practical knowledge about basic legal rights and remedies provided to women under various laws while also making women at block level aware of the competent authorities to approach in order to seek redressal thereby ensuring legal literacy among women in a total of 7266 blocks in the country. During the programme, 2-3 women will be identified from each block as potential master trainers who can further impart legal knowledge at the local level.

## Women Empowerment and Protection



The Indian Constitution embodies the principle of gender equality, ensuring that women have equal rights and protection under the law. It not only guarantees equality but also empowers the government to adopt policies aimed at uplifting women, addressing the socio-economic and political challenges they face. Women in India have the fundamental right to be free from discrimination based on sex and gender. Additionally, the Constitution mandates that every citizen renounce practices that demean the dignity of women. There are specific legal

provisions to protect and support the most vulnerable women in society, and the government is working diligently to ensure that laws related to women's rights are effectively enforced.

### Empowerment of Women

Empowerment refers to the process of enabling women to claim their rights and access equal opportunities across various spheres of life—economic, cultural, social, and political. This process involves enabling women to exercise their freedom, especially in decision-making roles, both within the family



and in society at large. Empowerment is also about helping women realize their full potential and play an active role in the development of their communities. Achieving this requires continuous efforts from the government, civil society, and women themselves to overcome barriers and ensure that women have the necessary tools, resources, and opportunities to lead fulfilling lives.

#### Sexual Harassment at the Workplace

The government has recognized the need to create safe spaces for women in all environments, especially workplaces. In 2013, the government enacted the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, which aims to provide women with a safe working environment where their dignity is respected. This law covers women of all ages and employment statuses, including students, apprentices, laborers, domestic workers, and even visitors to workplaces. To ensure effective implementation of this law, the government has introduced an online platform called She-Box, where women can file complaints of sexual harassment. This platform allows complaints to be directly forwarded to the concerned authorities, speeding up

the process of seeking redress. Moreover, the Ministry has published handbooks and training modules to educate individuals and organizations about the Act and its practical applications.

#### Child Marriage Prevention

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has been actively working to eradicate child marriage, which remains a significant challenge in some regions of India. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 aims to prevent child marriages by penalizing those who promote or abet such practices. In line with this, the government has taken several initiatives, such as collaborating with state governments to delay marriages, particularly during festivals that are known for child marriages. The government also uses public platforms like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, International Women's Day, and National Girl Child Day to raise awareness about the harms of child marriage. Additionally, the Ministry introduced the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021 to raise the minimum legal age for women to marry to 21, aligning it with that of men. This bill is intended to strengthen the existing law and protect the rights of girls.



### Domestic Violence Protection

The government is working to safeguard women's rights within the domestic sphere, where many women face violence. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 was created to protect women from violence within their homes and provide them with immediate relief. This law recognizes women's right to live free from violence and supports them in cases of physical, emotional, or psychological harm caused by domestic relationships. Alongside legal provisions, the government has also emphasized awareness programs to change societal mindsets that often tolerate or perpetuate such violence.

### Dowry Prohibition

Dowry remains a persistent social evil in India. To combat this, the government enacted the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, which criminalizes the giving and taking of dowry. This Act aims to eliminate the practice of dowry by punishing those who engage in it. The Ministry has been working on ensuring that this law is enforced effectively by encouraging the appointment of Dowry Prohibition Officers and creating awareness around the negative effects of dowry. Through continuous advocacy, the government aims to change societal attitudes and

reduce the prevalence of dowry-related crimes.

### Indecent Representation of Women

The government has also addressed the issue of the indecent representation of women through the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986. This Act prohibits the portrayal of women in a demeaning or derogatory manner in the media, advertisements, and publications. It is designed to protect the dignity of women by preventing the exploitation of their image in ways that undermine their status. The Act also aims to curb materials that objectify women and foster negative perceptions of them.

### Prevention of Sati

The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 was introduced to prevent the inhuman practice of sati, where widows were forced to commit self-immolation or were glorified for doing so. The Act punishes those who attempt or abet the commission of sati, as well as those who glorify it. This legislation seeks to protect women from such archaic and harmful practices.

### Human Trafficking Prevention

Human trafficking, especially



the trafficking of women and children, is a serious issue in India. The government has put in place measures to prevent human trafficking and to offer rehabilitation services to the victims. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 penalizes those involved in commercial sexual exploitation and seeks to rehabilitate victims. Additionally, the government has been working on developing a comprehensive legal framework to address human trafficking through the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018. This bill seeks to strengthen laws around human trafficking, focusing on victim protection and rehabilitation. The government has committed to ensuring that human trafficking is tackled with a more victim-centered approach, offering both legal and social support to victims.

#### Mission Shakti: A Comprehensive Program for Women's Empowerment

In 2021, the Ministry introduced Mission Shakti, an umbrella scheme aimed at enhancing the safety, security, and empowerment of women. This initiative seeks to address the challenges faced by women throughout their life-cycle and promote their active participation in nation-building. The program encourages collaboration

across different government departments and local bodies to ensure that women's issues are addressed comprehensively. Mission Shakti also focuses on building a digital infrastructure that can help track and improve the delivery of services to women, ensuring that women-led development becomes a reality across the country.

These initiatives reflect the Indian government's strong commitment to improving the lives of women through a mix of legal protections, policy frameworks, and active empowerment programs. By ensuring safety, reducing discrimination, and providing economic opportunities, these efforts contribute to creating a society where women can live with dignity, freedom, and respect.

#### Mission Shakti: A Comprehensive Scheme for Women's Safety and Empowerment

Mission Shakti is a well-structured initiative designed to support women throughout various stages of their lives by offering continuous assistance. The mission is divided into two sub-schemes: 'Sambal' and 'Samarthya'. While 'Sambal' focuses on the safety and security of women, 'Samarthya' is centered around

their empowerment. Here's a detailed breakdown of the components under both sub-schemes:

**Sambal: Ensuring Women's Safety and Security**

**One Stop Centres (OSCs):**

One of the key components under Sambal is the establishment of One Stop Centres. These centers offer integrated services such as legal advice, psychosocial counseling, and essential support for women. The aim is to create a space where women can receive help related to various challenges, including legal issues, emotional distress, and guidance about available welfare schemes, all under one roof.

**Women Helpline (181-WHL):**

The Women Helpline is another vital part of Sambal, providing a 24/7 emergency and non-emergency response service. Women facing violence or distress can reach out to this toll-free number, which links them to relevant authorities such as the police, medical services, or OSCs. This helpline is also integrated with the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112) to further strengthen the response mechanism.

**Beti Bachao Beti**

**Padhao (BBBP):**

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao program, aimed at changing societal attitudes towards the girl child, has been expanded to cover all districts in the country. This initiative seeks to improve the sex ratio at birth and encourage the education and empowerment of girls. It uses a multi-sectoral approach, focusing on generating awareness and fostering positive behavioral change.

**Sakhi Niwas:**

Under Sambal, Sakhi Niwas provides safe accommodation for working women, particularly in urban areas with high job potential. This initiative ensures that women have a secure place to stay while contributing to the workforce, helping to overcome barriers related to housing insecurity.

**Palna – Creche Facilities:**

To support working women, the Palna scheme offers crèche facilities





that provide safe spaces for the children of working mothers. This initiative is aimed at increasing female workforce participation by ensuring women can work without worrying about their children's safety and care.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):

This scheme compensates for income loss during pregnancy and childbirth, promoting health-seeking behavior. Initially covering only the first child, PMMVY now extends benefits for a second child as well, especially if the child is a girl.

SANKALP (Supportive Action Nurturing and Knowledge-Based Advancement):

Under the Samarthya sub-scheme, SANKALP aims to provide women with all necessary resources and support for empowerment. It serves as a single window for women to access various government schemes and services, helping them realize their full potential.

Nari Adalat:

Nari Adalat is a new initiative that provides women with an alternate grievance redressal mechanism for resolving minor issues such as harassment or violations of their rights. This serves as a localized and

accessible option for women seeking justice.

Samarthya: Empowering Women for Self-Reliance

Shakti Sadans:

Shakti Sadans are integrated relief and rehabilitation homes designed to support women who need assistance due to various circumstances. These homes serve as safe havens for women, offering them shelter, support, and resources for their rehabilitation.

SANKALP: Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW):

The SANKALP program is a comprehensive effort to empower women by connecting them with resources and opportunities. The program operates through a three-tier system (National, State, and District levels) with a team of experts in gender, financial inclusion, IT, and more, ensuring the effective delivery of services and support to women.

Outreach and Awareness Campaigns:

The SANKALP centers organize widespread outreach programs to raise awareness on issues affecting women, such as safety, health, financial literacy, and digital skills. These campaigns are conducted in collaboration with other



initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) to ensure maximum impact.

#### Capacity Building:

Regular capacity-building programs are conducted for staff at the SANKALP centers to ensure that they are well-equipped to carry out their responsibilities efficiently. This helps in improving the quality of services provided to women and ensures the sustainability of the empowerment initiatives.

#### Achievements and Future Focus

##### One Stop Centres (OSCs):

Since its launch in April 2015, the One Stop Centre (OSC) scheme has helped over 8.82 lakh women across the country. With 816 OSCs approved in 762 districts, the scheme provides critical services to women affected by violence, offering a combination of police, medical, legal, and psychological support. The scheme is funded through the Nirbhaya Fund and continues to integrate with other support systems for improved service delivery.

##### Women Helpline (WHL):

Operational since April 2015, the Women Helpline provides 24/7 support to women through a single toll-free number (181). This helpline has

received over 1.47 crore calls since its inception, offering assistance through referrals to police, hospitals, OSCs, and other relevant services. It is an essential tool for women in distress, offering immediate assistance in times of need.

##### Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative is a strategic program aimed at changing societal attitudes and behaviors toward the girl child. The focus of this program is to create widespread awareness about the importance of valuing the girl child, with a strong emphasis on multi-sectoral interventions that foster gender equality. Initially, the scheme was implemented in 405 districts, but with its success, it has now been extended to all districts across India. A key aspect of the scheme is zero-budget advertising, which allows the campaign to effectively focus on impactful grassroots activities. These interventions include promoting sports among girls, setting up self-defense camps, improving infrastructure like girls' toilets, installing sanitary napkin vending machines in educational institutions, and raising awareness about the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC-PNDT) Act.



In addition, the program has been further integrated into the Mission Shakti framework under the Sambal sub-scheme for continuity during the 15th Finance Commission period. With new partners such as the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and the Ministry of Minority Affairs, the focus has expanded to include skill-building initiatives for young girls, further promoting their empowerment.

#### BBBP Scheme Expansion and Fund Allocation

As part of its strategic evolution, the BBBP scheme has been expanded to include a broader set of districts across the country, covering all states and union territories in the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission period. The expansion is aligned with a detailed analysis of the district-specific Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) data. This ensures that the funding under the BBBP scheme is targeted effectively according to the

districts' specific needs, with differentiated support provided based on the SRB. Districts with lower SRBs receive higher funding, ensuring that the most disadvantaged areas are prioritized for intervention. The

financial assistance ranges from Rs. 40 lakh per year for districts with an SRB of 918 or below to Rs. 20 lakh per year for those with an SRB of 952 or above. These measures are intended to curb the imbalance in the sex ratio and to promote a more equitable and fair treatment of girls in society.

#### Objectives and Target Groups of BBBP

The primary goal of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative is to tackle gender-based discrimination and eliminate practices such as sex-selective abortion. The scheme's objectives include ensuring the survival, protection, education, and overall development of the girl child. By addressing these core issues, BBBP aims to create a society where every girl is valued and supported. The program targets various key groups to ensure its widespread impact. These include young and newly married couples, expecting parents,



adolescents, youth, communities, schools, Anganwadi Centers (AWCs), healthcare professionals, and local officials. The initiative also partners with women's collectives, self-help groups (SHGs), and civil society organizations to foster community-wide awareness and action. These efforts are aimed at changing societal norms, promoting gender equality, and securing the rights of the girl child across India.

#### Funding and Implementation

The BBBP scheme is fully funded by the Central Government, with the funds being routed through the state governments to the districts for implementation. This ensures that the program is implemented efficiently at the local level, with direct impact on the ground. A detailed operational manual has been developed to guide the districts in the effective execution of the scheme. This manual serves as a practical resource for ensuring that each district can customize its approach based on local needs, while adhering to the broader objectives of the program. Additionally, an activity calendar has been developed to facilitate year-round engagement with the target groups, ensuring that the awareness and interventions do not remain limited to specific periods but are a continuous effort throughout the year.

#### Multi-Sectoral Interventions and Coverage of the Scheme

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative operates on a multi-sectoral intervention model, which encompasses various activities aimed at directly benefiting girls in every district across the country. The scheme's focus is on practical, on-the-ground activities such as organizing sports events, conducting self-defense training, improving sanitation infrastructure, and distributing sanitary napkins in schools. This approach is designed to foster tangible improvements in the lives of girls. The scheme also places a strong emphasis on zero-budget advertising, aiming to maximize the impact of grassroots activities rather than spending on traditional media campaigns. Funding for these interventions is provided through the state governments, ensuring localized execution.

Furthermore, as part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission period, BBBP has expanded its coverage to include all the districts of India, moving beyond the phased implementation that was initially in place. This all-India expansion aims to bring about nationwide change by providing consistent and uniform support to all districts, allowing the scheme to address challenges specific to different



regions and communities.

### Monitoring and Achievement of the BBBP Scheme

The monitoring mechanism for the BBBP initiative operates at multiple levels—national, state, and district levels. This decentralized monitoring system ensures that the program's implementation is constantly tracked and any issues are addressed promptly. The scheme has achieved significant success in raising awareness and altering public attitudes toward the girl child. It has sparked widespread conversations on gender equality and led to increased public sensitivity on issues such as the declining child sex ratio (CSR) in India.

The BBBP scheme's efforts have shown measurable improvements in various key indicators. For example, the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) has improved significantly, rising from 918 in 2014-15 to 933 in 2022-23, based on data from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. The enrollment rate for girls in secondary education has also increased, from 75.51% in 2014-15 to 79.4% in 2021-22. These improvements demonstrate the success of the BBBP program in achieving its goals and making a substantial impact on the lives of girls across the country.

### National Girl Child Day

### Celebrations

National Girl Child Day (NGCD) is a key event for the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative, celebrated annually to honor the girl child and highlight the importance of gender equality. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) has consistently used this day to mobilize communities and raise awareness. In January 2023, the ministry focused on a series of activities under the NGCD campaign, which involved various stakeholders from local communities, schools, and organizations. These activities ranged from competitions, discussions, and sensitization programs to tree plantation drives, which helped amplify the campaign's message.

In 2024, the Ministry celebrated NGCD with an even more vibrant and participatory approach, organizing events at the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD). The celebrations included painting competitions on themes related to India's vision of development with a focus on the girl child, cultural performances by children, and community engagement activities. A notable highlight was the collaboration with Boeing India, which helped create an impressive unicycle performance by



children from Shishu Mandir, Bangalore, showcasing the immense talent and potential of young girls. The five-day NGCD celebration across the country included various initiatives such as door-to-door campaigns, awareness programs on menstrual hygiene, and recognition of local champions who have made significant contributions in the fields of education, sports, and social welfare.

These activities, along with the ongoing efforts under BBBP, have played an essential role in changing societal perceptions and making the empowerment of the girl child a priority at every level of government and community engagement.

The anticipated outcomes of Nari Adalat include increased awareness about rights and government schemes, reduction in domestic violence cases, the empowerment of women as pressure groups, countering the patriarchal system, increased reporting of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), qualitative results such as enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem, reduced burden on the police and formal judiciary system, and improved access to resources such as maintenance and property rights for women.

Nari Adalat is being

implemented at the Gram Panchayat level as part of a pilot project in selected States and Union Territories, namely, Assam and Jammu & Kashmir. 50 units each of Nari Adalat to be set up for Assam and J&K. 2.40 As per the cost norms and proposal received from the selected State/UT, total funds released for F.Y. 2023-24 is Rs. 42.40 lakh; J&K: Rs. 21.60 Lakh and Assam: Rs. 20.80 Lakh.

#### Samarthya Scheme for Women's Empowerment

The Samarthya Scheme is designed to provide support for women in distress situations, helping them to overcome challenges and difficult circumstances. Under this scheme, financial assistance is offered for operating Shakti Sadan, which are shelters for such women. These shelters are typically located in rented properties and are equipped to provide basic necessities and support to women facing challenging life situations.

Shakti Sadan shelters offer comprehensive support, including shelter, food, clothing, counselling, primary health services, and other daily requirements for women. In addition, these women are given access to vocational training, the opportunity to open bank accounts, and social security benefits through coordination with



relevant government departments. The scheme also covers the costs associated with managing and operating these shelters, such as administrative expenses, rent, and management fees, which are allocated according to city categories (A, B, or C). Furthermore, women staying in Shakti Sadan receive repatriation support, which includes financial aid for reintegration and a monthly allowance to cater to their basic needs.

One of the key features of Shakti Sadan is its provision for the children of the women who seek refuge there. Unmarried girls of any age and boys up to 12 years can stay with their mothers in the shelter, while boys older than 12 years are moved to specialized children's homes. The shelters are also closely linked with nearby police stations to ensure the safety and security of the women residing there. Moreover, the staff of these homes undergo annual police verification to maintain safety standards.

In some cases, homes can be set up specifically for women with mental challenges or disabilities in collaboration with other relevant departments, ensuring that the needs of these women are also addressed. This scheme follows a 60:40 funding ratio, with 60% of the financial support provided by the central government

and 40% by the state governments. For states in the North East and special categories, the funding ratio is more favorable, with 90% provided by the central government. As of March 2024, 445 Shakti Sadan homes are operational across India, with a total funding of ₹118.98 crore released for their implementation in the 2023-24 financial year.

#### Sakhi Niwas Scheme (Working Women Hostels)

The Sakhi Niwas Scheme is another initiative under the Mission Shakti, aimed at providing safe and convenient accommodation for working women in urban, semi-urban, and rural areas. This scheme is primarily focused on single women, widows, divorced or separated women, and women living away from their families for work or training. The scheme also offers a provision for day-care centers for the children of women residing in these hostels.

Financial assistance is provided to establish these working women hostels in rented spaces, making them accessible to women from different backgrounds. Women residing in these hostels are entitled to use the facilities if their monthly income is below a specific threshold. In metropolitan cities, the income limit is ₹50,000 per



month, while in other areas, it is ₹35,000. The scheme helps facilitate the availability of affordable housing options for women who otherwise face challenges in finding suitable accommodation due to their personal and professional circumstances.

The Sakhi Niwas Scheme also operates under a 60:40 funding ratio, with the central government contributing 60% and the state governments contributing 40%. However, for states in the North East and special categories, the funding ratio is 90:10, and for Union Territories without legislatures, the central government covers 100% of the cost. As of March 2024, 463 Sakhi Niwas centers are functional across the country, providing support to working women.

#### Palna Scheme – Childcare Facilities for Working Mothers

The Palna Scheme addresses the need for quality child-care services for the children of working women, as the increasing number of nuclear families and growing urbanization has led to a rise in the number of working mothers. Many working women, particularly those in the unorganized sector, face difficulties in managing childcare while balancing work responsibilities. The lack of adequate daycare services

often becomes a barrier for these women to participate fully in the workforce.

The scheme aims to provide day-care and crèche facilities to children from 6 months to 6 years of age, ensuring their safety, well-being, and development while their mothers are at work. The crèches under this scheme are designed to offer not just child care, but also nutritional support, health care, cognitive development, and education for the children. This initiative is part of the broader efforts to increase female workforce participation and promote decent work conditions for women.

Palna is a centrally sponsored scheme implemented in collaboration with state and UT governments, with a funding ratio of 60:40 between the central and state governments. For the North East and special category states, the ratio is 90:10, and for Union Territories without legislatures, the central government funds the scheme fully. As part of the scheme, the government is planning to establish 17,000 Anganwadi cum Crèches by the fiscal year 2025-26. These crèches aim to bridge the gap in the availability of quality childcare services and support the economic empowerment of women.

The Palna Scheme serves a



broad spectrum of working women, providing crèche facilities to all mothers, regardless of their employment status. The crèches not only support children's growth and development but also help mothers take up gainful employment, contributing to the overall economic progress.

#### Anganwadi cum Crèche Scheme – Palna Initiative

The Anganwadi cum Crèche scheme, also known as Palna, plays a pivotal role in supporting working women by offering child care services. The scheme ensures that Anganwadi Centers (AWCCs) are more accessible to women in need of child care while also contributing to the social fabric by creating employment opportunities for women. The government's focus on intra-ministerial convergence, particularly with the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and the POSHAN (Nutrition) schemes, ensures that the initiative is comprehensive in its approach.

The scheme complies with the Labour Laws and the Maternity Benefits Act, ensuring that women receive the support they need while maintaining their careers. To make the initiative more impactful, the government has allocated additional staff per AWCC, comprising a Crèche

Worker and a Crèche Helper, in addition to the existing Anganwadi Worker and Anganwadi Helper. This additional staffing will not only improve the services provided at AWCCs but also generate employment opportunities for women.

In 2023-24, the Ministry of Women & Child Development made significant strides in expanding the scheme. After extensive consultations with states, the guidelines for Palna were revised to introduce new features and enhance the provisions under the scheme. As a result, a budgetary provision was introduced to ensure the effective implementation of these changes. By the end of 2023, a total of 3134 AWCCs were approved across various states, contributing to the expansion of child care services. As of now, 5631 AWCCs have been approved, with continued plans for further expansion.

In a significant development, the Ministry of Women & Child Development, along with the Ministry of Labour & Employment, jointly organized a National Programme on Anganwadi cum Crèches. The event, held on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2023 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, featured the release of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for AWCCs, offering operational guidance for the



implementation of the scheme.

Further, the government addressed longstanding demands by releasing the National Minimum Standards and Protocol for Crèches. This initiative aims to institutionalize the care economy and contribute significantly to the vision of 'Women-led Development'. It focuses on standardizing crèches across the country and provides guidance for various organizations such as service agencies, hospitals, educational institutions, and NGOs to set up crèches under the mandate of government acts and rules.

#### Section 2: Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

Launched in 2017, the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is another landmark initiative aimed at supporting women during pregnancy and childbirth. The scheme aims to provide partial compensation for wage loss, ensuring that women can take adequate rest before and after the delivery of their first living child. This cash incentive, offered in two instalments, ensures that pregnant women and lactating mothers (PW&LM) can focus on their health without financial strain.

The PMMVY aims to promote positive behavioural change towards

the girl child, offering additional cash incentives if the second child is a girl. The scheme provides a maternity benefit of at least ₹5000 for the first two children, with an additional ₹1000 provided for the second child if it is a girl. This provision is crucial in improving the sex ratio at birth and preventing female feticide. The initiative also encourages the timely registration of pregnancies, which is mandatory to avail the benefits for the second child.

To prevent duplication and ensure transparency, benefits under PMMVY are linked to the Aadhaar Number of the beneficiary. This mechanism helps eliminate malpractices and ensures that benefits are provided to those who truly need them. The Palna and PMMVY initiatives reflect the government's strong commitment to empowering women and supporting their participation in the workforce. By providing essential childcare and maternity benefits, these programs help women balance family and work responsibilities. Through continued expansion and refinement, these schemes hold the potential to significantly improve the welfare of women and children across India. However Since the inception of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana



till 31.03.2024 more than 3.89 Cr. Beneficiaries have been enrolled out of which more than 3.38 Cr. Beneficiaries have been given the benefit with a total disbursement of more than Rs. 15,122.31/- Cr. Scheme is being implemented across the country through PMMVY soft MIS software and changes as per PMMVY 2.0 are incorporated in it.

#### Few More Highlights:

**Home for Widows:** A shelter for widows has been established in Vrindavan, fully funded by the Government of India through the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The facility can accommodate up to 1,000 widows, providing a secure environment with health services, nutritious food, legal aid, and counseling. The home is designed to cater to the elderly, ensuring it is age-friendly and accessible to individuals with special needs. It is the largest widow shelter in India, inaugurated on August 31, 2018.

**Mission Shakti Dashboard:** The Mission Shakti Dashboard is an online platform designed for real-time monitoring of services and activities as per Mission Shakti guidelines. This system helps track services provided through One Stop Centres (OSCs) and initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti

Padhao. It offers a user-friendly interface for reporting, ensuring data confidentiality, and provides a comprehensive overview of services, stakeholders, and beneficiaries.

**Support to Women in NRI Marriages:** Indian women married to Non-Resident Indian (NRI) men often face difficulties such as desertion, violence, and marital issues, which are complicated by cross-border legal challenges. The Government of India formed a committee led by Justice Arvind Kumar Goel to address these issues and suggest improvements in laws and policies to help these women access justice. As a result, a dedicated Integrated Nodal Agency has been established to resolve such matters, with involvement from key government ministries.

**NRI Marital Dispute Support:** To assist Indian women facing marital issues with NRI spouses, the government has proposed setting up facilities like One Stop Centres and helplines in Indian diplomatic missions (IDMs) abroad. These centers, identified in nine countries, will provide assistance to women in need, and the Ministry of External Affairs has been working to ensure their implementation.

**Combating Cyber-Crime:** With



the increase in cybercrime targeting women, the Ministry has partnered with the Ministry of Home Affairs to launch a comprehensive Cyber Crime Portal. This portal allows citizens to report online content related to child pornography, sexual abuse, and explicit material without revealing their identity, ensuring privacy. Police authorities handle complaints submitted through the portal, and users can track their reports.

**National Database on Sexual Offenders:** The National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO), managed by the Ministry of Home Affairs and maintained by NCRB, is an online registry of sexual offenders across India. It serves as a resource for authorities to monitor and track individuals involved in sexual offenses.

**Service Provision to Women during COVID-19:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, women and children were disproportionately affected by the crisis. To ensure continued support, the Ministry issued advisories to keep One Stop Centres and Women Helplines operational throughout the lockdown. This ensured that women experiencing violence or requiring assistance could still access crucial services, including legal, medical, and psychological support.

**Nirbhaya Fund:** The Nirbhaya Fund was established by the Government of India to support initiatives aimed at enhancing women's safety and security. It is a non-lapsable fund managed by the Ministry of Finance, with Rs. 7212.85 crore allocated as of 2023-24. The Ministry of Women and Child Development is responsible for appraising, monitoring, and reviewing the schemes funded under the Nirbhaya Fund.

**Framework of Nirbhaya Fund:** A framework for the Nirbhaya Fund was created to streamline the approval and implementation of projects aimed at improving women's safety. Central and state ministries and departments can submit proposals for projects under this fund, which are then reviewed by an empowered committee.

**Approval Process for Nirbhaya Fund Projects:** Central and state ministries may propose projects related to women's safety and submit them for approval to the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The Empowered Committee, headed by the Secretary of the Ministry, appraises these projects and ensures their implementation by the relevant ministries or state governments.

## A Comprehensive Framework for Progress



Women's empowerment is about improving the lives of women and strengthening the entire nation. When women have equal opportunities, access to education, economic independence, and social security, they contribute significantly to the progress of society. The Government of India has been working tirelessly to ensure that women in the country are safe, secure, and empowered. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has introduced several initiatives and programs that focus on the well-being, security, and financial independence of women.

These programs aim to help women at every stage of their lives, ensuring they receive proper healthcare, education, and employment opportunities while also protecting them from violence and discrimination.

Over the past few years, major programs such as Mission Shakti, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) have played a crucial role in improving the lives of women. These initiatives focus on different aspects of women's empowerment, including safety, financial assistance, education,



and maternal health. The efforts of the government have led to remarkable progress in multiple areas. For instance, the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) has shown improvement, increasing from 918 girls per 1,000 boys in 2014-15 to 930 in 2023-24. Similarly, more girls are now enrolled in secondary schools, with the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) rising from 75.51% in 2014-15 to 78% in 2023-24. These changes reflect the growing awareness and support for girls' education and well-being across the country.

One of the most significant programs launched by the government is Mission Shakti, an umbrella initiative that focuses on ensuring women's safety, security, and empowerment. This program has been implemented during the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission period (2021-22 to 2025-26) and is divided into two main parts: Sambal (for safety and security) and Samarthya (for empowerment). Under the Sambal section, One Stop Centres (OSCs) have been established across the country to provide assistance to women facing violence and distress. These centers offer various services, including medical aid, legal support, temporary shelter, police assistance, and psychological counseling. As of December 2024, more than 10.61 lakh

women have received help from these centers, demonstrating their importance in protecting women's rights.

Another key component under Mission Shakti is the Women Helpline (181-WHL), which operates 24/7 to assist women in need. This helpline connects women with appropriate authorities such as the police, hospitals, legal aid services, and One Stop Centres, ensuring they receive immediate assistance. In addition to providing emergency support, the helpline also informs women about various welfare schemes available to them. By making these services easily accessible, the government has taken a major step toward creating a safer environment for women across the country.

Launched on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme aims to prevent gender-biased sex-selective abortions, ensure the survival and protection of the girl child, and promote education for girls. Over the years, this initiative has contributed significantly to changing societal attitudes toward daughters. According to reports from the Health Management Information System (HMIS) of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) has improved from 918 in 2014-15 to



930 in 2023-24, showing a positive shift in gender equality.

Education is a crucial aspect of women's empowerment, and the government has taken various measures to encourage families to educate their daughters. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of girls at the secondary level has increased from 75.51% in 2014-15 to 78% in 2023-24, as per data from the Ministry of Education (MoE). These numbers indicate that more girls are continuing their education, leading to better future opportunities for them. By supporting girls' education and challenging deep-rooted societal biases, the BBBP initiative is ensuring a brighter and more equal future for the women of India.

Legal justice is often difficult to access, especially for women in rural areas. To provide an alternative mechanism for resolving small disputes faced by women, the Nari Adalat program has been introduced. This initiative allows women to address issues such as harassment, curtailment of rights, or denial of entitlements at the Gram Panchayat level. The cases are resolved through negotiation, mediation, and mutual agreement, ensuring that justice is accessible, quick, and affordable for all women.

In addition to serving as a

grievance redressal forum, Nari Adalat also plays an important role in creating awareness about women's rights and entitlements. Women-centric organizations use this platform to educate women about legal provisions, government schemes, and social welfare programs. By bringing justice closer to the community, this initiative empowers women to stand up for their rights and seek fair treatment in society.

To help women who wish to work and achieve financial independence, the government has introduced several schemes that provide safe and secure accommodation as well as childcare facilities. Sakhi Niwas is a program that offers affordable and conveniently located accommodation for working women. This scheme ensures that women have a safe place to stay while pursuing their careers. Additionally, daycare centers are provided for the children of the residents, helping working mothers balance their professional and personal lives.

Another initiative, Palna, focuses on providing day-care creche facilities through Anganwadi Centres (AWCs), which are the largest childcare institutions in the world. This scheme ensures that young children receive proper care and nutrition while their mothers are at work. By offering reliable



childcare solutions, Palna enables women to work without worrying about their children's safety and well-being. Mothers also receive financial assistance under the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), which provides compensation for loss of wages due to pregnancy and childbirth. Earlier, this scheme covered only the first child, but it has now been extended to cover the second child if it is a girl, promoting gender equality. This financial aid helps pregnant women take proper rest and care for their newborns without facing economic hardships.

Good nutrition and health care are essential for women and children. To address this need, the government has introduced Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, which focuses on improving the health, wellness, and immunity of women and children. Across 781 districts in 36 States/UTs, there are 13,99,890 Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) providing services to nearly 9.88 crore beneficiaries. These centers offer nutritional support to pregnant women, lactating mothers, and young children, ensuring they receive adequate food and healthcare. Additionally, infrastructure improvements have been made to these centers. As of December 2024, 6,77,349 Anganwadi Centres have their own

buildings, 9,93,863 have functional toilets, and 12,31,201 have access to drinking water. These improvements ensure that women and children receive services in a safe and hygienic environment.

Another major achievement under this mission is the decline in the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR). Due to better maternal healthcare services and institutional deliveries, the MMR has dropped from 130 per lakh live births in 2014-16 to 97 per lakh live births in 2018-20. This decrease reflects the positive impact of government policies on maternal and child health.

Women's empowerment is a continuous process that requires persistent efforts at all levels. The government's initiatives have made significant progress in ensuring women's safety, education, economic independence, and healthcare. By addressing key challenges and providing supportive ecosystems, these programs have helped women gain autonomy and decision-making power in their lives. As India continues to focus on inclusive policies and institutional strengthening, the country moves closer to achieving true gender equality, where every woman can thrive and contribute to the nation's development.

# 100 days of Modi 3.0: Women-Led Development in the First 100 Days

A Transformative Journey

19 SEP 2024



As India marches toward realizing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047, the government's efforts are focused on ensuring no one is left behind—especially women. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by poor women, particularly in rural areas, the government has embarked on a series of transformative initiatives to empower them, harnessing their potential for national development.

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-  
National Rural Livelihoods Mission

One of the most notable

interventions has been through the Ministry of Rural Development's Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM). DAY-NRLM is the flagship program of Govt. of India for promoting poverty reduction through building strong institutions of the poor, particularly women, and enabling these institutions to access a range of financial services and livelihood services. DAY-NRLM is designed to be a highly intensive program and focuses on intensive application of human and material resources in order to mobilize the poor into functionally effective



community owned institutions, promote their financial inclusion and strengthen their livelihoods.

A women's Self-Help Group (SHG), coming together on the basis of mutual affinity is the primary building block of the DAY-NRLM community institutional design. DAY-NRLM focuses on building, nurturing and strengthening the institutions of the poor women, including the SHGs and their Federations at village and higher levels. In addition, DAY-NRLM promotes livelihood institutions of rural poor. This mission has successfully mobilized over 10.03 crore women into more than 92.06 lakh self-help groups (SHGs). These SHGs serve as engines of financial inclusion, digital literacy, sustainable livelihoods, and social development for women across India. By integrating a holistic approach to livelihood development, DAY-NRLM has empowered women to break free from the cycle of poverty and contribute significantly to the nation's growth.

#### Lakhpati Didi Yojana: Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

A Lakhpati Didi is a Self-Help Group member who earns an annual household income of Rupees One Lakh (Rs. 1,00,000) or more. This income is calculated for at least four agricultural seasons and/or business cycles, with an

average monthly income exceeding Rupees Ten Thousand (Rs. 10,000), so that it is sustainable. The Prime Minister's participation in the Lakhpati Didi Sannam in Jalgaon, Maharashtra, further highlighted the government's commitment to empowering women. During this event, PM Modi handed out certificates to 11 lakh women who became "Lakhpati Didis" during the government's third term. Under the Lakhpati Didi Yojana, these women have achieved financial independence, with a goal set to make three crore women Lakhpati Didis in the coming years.

To further fuel this movement, the Prime Minister released a revolving fund of Rs 2,500 crore benefiting about 48 lakh members of 4.3 lakh Self-Help Groups and disbursed bank loans worth Rs 5,000 crore which will benefit 25.8 lakh members of 2.35 lakh SHGs. Since the inception of the Lakhpati Didi Yojana, one crore women have already been made Lakhpati Didis and the government has set a target of three crore Lakhpati Didis.

This infusion of financial resources will provide the necessary support for women-led SHGs to expand their operations, improve their livelihoods, and create lasting economic growth in rural areas.



## Union Budget 2024-25: A Focus on Nari Shakti

The Union Budget for 2024-25, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, emphasized the critical role of Nari Shakti (women power) in India's development. A notable Rs 3.3 lakh crore has been allocated across various ministries for women's welfare and empowerment, which will boost participation in the workforce, enhance safety and security, and ensure an ecosystem of support through working women's hostels and crèches. Several other key initiatives have been introduced to empower women across various sectors:

1. **Working Women Hostels and Crèches:** To support women's participation in the workforce, the government will set up working women hostels in collaboration with industry and establish crèches. This will provide a safe and conducive environment for women to work while ensuring childcare support.

2. **Skilling and Employment:** A centrally sponsored scheme will be launched for skilling women in collaboration with state governments and industries. This initiative will skill 20 lakh youth over five years, which includes

opportunities for women to enhance their employability and financial independence.

3. **Mudra Loans:** The limit for Mudra loans will be increased from ₹10 lakh to ₹20 lakh for women entrepreneurs who have successfully repaid previous loans. This will support women in expanding their businesses and increasing their economic participation.

4. **Inclusive Economic Opportunities:** Schemes like Stand-Up India, National Livelihood Missions, and PM Vishwakarma will be scaled up to support women entrepreneurs, artisans, and self-help groups (SHGs), ensuring broader access to financial resources and opportunities for women-led businesses.

5. **Stamp Duty:** As per the Union Budget 2024, the Union Government will encourage states to moderate high stamp duty rates and consider further lowering duties for properties purchased by women, making this reform an essential component of urban development schemes.

These initiatives collectively focus on enhancing the economic and social empowerment of women,



helping them participate in India's development story.

Additionally, Hon. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted earlier in the Interim Budget that under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), 30 crore loans have been provided to women entrepreneurs, enabling them to launch and scale their businesses. Women's enrollment in higher education has increased by 28%, and in STEM fields, girls and women now represent 43% of all students—one of the highest rates globally.

#### Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY): A Path to Women's Empowerment

Housing is another area where the government has made significant strides in women's empowerment. More than 70% of houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) have been allocated to women, ensuring they have ownership and security over essential assets. In June 2024, after sanctioning 4.21 crore houses since the scheme's inception, the government committed to constructing an additional 3 crore houses, further cementing its dedication to providing dignified living conditions for all citizens.

A key feature of PMAY is its focus on making women the owners or

co-owners of houses, particularly for economically weaker sections and low-income groups. This not only provides women with financial security but also helps build their confidence and status within their communities. Furthermore, the scheme promotes environmentally sustainable and disaster-resilient construction practices, ensuring that rural housing is affordable, durable, and safe.

In addition to this, in order to ensure the quality of housing construction, the government has introduced nationwide training programs for rural masons, including women. These initiatives equip participants with the skills needed to construct resilient homes using locally available materials, empowering them to contribute to local economies and enhance their communities. Paryatan Didi & Paryatan Mitras initiatives have been started to create employment opportunities for women in the tourism sector.

#### A Collaborative Approach to Women-Led Development

Addressing the challenges faced by women in rural areas requires local knowledge and multi-stakeholder collaboration. Partnerships with NGOs, private organizations, and local communities have been pivotal in reaching the last mile and creating



sustainable change. These partnerships ensure that women are equipped with the necessary tools and resources to lift themselves out of poverty, enhancing the overall development of rural India.

With the mantra of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas," the government's holistic approach has laid a strong foundation for women-led development in its first 100 days. Through financial inclusion, social empowerment, housing security, and

livelihood creation, India's women are not only participants in but drivers of the nation's growth story. As the government continues to push forward with these initiatives, the vision of a developed India by 2047, where no woman is left behind, is becoming increasingly achievable.

S o u r c e : <https://pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?NoteId=152164&ModuleId=3&reg=3&lang=1>



## Empowerment of Women a pivotal focus of PM Modi's leadership

Raveena Tandon

(Raveena Tandon is an award-winning Indian actor) Sep 16, 2023,



India is a nation which has been a cradle to many brave hearts who have been instrumental in moulding the past, present and future thereby contributing towards nation building. Be it Rani Laxmibai and Rani Gaidinliu from the freedom movement era, who laid down their lives while protecting the integrity of the nation; or the sportswomen in the contemporary era who have brought laurels to the nation; or the women

scientists behind the Chandrayan 3 Lunar Mission, who played a significant role in propelling the nation towards becoming the first ever nation to land on south polar region – the nation has seen remarkable women belonging to different era and fields, being the catalyst to making the nation the global player which it is today. But still there have been many occasions and pressing issues which have



stagnated the growth of women and threatened their integrity in the past.

The film fraternity has been the mirror of the contemporary social evolutions, the Indian film industry has in the recent past witnessed a paradigm change in approach towards women, who are playing lead roles invariably on issues bearing a direct impact on society at large. The women playing lead roles is reflection of the emergence of strong women leaders in different sectors, a testimony to the gender parity being realised in the past few years.

Since taking office in 2014, PM Modi has consistently emphasized the importance of gender equality and the need to empower women in all spheres of life. Women empowerment has been a pivotal focus of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. The directional guidance of PM has also been very clear – he has steered the nation from just women development to women-led development. This is such a transformative change of approach and mindset that PM Modi's vision has now been echoed in G20 summit declaration as well.

Prime Minister Modi has adopted a comprehensive approach in order to promote gender-neutral equality and place women at the forefront of progressive developments.

This strategy encompasses a wide range of initiatives, including the launch of numerous programs catering to married and pregnant women, instituting changes in childbirth procedures, the implementation of various initiatives aimed at supporting and educating adolescent girls, and fostering a thriving workforce for career-oriented women. The government has displayed unwavering commitment to uplifting this historically marginalized segment of the population, thereby ushering in a transformative era for social change and women's empowerment.

I can say this because I myself have been part of the W20 sessions as a delegate where I have participated in discussions on various policy-making initiatives and programmes. The way PM Modi inspires people and motivates the workforce, it has impacted the lives of all sections and strata of women. The Modi Governments's programmes and policies have borne successful results, which is visible from several achievements such as improvement in sex ratio, improvement in maternal mortality ratio along with a significant rise in institutional delivery. A multitude of comprehensive women's welfare programs have been initiated,

including the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), designed to address heightened nutritional requirements and compensate for income loss among expectant mothers.

Additionally, the Labour Room Quality Improvement Initiative (LaQshya) has been introduced which aims to enhance the quality of care in labour rooms and maternity operation theatres to ensure that pregnant women receive respectful and high-quality care



during childbirth and the immediate post-partum period. The POSHAN Abhiyaan, implemented across all 36 States/Union Territories, covering approximately 730 Districts, including 112 Aspirational Districts, was launched with the objective of improving the nutritional status of children, adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.

PM Modi places a strong emphasis on the education of girls, a commitment that has yielded remarkable outcomes through his visionary policies. A significant stride in this direction is the approval of 5,646 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBVs) to promote widespread girl child education. Furthermore, the enrolment of girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) stands at an impressive 43%, surpassing figures in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

The government under PM Modi has also introduced commendable measures to ensure quality education through e-learning nationwide. Initiatives such as SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), SWAYAM PRABHA, National Digital Library (NDL), Virtual Lab, e-Yantra, and NEAT (National Education Alliance for Technology) have played a pivotal role in providing accessible and high-quality education to students across the country.

PM Modi has launched several government initiatives which have



provided women with an influential role in the economic decision-making within their households. Some of the flagship programs aimed at enhancing women's lives include PM Awas Yojna and increased access to clean cooking fuel through the distribution of domestic LPG under the PM Ujjwala Yojana. Furthermore, initiatives by PM Modi such as Jan Dhan accounts have paved the way for financial independence, and the Swachh Bharat Mission and Jal Jivan Mission have collectively elevated the overall quality of life for women.

Embracing the ethos of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, and Sabka Prayas,' Prime Minister Modi envisions a nation where women play a leading role in development. In line with this vision, the government has wholeheartedly supported women-led startups and entrepreneurship.

Under the leadership of PM Modi, the government has introduced multiple initiatives to empower women economically. Programs like Startup India - Women, digital skilling of women, Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) have been launched to enhance the economic resilience of women.

The Stand-Up India program, spearheaded by the government, is

designed to promote entrepreneurship among women and marginalized communities, including Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), facilitating the establishment of new ventures.

In addition to these initiatives, the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA) has implemented various skill development schemes, including 'Seekho Aur Kamao,' 'USTTAD,' and 'Nai Manzil,' with a minimum of 30% of training slots reserved for female participants, benefiting six notified minority communities.

It is because of government's sustained efforts under PM Modi which has encouraged greater female representation across various domains, including science, technology, medicine, sports, business, and politics, we have witnessed not only an increase in women's participation but also their prominent leadership roles.

The government has broadened its approach to women's safety, implementing a range of comprehensive measures to ensure the security and support of women facing distressing situations. Through the Samagra Shiksha program, the government is equipping girls in grades 6 to 12 in government schools with self-defence skills. I too attended three



such programmes in Maharashtra which were focused on women self-defence.

Under Mission Shakti, the government has established 'Shakti Sadan,' an integrated facility offering relief and rehabilitation to women in challenging circumstances. Additionally, the government has launched various other initiatives, including the Cyber Crime Prevention Against Women & Children (CCPWC) program, the establishment and reinforcement of Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) in all districts of states and Union Territories, and the enhancement of police stations to be more welcoming and accessible to women.

The Modi government has also made women an integral part of all

initiatives linked to sustainability and climate change. After all, it is women who play key role when it comes to preserving and conserving our mother Earth.

Prime Minister Modi's determined agenda to uplift women economically and foster financial independence are yielding tangible and favourable outcomes. Through these proactive strategies, the government aspires to usher in an era of women-led development, empowering today's modern woman to become a catalyst for transformative change.

Source:<https://m.economictimes.com/opinion/et-commentary/view-empowerment-of-women-a-pivotal-focus-of-pm-modis-leadership/articleshow/103720379.cms>

## The Rise of Women in Politics Under Modi-Led BJP Government

Akanksha Khullar

June 15, 2023



While India's political history is relatively new in comparison to many other nations—marking its beginning only in 1947—it is well known as one of the earliest countries to grant women the right to vote, taking the step right after its independence. The legislators and policymakers in fact came to a consensus about granting women the right to vote without much discussion and by 1950, the law regarding women's suffrage was included as a part of the Indian constitution, legally allowing women to vote.

It was these efforts—along with

rising awareness about women's agency—that ultimately sparked political aspirations among Indian women, urging them to join politics and become an integral part of decision-making processes across broad issues such as health, education, economics, women's empowerment, etc. Ever since, India has seen multiple female heads of state and a progressive as well as highly diverse political past and present.

Yet, like any other field and space, even the political sphere in India has long been a male bastion in which



women have rarely been able to gain an equal footing. Even in cases where women leaders have been able to overcome obstacles like patriarchal norms and societal pressure to enter electoral politics, they have continuously been discouraged by misogynistic attitudes, institutional discrimination and character assassination. As a result, women have routinely been demotivated to join politics and have, in fact, largely been kept out of political decision-making.

Things, however, began to change with the PM Modi-led Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) coming into power, which not only undertook conscious efforts to increase women's participation and representation in Indian politics but also placed the empowerment of women and harnessing their talent for nation building as a central component of the party's policy.

In fact, shortly after its victory, the BJP government went out of its way to enlarge women's role in the highest rungs of decision-making processes, bringing about a considerable increase in the total number of female contestants, which rose from 45 in 1957 to 668 in 2015. It is important to note here that this was a fifteen-fold increase in the number of female contestants. Meanwhile, the number of male contestants for the same years

increased only five-fold, rising from 1,474 to 7,583.

Then in 2019, the BJP sent the largest number of elected women representatives—with 40 women MPs—to the Lok Sabha because of the sheer size of its victory. At 78 elected women MPs, the 17th Lok Sabha today, in fact, comprises the highest number of women representatives—accounting for 14.6 percent of the entire strength—in the lower house of India's parliament. This is not only the highest-ever composition of female MPs, rising substantially from a mere 5 percent in 1952 but also the strongest progression rate of that number since 1984 at plus 3 percentage points.

Apart from the increase in representation, the women voters' turnout in 2019 stood at 67.18 percent, which was nearly 0.17 percent greater than the male voter turnout, thereby, marking a historic moment since it was the first time after India's independence that women had outshone the men in terms of voting turnouts. This was perhaps a pivotal moment in Indian politics since more and more women began playing a major role in choosing the representatives that they deemed fit for the nation.

Furthermore, as of today, PM Modi's cabinet consists of eleven women—the highest number of



women ministers in the Union government—which accentuates the rise of women in Indian politics. The BJP has given notable posts to women, appointing them as Minister of Defence, Finance, Commerce and Industry, etc—all of which can be considered as extremely masculinised sectors—clearly demonstrating its confidence in Indian women.

Thus, there remains no doubt that by providing these women access to such strong political positions, the PM Modi-led government has definitely given Indian women the authority to represent their gender and views—at a national level—in the Indian parliament. Going a step ahead, the Modi government recently chose Draupadi Murmu as its presidential nominee, which resulted in her becoming the first tribal woman to be elected as President of India.

And in observation of the practice where decision-making for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayats had continued to be driven by male family members, predominantly, owing to the lack of training provided to female representatives, the Ministry of Women and Child Development—under the BJP government—launched a nationwide training programme for EWRs with the objective to enhance

their capacity, capability and skill in governance and administration of villages.

Extrapolating from these examples, it would be fair to state that the policy interventions undertaken by the BJP government have equipped and empowered women to take on leadership roles in their communities, organisations as well as households, thereby, stepping their foot into politics—an area that initially seemed out of their reach. This is a clear departure from the mere tokenism practices that were adopted by the earlier governments. But what the party does in terms of the Women's Reservation Bill, which seeks to reserve 33 percent of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies, remains to be seen.

S o u r c e :  
<https://www.news18.com/opinion/opinion-the-rise-of-women-in-politics-under-modi-led-bjp-government-8084317.html>



## How Modi Government Is Working on Boosting Women's Labour Force Participation

Sohil Sinha  
February 02, 2024



On January 30, the Centre directed employers to implement digital payment of wages and provide 26 weeks of paid maternity leave to women construction workers. The Ministries of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and Housing and Urban Affairs issued advisories to agencies under their purview, urging them to promote workforce participation through these measures. In coherence, in a groundbreaking decision with significant socio-economic implications, the Centre announced that female employees can now nominate their sons or daughters for

family pension instead of their husbands. The official statement, released on Monday, emphasised the alteration in family pension rules for government servants or pensioners.

Along with it, the Union Ministries of Labour & Employment and Women & Child Development have initiated a collaborative survey to analyse the augmentation of women's participation in the workforce.

Union Minister Smriti Irani announced the survey in New Delhi during the 'Women in the Workforce for Viksit Bharat' event. The objective of the



survey is to evaluate the prevalence of women-friendly practices among employers in the country. Concerns raised by various international agencies and trade unions, including the International Labour Organisation, regarding the declining involvement of female workers in the country, prompted the survey.

Since time immemorial, legislations grounded in equality, which guarantee equal rights and protection against discrimination for every Indian woman under the Constitution, have been enacted and facilitated. These laws play a pivotal role in reshaping societal values, operational mechanisms, and perceptions, ensuring women's access to education, healthcare, and justice, constituting half the nation's population.

In the contemporary era, there has been a notable expansion of women's participation in the public sphere. Increasing numbers of Indian women have assumed roles in the workforce, actively engaging in business enterprises, banking, trade, international forums, and diverse careers such as advertising and fashion. They have demonstrated their capabilities as legislators, bureaucrats, judges, lawyers, doctors, engineers, accountants, and more. Women advocate for robust laws and legislations that empower them as significant contributors to nation-building.

Under the strong leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the government has played a key role in fortifying the position of Indian women. Since 2014, a series of women-centric legislations and legal reforms have been introduced, contributing to the empowerment and upliftment of women in India. Under the Modi government, women have been given greater appreciation and better protection. Since the BJP came to power in 2014, the protection of women's rights has become one of the key focus areas of the government.

#### Maternity Leave for Construction Workers

The Modi government on Tuesday announced that employers shall provide 12 weeks of paid maternity leave for individuals with more than two children or for those adopting or commissioning mothers. The advisories also address miscarriages, stating that in the construction sector, if a woman undergoes a miscarriage, she is entitled to leave with wages equivalent to maternity benefits for six weeks from the day of the miscarriage.

The advisory issued by the MoRTH said, "For ensuring wide participation of women and providing gender equal opportunities in the highway sector, MoRTH has decided to issue an Advisory in line with the



Statutory Provisions to all implementing agencies, which in turn, shall ensure and oversee the adoption of the Advisory by their respective contractors/concessionaires".

Employers in the highways sector are urged to ensure facilities such as latrines and urinals, washing areas, crèches, and adequate accommodation for migrant women workers in accordance with the provisions of the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act and Rules. The advisory underscores the proactive responsibility of employers in implementing policies and programs to encourage women's participation in the workforce.

#### Changes in Pension Nominee

The Centre has granted female government employees the authority to nominate their eligible child/children for family pension instead of their husbands. The Department of Pensions and Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW) introduced an amendment to the Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 2021, allowing female government employees or pensioners to assign family pension rights to their eligible child/children in the event of their demise. This replaces the previous provision where the spouse was the primary recipient, and other

family members qualified only under specific circumstances.

Union Minister of State for Personnel, Jitendra Singh, highlighted that this amendment aligns with Prime Minister Modi's commitment to ensuring equal rights for women. The amendment addresses situations arising from marital discord, divorce proceedings, or legal cases under laws such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, Dowry Prohibition Act, or the Indian Penal Code. This ensures fair and just family pension allocation even in complex family situations.

According to the DoPPW, a female government servant or pensioner must submit a written request to the concerned head of the office, specifying that family pension should be granted to her eligible child or children in precedence to her spouse in case of her demise during ongoing proceedings. If the female government servant or pensioner passes away during the proceedings, the family pension will be disbursed accordingly.

The statement clarified various scenarios for family pension distribution. If a woman employee is survived by a widower with no eligible child, the family pension will be payable to the widower. However, if the widower is the guardian of a minor child or a child with a



mental disorder, the family pension will be payable to the widower as long as he remains the guardian. Once the child attains majority and remains eligible for family pension, it will be payable directly to the child.

This decision marks a significant step towards gender equality and empowerment, aligning with the government's commitment to providing just and legitimate rights to women in various sectors. The amendment not only addresses legal complexities but also reflects a broader effort to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in the workforce.

#### Women's Participation in Workforce

As a result of the number of legislative changes, women's participation in the labour force has increased substantially. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, in its release of the Periodic Labour Force Survey Report 2022-23, highlighted a noteworthy 4.2 percentage point increase, pushing the Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) to 37.0 per cent in 2023.

Under the current survey being undertaken by the Labour Ministry, the government is requesting information on the establishment of an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) for the

Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace (POSH), the provision of crèche facilities for children, ensuring equal pay for equal work, offering flexible or remote working hours for women, and providing transportation facilities during late hours.

All of it is indicative of the important role that women have played and continue to play for the country's development and on the part of the government is an exercise to provide an equitable workplace environment and safeguards for the female section of the society.

The growth in the female LFPR indicates a positive shift in the dynamics of the country's labour force, with more women actively participating in the workforce. The substantial increase in FLFPR is seen as a significant step towards women's empowerment and their active involvement in India's socio-economic and political development, according to the press release.

The Government of India has taken decisive actions to promote women's engagement in the workforce, concentrating on their long-term well-being. The comprehensive approach covers various stages of women's lives, including significant initiatives targeting girls' education, skill development, entrepreneurship facilitation, and



ensuring workplace safety, as highlighted in the press release. Government policies and legislation in these domains have played a pivotal role in advancing the agenda of women-led development. By promoting opportunities for women in education, skills, and entrepreneurship, and ensuring a safe and supportive working environment, the government has laid the foundation for a more inclusive and gender-equal workforce.

The increase in FLFPR not only mirrors the growing participation of women in the labour force but also signifies a broader societal transformation, where women are increasingly contributing to the nation's progress and their own empowerment.

Providing Women Equity since 2014 in the workplace

Several reforms have been undertaken by the current government to empower women and safeguard their rights. Some of them are:

–In 2017, the government achieved a milestone by amending the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, extending paid maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks for women employees with fewer than two surviving children. The amendment allowed flexibility in taking up to 8 weeks before the expected delivery date and the remainder after childbirth. It also granted 12 weeks of paid maternity leave for

women expecting their third child.

This amendment addressed the needs of adopting and commissioning mothers, allowing them 12 weeks of maternity leave from the date of receiving the child. Provisions for work from home were introduced after completing 26 weeks of leave, subject to work profiles and employer consent. Establishments employing 50 or more employees were mandated to have a crèche with specified facilities. Women employees had the right to visit the crèche four times a day.

–In 2018, the Criminal Law Amendment Act strengthened anti-rape laws, increasing the minimum punishment for rape from seven to ten years and introducing stricter penalties for rape on women under sixteen or twelve years. Death penalty became applicable in certain cases. The amendment aimed at speedy trials and investigations, mandating completion within two months and disposal of appeals within six months.

–The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, declared the practice of triple talaq as void and illegal. It made the declaration of 'talaq' a cognisable offence, attracting up to three years imprisonment and a fine. The act allowed married Muslim women to seek custody of minor children and receive subsistence allowance.



–In 2018, the Finance Ministry incentivised the employment of more women in the formal sector by amending the Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952. The amendment reduced women employees' contribution to 8 per cent for the first three years of their employment.

These legislative reforms aimed to eliminate gender-based discrimination and create a more women-friendly work environment, aligning with the principles of the Constitution of India.

#### Transformative Policies and Progress

In the post-2014 era, the Indian government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has orchestrated transformative policies, significantly elevating gender equity and women's empowerment. Crucial reforms, such as extended maternity leave and the empowerment of female government employees in family pension decisions, have bolstered the well-being and rights of women in the workforce.

The upswing in the FLFPR to 37.0 per cent in 2023, evident in the Periodic Labour Force Survey Report, is a testament to the success of these strategic interventions. The government's proactive stance, exemplified by initiatives like the collaborative survey between the Ministries of Labour &

Employment and Women & Child Development, showcases a responsive approach to global concerns regarding declining female workforce participation.

Legislation championing equality and protection against discrimination has not only reshaped societal norms but has also been instrumental in fostering women's active engagement across diverse careers. The sweeping reforms in maternity benefits, protection against sexual harassment, and stringent measures against crimes underscore a resolute commitment to creating a safer and more supportive work environment.

Recent advisories amplify the government's dedication to fostering equitable workplace conditions. The journey since 2014 encapsulates a positive evolution, emphasising women-led development and contributing to a more inclusive and gender-equal workforce. This period marks a definitive stride towards realising the vision of a nation where women thrive in every sector, underlining the government's unwavering commitment to empowerment and equitable opportunities for all women.

Source: <https://www.news18.com/opinion/opinion-how-modi-government-is-working-on-boosting-womens-labour-force-participation-8763156.html>

## India's 11-Year Journey Under Modi: From Sankalp to Siddhi

Kangana Ranaut

This whole tale of India's democracy is conventionally marked with milestones; however, the last 11 years have given shape to a distinct journey of transformation-around political, economic, and social parameters. Under dynamic leadership, India witnessed a stage of evolution from Dum to Siddhi. It is not merely a story of implementations but rather about shaping a new vision—a confident, capable, and ready-for-the-future India. Looking back at these 11 years, one can realize that every single step was taken with the vision of creating a self-reliant, inclusive, and globally respected India. The foremost foundation



of this transformation rests in infrastructure. At the time of the Modi government's inception in 2014, connectivity of the country, be it physical or digital, was a major concern. However, today India boasts of more than 146,000 km of national highways as against 91,000 km in 2014. The Bengaluru–Chennai and Amritsar–Jamnagar expressways are now no longer distant dreams but symbols of a fast-moving India. These infrastructural changes symbolize the bridging of gaps between rural and urban, aspiration and opportunity. The new-age highways have been supplemented by a revolution in rail connectivity, especially in maturation in





the remotest region of Jammu and Kashmir. With the commissioning of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Link, engineering marvels like the Chenab Bridge and Anji Khad Bridge also mark the victory of human-will over terrain and technology. The prized Vande Bharat Express has opened up those high-speed, modern train operations to Kashmir, which means that economic integration with the rest of the country has been enhanced and tourism in the region stimulated.

The gamut of infrastructural developments did not narrow down to roads and railways. Urban transport also went through its green transformation with the introduction of electric buses, starting from the national capital, New Delhi. The environment clubbed with the movement of e-buses marks the issues reduced to their simplicity. On June 5, 2025, 200 e-buses were flagged off. This is in line with the government's big picture idea of sustainable development and green growth. The giant steps taken in infrastructure also saw the birth of housing as a national mission. Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, millions have been assisted in getting a home, with an increased budget for 2024-25 fixed at ₹80,671 crore. It is not just a matter of brick and mortar; it is a matter of dignity and aspirations for the poorest in India. A rural family assigned a pucca house with electricity and toilets signals an end to generational poverty.

Speaking of electricity, the Saubhagya Scheme has to be counted among the best public welfare success

stories. Getting nearly 3 crore households electrified has filled a long-neglected need—one the Modi government has never before addressed so successfully. Light brought far more than comfort: it brought learning, security, and economic activity into the homes of rural India. The reform in the health sector followed this path too toward inclusiveness. Ayushman Bharat—world's largest health assurance scheme—has been giving cover of ₹5 lakh per family annually. For the poor, illness was no longer to be equated with bankruptcies. Benefiting over 50 crore people, the scheme closed the gap between urban, rural, rich, and poor. The next cornerstone was financial liberalization through Jan Dhan accounts. But in excess of 48 crore bank accounts have brought humongous numbers into the formal economy. More importantly, all subsidies, scholarships, pensions, and pandemic relief funds are routed through these accounts, from the government directly to the needy, snubbing graft or middlemen. Every such scheme gathered momentum through the success of the Digital India campaign. UPI is no longer a fancy new thing to foreign visitors; it is used by vegetable sellers and shopkeepers across the county. Digital India is not just about technology; it is about access and transparency—two pillars of good governance. However, the digital revolution would not be complete without the recognition that the growth of the Indian woman lies at the forefront of this agenda. Subhadra Yojana is one such expression of this gender-sensitive policy approach. This means that financial assistance and the empowerment of



women are not more token gestures—they are the focal points of governance. Environmental issues received due importance as well. Be it afforestation under 'Dakkhan Kedaranya' or heavy investments in solar energy, the Modi government has given a wake-up call that development can really go hand in hand with ecology. A sustainable future was never an afterthought; it was weaved into the very design of progress.

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was a paradigm shift. It fostered flexibility, comprehensive learning, and local language education. It addressed the future—AI, innovation, and interdisciplinary research—while remaining rooted in India's cultural heritage. The government school upgradation under the PM SHRI scheme made sure that the policy got boots on the ground. Agriculture, the pillar of India, also underwent structural change. PM-Kisan made more than 11 crore farmers receive income support every year. At the same time, mega schemes such as the Polavaram irrigation scheme solved the problems of availability of water and productivity. Farmers felt for the first time that they were not mere political slogans, but actual stakeholders in national development. In national security, the government modernized the armed forces and fortified border infrastructure. The Shinkhun-La Tunnel is a case of strategic thinking that enhances connectivity as well as defense. The message was unmistakable—India will no longer be ignoring the strategic requirements of its frontiers.

On the global stage, India found a louder, more confident voice. From G20 summits to diplomatic dialogues, India emerged not just as a participant, but a shaper of global narratives. Our foreign policy reflected pride in our civilizational identity while adapting to 21st-century challenges. Maintaining this identity also equated to cultural revival. Restoration and evolution of old temples, heritage walks, and places of spirituality reflected a government dedicated to Bharat's soul. Culture was no longer an aside, but a priority.

Economic growth, on the other hand, remained resilient in the face of global uncertainties. Reforms ranging from GST to cutting corporate tax made India an investment hub. The country remained in the league of the world's fastest-growing economies at all times. Job creation was facilitated by the sheer volume of infrastructure development. Housing schemes, bridges, and roads generated crores of jobs, and Skill India provided training to youth. This job was not merely for survival, but for upward mobility. Tourism, particularly in the long-neglected areas such as Jammu & Kashmir, received fresh interest due to connectivity and infrastructure development. From Vande Bharat trains to online promotion, the government saw the strength of spiritual and cultural tourism. Rural India was still a focus. From potable water to rural roads under PMGSY-IV, the emphasis was on providing services with dignity. More than 25,000 villages were newly connected, making markets, education, and health institutions accessible within reach.



Technology was at the core of governance. In the shape of drones in agriculture, AI in healthcare, or e-governance platforms, the government utilized innovation to serve the masses. Social welfare was inclusive. The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, which was extended several times during the pandemic, saw that no Indian was hungry. The welfare model of the government did not produce dependency—it empowered. Reform in governance underlay all of these. From ending redundant laws to creating simplified tax systems, the effort was to make government effective and citizen-friendly. Projects like Mission Karmayogi to revamp civil services are a testament to it. The youth continued to be at the core. Start-Up India, Stand-Up India, and Atal Innovation Mission have been empowering a generation to be job creators, rather than job seekers. Indian unicorns are now global players today, partially because of these ecosystem changes.

Over the last 11 years, India has seen massive transformation in infrastructure, and two shining examples are the Chandigarh–Manali highway tunnels and the Chenab Rail Bridge in Jammu & Kashmir. Earlier, the road to Manali was filled with traffic jams, landslides, and long travel hours. Today, with the construction of over 14 new tunnels and multiple bypasses, the travel time has been cut by almost four hours. These tunnels, part of the Kiratpur–Manali highway project, are not just roads through mountains—they are symbols of a changing India that values safety, speed, and sustainability. The use of modern

technology, proper slope protection, and green transport ideas shows how development can respect both nature and people's time.

Equally remarkable is the Chenab Railway Bridge, now the highest rail bridge in the world—taller than the Eiffel Tower. Connecting Katra to Srinagar through the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link, this bridge is not just an engineering wonder, it is a lifeline for the people of Jammu & Kashmir. With the launch of Vande Bharat trains on this route, the region is now more connected than ever. Tourism is picking up, businesses are growing, and locals feel more included in India's growth story. These projects reflect the Modi government's clear commitment—from Sankalp to Siddhi—to ensure that even the remotest corners of India are part of its development journey.

So, in summation, the 11 years of Modi government have not been merely about numbers and schemes—about making it all work on paper—they've been about a vision fulfilled. From Sankalp to Siddhi, India is more secure, more integrated, and future-proof. The journey goes on, but the milestones reached between 2014 and 2025 will forever mark a golden page in India's democratic, economic, and civilizational renaissance.

(Author is Indian Bollywood Actress and Member of Parliament Loksabha Mandi)

# PM Modi is Tearing Down Age-Old Barriers Restricting Women Empowerment

Curated By : Rupali Ganguly  
March 08, 2022



Prime Minister Narendra Modi has laid the foundation for the empowerment of women over the last eight years, which has been delivering remarkable results. The government's schemes and their impact are a refreshing change from the empty rhetoric the country has often witnessed earlier. As we celebrate Women's Day, it's as good an occasion as any to review the extent and depth of PM Modi's policies that have cleared the hurdles for 'Narishakti' to achieve its full potential by empowering women.

In the defence forces and related

areas alone, PM Modi's tenure has managed to break several glass ceilings—something that many thought wasn't possible in such a short duration. It was during the 2018 Independence Day speech when the Prime Minister announced the grant of permanent commission for the appointment of women officers in the short service commission, fulfilling a demand that was there for long.

This was followed up by allowing women to appear for the National Defence Academy examination. The necessary administrative training and policy



changes were made and the June 2022 course of the preeminent institution in the country, which forges young cadets into officers of the armed forces, will have the first batch of women cadets.

Last year, the age-old barrier to girls' admission into Sainik Schools was breached thus giving wings to the aspirations of girl students from around the country who have for long dreamed of attending Sainik Schools. According to reports, With effect from the academic session 2021-22, 312 girl cadets have been admitted in all existing 33 Sainik Schools in class 6.

Further, the domain of naval aviation has seen a first. The first batch of women Naval Operations officers was inducted into the rotary-wing and joined the helicopter squadron INAS 336 at INS Garuda last year. In the many firsts for women last year, another chapter was added when Border Roads Organisation – a crucial wing of the armed forces that maintains and builds roads in some of the toughest terrain along the borders– appointed women officers to command important Road Construction Companies (RCC) along border areas.

In the past, there has been plenty of rhetoric and declarations but action has been lacking in many cases. As the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has spent political capital in ensuring that

hitherto closed doors for women are flung open.

Not just that, PM Modi has gone one step ahead, questioned prevailing societal norms and attitudes towards sons vis-à-vis daughters. In an Independence Day Speech, PM Modi asked why parents don't keep track of their sons' daily movements and about their friends and the company they keep, but only do it for their daughters.

“After all, a rapist is also somebody's son. He also has parents. As parents, have we ever asked our son as to what he is doing and where he was going? If only every parent decides to impose as many restrictions on the sons as have been imposed on our daughters, try to do this with your sons, try to ask such questions of them," PM Modi had said.

The attitude to take the bull by its horns for the right cause isn't restricted to making speeches, PM Modi has delivered on such ideas through meticulous planning and delivery. In the first term, PM Modi appointed 6 women cabinet ministers even though the cabinet was the smallest in the last 16 years.

In the cabinet expansion in 2021, the number of women ministers in the Council went up to 11, the highest in 17 years.

While the policies discussed



above that led to women's empowerment and broke many long-standing barriers, the truth is that there is a lot more that has been done to ensure the financial independence and empowerment of women.

The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), launched in 2015 to provide loans up to Rs 10 lakh for small businesses, has 68% of women entrepreneurs out of its 32 crore plus beneficiaries. This scheme has ensured a whopping amount of Rs 7.42 lakh crore goes to women entrepreneurs.

Similarly, the Stand-Up India scheme was launched in 2016 with the stated aim to promote entrepreneurship, job creation and economic empowerment. It mandated that each scheduled commercial bank branch provide at least one loan (ranging from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 1 crore) to a scheduled caste or scheduled tribe or a woman borrower. Till last year, 81% of the loan

accounts belonged to women with sanctioned amounts standing at nearly Rs 21,000 crore.

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, one of the first schemes launched after PM Modi took charge in 2014, was aimed at bringing a vast amount of unbanked people into the financial system. The scheme now has 55% of bank accounts belonging to women.

All these schemes provide the much-needed access to credit and general banking facilities for women to spread their wings. The effect of financially empowered women on their families, society and the economy as a whole cannot be overstated. These schemes are carefully crafted to reach out to all sections of hitherto ignored and marginalised sections of women thus making the financial revolution truly inclusive.

(Rupali Ganguly is an Indian actress primarily known for her work in television and films. Her current TV serial, Anupama, has gained cult status.)

S o u r c e :  
<https://www.news18.com/news/opinion/pm-modi-is-tearing-down-age-old-barriers-restricting-women-empowerment-4849580.html>

## Why PM Modi's Mission 2047 is Linked to India's Women, their Safety

Sumati Mehrishi  
August 17, 2024



In December 2012, several moving slogans had emerged from the protests held in New Delhi against the gang rape that shook the nation. The most moving among them in the country-wide outrage was “Nirbhaya is every woman. I am every woman” - a slogan that individualised pain.

The calls succeeded in achieving political unity in protests that were not completely apolitical, even as they failed to achieve, as expected, societal “zero tolerance” towards gender crimes against women.

It has been 12 years since the 'December protests' and the streets are

resounding with yet another slogan — “Beti Padhi Toh Sahi, Bachi Nahin” (The daughter did get educated, but did not survive) — as public outrage rises against the Kolkata rape-murder case.

It is perhaps this blend of emotions that made Prime Minister Narendra Modi describe the outrage as “jan-saamaanya ka akrosh” (anger of the common man) during his Independence Day speech at Red Fort.

The Red Fort Declaration of 'Akrosh'

PM Modi did not specify the Kolkata case while speaking on women safety in India but the timely, succinct



and essential mention will go down in the history of Independence Day speeches as poignant and morally courageous. It sticks out from the larger habit where accountability in sections of politics is as ragged and tattered as the public's own understanding for the need for gender sensitivity and women's safety.

PM Modi called for swift investigation and harsher punishments in cases of crimes against women. In the 98-minute speech, the reference to women's safety may have been short in terms of duration, but it echoed, bleeding into the development-oriented mentions made by him. On development, the prime minister fondly mentioned the success of women Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

Modi recognises the grit and gifts in developing and harnessing sisterhood — whether of the SHGs, of prosperity, of celebration, or the sisterhood achieved by the clogging of anger, pain and tears in women's throats.

Development is goal-driven, and goals, delivery and time-driven. In Modi's inspiring and effective women-centric, women-led, women-oriented development politics, he must try to move towards accomplishing the time-marked goal of eliminating India's

crime against women problem.

### Need of The Hour

The time and opportunity to fix India's crime against women problem is now. The country cannot enter the “golden era” of the build-up to 2047 without fixing the crime against women problem.

Here is why:

Reason 1: Development without women participation is unthinkable, lifeless, unsustainable and meaningless. Women participation, without women's safety and security in all fronts and realms of life and work, is impossible, imprudent, illusive and would render the goal of 2047 either symbolic or abstract.

Reason 2: Development is power. Development involves and uses gender power. Shakti — the divine and human manifestation of the goddess propels the idea of power — from warriors in the battlefield, to the pursuit of prosperity, creation and production; to the seeking and explorations of knowledge and study. Without Shakti — the combined strengths of an empowered and safe woman — the human manifestation of Shakti — the Devi herself — is powerless. And the powerless cannot inspire the power of and for a “developed” nation.



Reason 3: Modi works on the Indic belief system when approaching development. The Indic understanding of prosperity and wellbeing keeps the Devi central — in worship, in work, discipline and adherence to domestic life and its celebration.

Reason 4: Crimes against women and the resulting fear and anxieties corrode the idea of safety of families in public consciousness. The unit of family sustains the nation. PM Modi is perceived as a nationalist. He views development as resting on the unit of home and family, which itself rests on women. Crimes against women — whether in the curtained confines of “home” or workplace or at public spaces — have the potential to rattle the very clockwork required for a developing nation.

Reason 5: Women are citizens and voters. The invisible value that connects women voters and PM Modi is trust. It is only this 'Vishwas ki Dor' (thread of trust) that will hold together his work for Mission 2047.

Reason 6: The prime minister must use the strength of the SHG sisterhood for the women of India. A multi-ministry approach in creating gender sensitivity in rural and urban areas, awareness of the consequences of committing a crime, and social

alerting, need to be put in place.

#### The 'Vishwas Ki Dor'

Harsher punishments to the perpetrators of gender crimes were a subject of debate in 2012 as well. While law and order is a state matter and punishment resides with the judiciary, the intent and drive belong to the prime minister himself.

While Modi is known for adhering to moral boundaries in his respect for the limits and limitations in the Centre-state partnership towards development, it is well known that he counts the safety, security and prosperity of women as a powerful facet of development.

As events and consequences indicate, Narendra Modi's politics, especially during and after 2019, has been influenced by the blending of uncertainties that demand his response and the development-oriented path he tailors.

Response to the Pulwama attacks; the revoking of Article 370, anti-CAA protests, protests against farm laws and the resulting events; the pandemic and related lockdowns, the LAC-situation of 2020, vaccines to fight Covid-19, challenges related to the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, and Sandeshkhali issue are some of the



major chapters arising with uncertainties that would test his resilience and exhibit his decision-making. The prime minister, at the time he was addressing each of these, was also moulding, shaping, and putting to execution several development-oriented programmes simultaneously.

This duality in his nature of work pretty much defined and designed his previous term (2019-2024). That these two aspects of his politics directly and indirectly affect and involve women voters, their lives, their future journeys, is as much inherent in the character of our democracy as it is deeply seeded in Modi's own work-destiny. He must treat the war on crimes against gender as the uncertain factor in governance and go all strengths after it.

In 2019, when Narendra Modi-led NDA came to power after winning a landslide victory in the Lok Sabha polls, he used the phrase "Vishwas ki Dor" to define the strong thread of trust that connected the victory to women voters. Crimes against women should hence figure as the top priority. Years and decades after he walks away from his office, he will be remembered for it.

The Development & Delivery Clockwork

Modi's work in sculpting delivery of basics was the first

indication of promise and delivery.

He remained obstinately focused on building toilets, even as the Opposition criticised him and western media smirked at his efforts. He let the impact of the Swachh Bharat Mission speak for the health, safety and physical security of women, even while the interventions under the Ujjwala Yojana, the Jal Jeevan Mission, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao were underway. Happening simultaneously is his work on creating women-centric financial inclusion, housing, education, and entrepreneurship. In 10 years of his governance, Modi has maintained his stand and narrative on how the development in women's own lives is India's development.

Let's look at some changes that Modi has brought about for women that have encouraged him to envision Mission 2047.

According to government data, as on February 2023, under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, over 2.16 crore houses were constructed of the 2.85 crore sanctioned houses. Over 69 per cent houses are either solely or jointly owned by women. Under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, over 9.58 crore LPG connections were released. LPG coverage in India improved to 105.4 per cent in November 2022. In April



2016, it stood at 61.9 per cent.

About SHGs, PM Modi has said that he considers “the sisters of women self-help groups to be the champions of self-reliant India campaign. These self-help groups are actually national help groups”.

In his Independence Day speech, PM Modi mentioned SHGs, reflecting their contribution to development of women. It should be known that he, previously, has substituted the “self” in women, and their self-reliance with the “nation” and “national”.

Modi's belief in building the connection between the woman as an individual and the “nation” as the abode and recipient of her reliance and fulfilment has base in the strengths of SHGs. Women's access to formal credit, the support they receive for the strengthening of their livelihood initiatives, and a potent women-led support system, have led to the mobilisation of 9.73 crore women as in September 2023 in 89.4 lakh SHGs under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission.

A newly created, vibrant narrative on the socio-cultural linking of schemes such as Sukanya Samridhi Yojana with SHGs will go a long way in cementing generational evenness in

self-reliance of women, and their children — particularly the girl child.

As creative leaders and shapers of the Indian family unit, women across roughly three generations would become discerning contributors to India's development story towards the centenary celebrations of India's Independence. What would be more apt that celebrating self-reliance in women and a developed nation made self-reliant by self-reliant women in 2047?

Why Work For 2047 Begins In 2024

Modi's success in setting the pace for Mission 2047 would seed itself in how his government during this term maintains the “change installed” under the Swachh Bharat Mission. Government data mentions that 93 per cent women reported that they were no longer afraid of being hurt by someone or harmed by animals while defecating. Also, 93 per cent women reported they are no longer afraid of contracting health infections.

Bringing a multi-ministry convergence in a massive project on transforming India's collective consciousness on “beti” — the unborn, the newborn, the growing, students, working women, homemakers, pregnant women, working women, and mothers — needs to be seen in a new



single and unified beam of concern, vision and work. This will ensure the breaking down and dissolving of prejudices that lead to unjust attitudes and actions towards women in all stages of life.

Modi has proudly worn the headgear of being the “patriarch”. His mention of women's menstrual health, sanitary pads and his pitch for taking the problem of cervical cancer and vaccination to fight it seriously, in prime speeches, has set the tone for future decades.

Giving women the opportunity to take charge of their own economic survival, domestic prosperity and simultaneously of India's development is the fulfilment of that “purpose”.

“Recognition”, “being valued”, “dignity”, “savings”, “pool”, “nation”, “unity” are recurrent words that have marked my own interactions with women part of SHGs. Harnessing women's resilience, ideas, creativities and strengths in a work mutation of sorts in formidable caste, community, village and urban level convergences requires a tireless and continuous identification of those convergences.

Women achieving 37 per cent labour force participation, the rise in entrepreneurship among women, the dominance of women when it came to

loans sanctioned under PM Mudra Yojana (68 per cent — according to Economic survey 2024) — all point to rising women entrepreneurship and the dominance of women in Stand-Up India.

The harvest of promise in Sukanya Samridhi Yojana — designed exclusively for the financial stability of the girl child — will become evident when girls touched by the scheme begin to contribute to lives, education, work force and as the bearers of power in the domestic set-up.

The Modi government has done little to celebrate the impact of its own initiatives during the last 10 years. Since the inception of Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, around 3.10 crore accounts have been opened under the scheme, says government data. If the government tracks success stories of only a thousand account holders from this figure, in conversations with their guardians, several possibilities, ideas, lessons and precious inferences for futuristic developmental work and vision towards 2029-2034 will emerge.

S o u r c e :  
[https://www.news18.com/opinion/opinion-why-pm-modis-mission-2047-is-linked-to-indias-women-their-safety-9018579.html?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.news18.com/opinion/opinion-why-pm-modis-mission-2047-is-linked-to-indias-women-their-safety-9018579.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

## How new India moved from women's development to women-led development under Prime Minister Modi

Smriti Z Irani  
15 August, 2020



As the Tricolour unfurled in all its glory at the ramparts of the Red Fort, a nation of a billion-plus people listened to the address of the 4th longest serving Prime Minister of our country with a sense of anticipation. In 2014, he came with a promise of providing equal opportunity to fellow Indians, a proclamation of minimum government and maximum governance and a resolve to not only challenge but also change the status quo.

Since then, for the past 6 years the Prime Minister of India has not limited his efforts to public discourse;

instead has diligently dedicated each day of his 6 year journey in office to living up to every expectation, every promise made to the citizens of India. Never before has a Prime Minister ignited the Nation's imagination on large infrastructure projects, espoused economic measures, presented publicly the implementation pathways and successes backed by data and in equal measure given prominence to welfare programs which touch upon the basic needs of the ordinary Indian.

Many a female politicians, activists who study each program of the



Government from the lens of gender justice have found solace in the unabashed support of the Prime Minister to the national purpose of women led development. I recall the clarion call given by the PM from the ramparts of the Red Fort to help build toilets to facilitate the lives of women especially school going girls.

That our Nation was bereft of a solution to basic human need in over 6 decades of democratic churn did not astound anyone; in fact it was accepted as a way of life if you were born poor. 11 crores toilets built in the past 6 years bridged the gap between administrative laxity to service the needs of the poor and the desire of a multitude to live a life of dignity.

Today, I heard the Prime Minister speak of the service rendered by Jan Aushadi Kendras with regards to menstrual hygiene products and sale of 5 crore sanitary pads at the cost of rupee 1 each. From toilets to sanitary pads, a public declaration of services, support and a promise that women's issues need to be discussed threadbare, has become the mainstay of this government.

Truth be told, if ever a left liberal was asked about the administrative capacity of the right wing to address the needs of modern Indian women, they would paint our ability to deliver on

issues of gender justice with a brush of disdain. Thrust with untruths of how the right wing are proponents of a regressive approach on women, the 6 year journey of Narendra Modi's prime minister-ship is an example to the contrary.

The fact that it is under his leadership that the Nation's first ever Menstrual Hygiene Protocol, was shared to aid administrative endeavours, does not find a mention in narratives that critique gender issues is not surprising. Neither is his decision to amend the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act which aligns reproductive rights of Indian women with 21st century medicine oft spoken of.

But then that has been the underlying essence of the politics of Narendra Modi, he serves so that he can better the prospects of our citizenry and not so that he is celebrated in the hallowed halls of Lutyens. A testimony to his capacity to engage with challenges which are otherwise considered harbinger of political disconcertion is his Government's approach to addressing the needs of Muslim women in our country.

For decades Indian polity steadfastly refused to provide to legislative solutions to married Muslim women abandoned under the pretext of

Triple Talaq as the cost of delivering justice was hefty considering its impact on an electorally profitable vote bank. The law to banish the injustice of triple talaq from the realms of our democracy is an assertion that Narendra Modi can bite the proverbial political bullet irrespective of its political cost for he truly believes in justice for all and appeasement of none.

Additionally, with a sense of delivering societal & economic justice, today we proudly proclaim that amongst the 25 crore MUDRA loans given, 70% of our beneficiaries are women. That of the 40 crore Jan-dhan accounts opened 22 crore belong to women, that when the Government under PM Modi's leadership revisits an education policy after 3 decades; it finds in it for the first time ever a special effort made under the aegis of Gender Inclusion Fund to financially assist academic aspirations of our young girls encapsulating the spirit of cooperative federalism which manifested itself in support of our school going daughters by building toilets across all government schools in the country in less than a year.

The fact that he not only enabled but celebrated the role of women in combat roles in our armed forces gives way to a social acceptance that Indian women are no longer considered less than equal. They are an equal partner,

an equal contributor in the development processes we undertake as a Nation.

Today, as the Prime Minister waved goodbye to the young assembled to celebrate this day of Independence, I saw hope for the future; for the change he has ushered in has helped evolve a new disposition in our country – no longer will women in our Nation be looked upon as hapless counterparts waiting to be administratively and socially rescued. A new India now has significantly moved from Women's development to Women-led development.

The article was authored by Smt. Smriti Irani, Union Cabinet Minister for Textiles and Women & Child Development.

S o u r c e :  
<https://www.opindia.com/2020/08/smriti-irani-narendra-modi-women-empowerment-independence-day/>



Women at the Forefront – A Decade of Transformation Under Modi  
**“A Decade of Women Leading Change under Modi Era”**

**Prof Jasim Mohammad**



For decades, conversations around women in India revolved around empowerment, as if they were waiting to be lifted. But something has shifted in the past ten years under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India has trekked into a new world, where women are active participants in progress and also, most significantly, the driving force that keeps India going on. The struggle of some women was to prove their worth in the four walls of the house, the workplace, place, or society at large; that was then. Today, they stand as an

epitome of entrepreneurship, decision-making, and of being the creator of societal change, not because of sympathy but purely because they deserve to be there. The last decade was a route where women's natural gifts were increasingly recognized, if not always respected. It is increasingly being realized that when a woman goes up the ladder, she pulls many along with her. Today, the climb in every field is by Indian women.

The potency of women is timeless; only a conducive



environment was needed by them to espouse their strength; such an environment has unfolded in the past decade. Be it business, governance, technology, or education, women are stepping out now in full confidence. The erstwhile dependent woman is now financially independent, well versed in her rights, and spirited enough to chase after her dreams. It is no longer a society where women wait for opportunities; they create them. The deep transformative power of a nation making its own is felt by women taking charge of their own lives. Transformation is visible not merely in stats and reports, but in the day-to-day minute experience. It's in the village girl who wishes to become a scientist, a young woman running her own company, in the mother teaching her daughter not to be afraid, and in the grandmother proudly watching the world her granddaughters are building.

The development model of the

past was predicated on economic progress being done "for" women. But that model pales against the true strength of development truly done "by" women. Women look at their education, finances, and careers with the power to apply efficiency, compassion, and vision. The last ten years have proven that, not just once but time and again.

A quiet but strong tide is sweeping through society. The women are no longer passive contributors to the economy; rather, they are its definers. When they are no longer asking for safer streets, they will make sure they own those streets. They're not conforming to society's expectations; they are now creating the new ones. I am very much in awe of this generational attitude among women who, being erstwhile admired, no longer wish to wait. They believe they deserve the best, and they are ready to claim it. And best of all? They're carrying other women with



them. The concept of sisterhood-women for women-is getting stronger. There is more collaboration than competition. More women in power means passing more laws, establishing more businesses, and creating workplaces that truly understand the needs of women.

A sense of confidence in women has considerably grown in Modi led government. Women today are making maximal choices: in their careers, in education, and in personal matters. They are going to the fields that were once thought unreachable for them and are excelling in these fields. Gone are the days of hesitation; in their place is resoluteness, ambition, and an unwavering belief that nothing is off-limits. Without the work of women, no country can hope for progress. And today at first hand, India is witnessing it. The progress is in villages and cities, boardrooms and classrooms, science labs and sports fields. The walls that once forbade women are being broken, not because women were allowed to step forward but because they refused to be left behind. This past decade has shown that as such investments into women are made, the returns are simply immeasurable. What is being seen

today is largely because of the thought processes that have gone ahead of policies and programs. The very revolution of this change has come in realizing that women are not merely passengers of growth but the drivers of it. And yet, this is only the beginning. There is so much more to come on this exciting road. The women of India will not stop here. They have rewritten antiquated narratives and are now



writing an unlimited future. The next decade will be filled with more achievements as Indian women continue to lead, inspire, and transform the nation while the world looks on. The future belongs to women; in India, that future starts now.

*(Author is Professor and Chairman of Centre for Narendra Modi Studies (CNMS) [www.namostudies.com](http://www.namostudies.com) Email: [profjasimmd@gmail.com](mailto:profjasimmd@gmail.com))*

# From Women Development to Women-Led Development: Empowerment through Sports in a Viksit Bharat

**Prof. Usha S. Nair**

*Vice Chancellor (Officiating), National Sports University, India*



## **A Paradigm Shift in Nation-Building**

India's journey toward becoming a Viksit Bharat a developed, inclusive, and self-reliant nation rests firmly on the shoulders of its empowered women. Over the past decade, under the visionary leadership of Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji, the nation has transitioned from the paradigm of women's development to that of women-led development. This shift is

not merely symbolic; it marks a radical transformation in the way India envisions its growth placing women not as passive beneficiaries, but as active leaders across all domains.

Flagship policies such as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, PM Ujjwala Yojana, Stand-Up India, and Mission Shakti have collectively enhanced health outcomes, expanded educational access, improved financial inclusion, and increased gender representation. Notably, India's sex ratio has improved to 1020 women per 1000 men (NFHS-









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# New Momentum for Nari Shakti 11 Years of Women Empowerment

## Introduction

For generations, Indian women faced systemic barriers—limited access to education, healthcare, employment, and decision-making—especially in rural and marginalised communities. But since 2014, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, a historic shift has taken place. Women are no longer seen as passive beneficiaries but as empowered agents of change, central to India's growth story.

Driven by a bold, inclusive, and lifecycle-based approach, the government has launched targeted interventions in health, education, housing, digital access, sanitation, and financial inclusion. “Nari Shakti” is now a national mission, empowering every woman—urban or rural, young or elderly—to live with dignity, safety, and self-reliance.

Today, women are leading self-help groups, launching businesses, breaking barriers in science, defence, and sports, and shaping the nation's future. With women and children comprising nearly 67.7% of India's population, their empowerment is not just social reform—it's a strategic imperative. As India enters Amrit Kaal, Nari Shakti stands as the unstoppable force driving a stronger, more inclusive nation forward.



## Empowerment at Every Stage of Life

*Women empowerment is crucial to India's growth. Days of seeing women as 'homemakers' have gone, we have to see women as nation builders!*” -PM Narendra Modi

Empowerment isn't a singular event — it is a journey. The Modi government's policies reflect this reality through programmes designed to **support women through every phase of life**. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has time and again reiterated that a nation can progress only when its women are equally empowered. Over the last 11 years, the Government of India has adopted a comprehensive, lifecycle-based policy

framework to empower women across social, economic, political, and legal domains. From constitutional safeguards and landmark laws against violence and discrimination, to **transformative schemes like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*, *Mission Shakti*, and movements like the historic *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam***, the focus has shifted from women's development to women-led development. Women's participation has surged in education—especially in STEM—skilling, entrepreneurship through Self-Help Groups, and public service. Legal reforms and labour codes promote safe and inclusive workspaces, while **schemes like *PM Awas Yojana*, *DAY-NRLM*, and *agricultural support initiatives*** have empowered women financially and socially. From grassroots governance to defence forces and aviation, women are now leading across sectors, driving inclusive and sustainable national growth.

## Improving Health, Building Nation

**Improving Health, Building Nation**

- Sex Ratio: 1,020 women per 1,000 men (NFHS-5)
- Over 77 Crore sanitary pads ensured at ₹1 in Jan Aushadhi Kendras
- ₹18,593 Crore disbursed to 3.98 Crore pregnant and lactating women
- 6 Crore+ free antenatal check-ups under PM Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan
- 15.6 Crore+ tap water connections reducing drudgery and health risks

India's fight against malnutrition has taken a bold, unified leap through *Mission POSHAN*—a transformative initiative that weaves together nutrition, health, and community to build a healthier future. Designed as an integrated nutrition support programme, Mission POSHAN

targets the most vulnerable—children, adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mothers—by revamping both the *content* and *delivery* of nutrition services.

### Mission POSHAN 2.0

With a visionary investment of over ₹1.81 lakh crore, Poshan 2.0 is being rolled out over the 15th Finance

**A Timeline of Progress: Lifecycle-Based Interventions**

- Birth**  
Challenge: Survival  
Intervention: *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*  
Outcomes: Sex ratio improves to 1020 female per 1000 men (NFHS-5)
- Schooling**  
Challenge: Sanitation Access  
Intervention: *Swachh Vidyalaya*  
Outcomes: 9.8 lakh+ schools with girls' toilets
- Defence**  
Challenge: Gender Restriction  
Intervention: *Reservist commission in Armed Forces*  
Outcomes: NDA and Sainik Schools open to girls
- Family**  
Challenge: Property Ownership  
Intervention: *PMAY-G: Women co-owners*  
Outcomes: 73% homes in women's names
- Childhood**  
Challenge: Nutrition  
Intervention: *Mission Poshan 2.0*  
Outcomes: ₹1.81 lakh crore nutrition ecosystem
- Education**  
Challenge: Financial Aid  
Intervention: *Sukanya Accounts*  
Outcomes: Nearly ₹1 lakh crore in 4.2 crore accounts
- Entrepreneurship**  
Challenge: Fund Access  
Intervention: *MUDRA Yojana*  
Outcomes: 68% women borrowers

Commission period (2021–22 to 2025–26) to build a culture of well-being—through improved practices, stronger immunity, and holistic wellness. It unites efforts across sectors, creating a convergent ecosystem that transforms nutrition into a shared mission of national development.

At the heart of this movement lies *POSHAN Abhiyaan*, launched in 2018—a

upgrade **2 lakh Anganwadi Centres (AWCs)** across the country during the 15th Finance Commission cycle (at 40,000 AWCs per year) under Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0. These upgraded centres aim to deliver improved nutrition and Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE), supporting holistic development of children under six.



flagship programme that combines cutting-edge digital tools with grassroots action. From real-time tracking of nutrition indicators to community-driven campaigns, it has ignited a behavioural shift around food, health, and hygiene. This mission isn't just about feeding people—it's about fuelling a healthier, empowered India.

### Upgradation to Saksham Anganwadis

The government set a target to

- In FY 2024–25, full approval was accorded for the upgradation of **2 lakh AWCs**.
- So far, **24,533 AWCs** have been transformed into **Saksham Anganwadis**.
- **Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi (PBPB) Initiative**
- Launched to integrate **early education with nutrition**, this initiative focuses on building the capacity of Anganwadi workers to provide quality pre-school education.

- As of 31st March 2025, 36,463 State-Level Master Trainers (SLMTs) and 4,65,719 Anganwadi Workers have been trained nationwide.
- **Recognised for Innovation: Poshan Tracker Achievements**  
The Poshan Tracker application received the **Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration 2024** (Innovation Category - Centre) on Civil Services Day.
- **Won the National Award for e-Governance (Gold) at the 27th National Conference in September 2024.**
- **99.02% of beneficiaries are now Aadhaar-verified (as of March 2025).**
- **A Face Authentication module has been introduced for Take-Home Ration (THR), ensuring transparency and accountability through a two-factor authentication system.**

**Suposhit Gram Panchayat Abhiyaan**  
Launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on **26th December 2024**, this campaign identifies and rewards the **Top 1000 Gram Panchayats** demonstrating exceptional grassroots work in improving nutrition and health outcomes. These "Suposhit Gram Panchayats" serve as models of community-led progress in child and maternal nutrition.

**Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)**

The **Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)** is one of the world's largest public health efforts, reaching approximately **2.9 crore pregnant women annually**, protecting both mothers and their newborns from vaccine-preventable diseases.

**Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK)**

The **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK)** was expanded in 2014 to include care for all antenatal and postnatal complications, ensuring that mothers and newborns receive essential services, particularly within the critical first 48 hours after delivery. Since 2014–15, the programme has benefitted over 16.60 crore beneficiaries, significantly reducing out-of-pocket expenditure for families.

**Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)**

Complementing JSSK, the **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)** has also made a significant impact, supporting over 11.07 crore beneficiaries by March 2025. This conditional cash transfer scheme encourages institutional deliveries among poor pregnant women, especially in rural and underserved areas.

**Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN)**

Further strengthening maternal and neonatal care, the **Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN)** initiative assures zero-cost access to quality healthcare services for pregnant women, sick newborns, and mothers up to six months after delivery. Through this initiative,

beneficiaries receive dignified, respectful care from trained professionals in certified facilities. As of March 2025, 90,015 SUMAN health facilities have been notified across the country.

### **Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA)**

It played a critical role in ensuring maternal health by offering four comprehensive antenatal check-ups during the first trimester to ensure timely detection of high-risk pregnancies.

### **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**

Aimed at promoting institutional delivery and ensuring maternal health, the scheme provides direct cash benefits of ₹5,000 to pregnant and lactating women. It has ensured better nutrition and health monitoring during pregnancy.

### **Dignity in Daily Life: A Silent Revolution**

True empowerment begins with dignity — a safe home, clean fuel, private toilets, and water at the doorstep. The Modi Government has placed women at the centre of India's development journey, transforming everyday struggles into opportunities for health, safety, and self-reliance. From housing to hygiene, each initiative has uplifted lives and strengthened the foundation of *Nari Shakti* in rural India.

### **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G)**

Launched in 2016, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) turned dreams into concrete homes. 73% of

nearly 2.75 crore PM Awas-Gramin beneficiaries are women. Owning a house has not just given women shelter — it has given them dignity, security, and a seat at the decision-making table.

### **Ujjwala Yojana**



With the launch of the **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)** in 2016, **10.33 crore LPG connections** have been distributed, liberating women from hazardous fumes. The **International Energy Agency** hailed it as a milestone in health and environmental reform, and a crucial step in **bridging gender inequality**.

### **Swachh Bharat Mission**



Before 2014, **only 39% of Indian households** had access to toilets. Women and girls bore the brunt of this indignity — risking health, harassment, and humiliation. The **Swachh Bharat Mission**, launched in 2014, changed that narrative. **Over 12 crore toilets** have been built under SBM-Gramin, bringing a **profound sense of safety and self-respect** to women. A study revealed that post-toilet construction:

- **93% of women** no longer feared harm or infection,
- **92% felt safe at night**, and
- **93% could stop limiting food and water intake** just to control the need to defecate.

### Jal Jeevan Mission

Fetching water, often from long distances, was a daily burden for rural women. **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)**, launched in 2019, sought to end this drudgery. **Over 15.6 Crore** Tap Water connections are transforming rural living, a dramatic leap from the mere 3.23 crore in

**Education and Digital Literacy**

- Separate toilets for girls in 9,79,610 government schools.
- 4.2 Crore Sukanya accounts opened with ₹2.99 Lakh Crore net deposits.
- Nearly 50% of STEM graduates in India are women — highest globally.
- Over 100 women contributed significantly to the Chandrayaan-3 mission.

2019. **JJM has empowered women**, not just by saving their time, but by involving them in planning, execution, and monitoring of water supply — making them the true stakeholders in their community's future.

### Education and Digital Literacy Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)



As per the Health Management Information System (HMIS) data of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Sex ratio at Birth (SRB) at National level has improved from 918 (2014-15) to 930 (2023-24). As per UDISE data of Ministry of Education, enrolment of girls in the schools up to secondary has increased from 75.51 percent in (2014-15) to 78% in 2023-24.

### Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY)

The Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY), launched on 22nd January 2015 has completed a decade of empowering girl children through financial security. As of November 2024, over **4.2 crore** accounts have been opened across India, reflecting widespread public participation and trust in the scheme. Marking its 10-

year milestone in January 2025, SSY continues to encourage families to invest in their daughters' futures—fostering financial inclusion, gender equity, and long-term social progress.

### Social Welfare and Development



India's journey of women empowerment under Prime Minister Modi has been rooted in strong social welfare measures and has now evolved into a movement of leadership and agency. From welfare to leadership, Indian women are now shaping the nation's destiny. Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, the narrative has shifted from viewing women as passive beneficiaries to recognising them as active agents of change.

### Women in Defence

Today, women proudly wear the uniform in police services and across all wings of the armed forces, with permanent commissions now a reality. Historic milestones such as girls being admitted to Sainik Schools and the National Defence Academy mark a new era of opportunity and inclusion.

On May 29, 2025, the first batch of female cadets graduated from the National Defence Academy.

### Women in STEM

In the fields of science and space, Indian women are reaching for the stars—quite literally. They played pivotal roles in the success of Chandrayaan-3, symbolising India's scientific excellence and gender inclusivity. The country also boasts the highest number of female pilots in the world and leads globally in the proportion of women graduating in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), reflecting the rise of a confident, capable, and ambitious Nari Shakti.

*Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam Institutionalising this transformation, the landmark Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam marks a constitutional leap for women's political empowerment. By reserving 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women — with dedicated representation for SC and ST women — this act ensures their rightful place in governance. It goes beyond tokenism, laying the foundation for a generation of female leaders who will shape India's future policies and progress.*

### Equal Rights for Women

The growing trust women place in Prime Minister Modi's vision is rooted in meaningful reforms that impact their everyday lives.

- The abolition of Triple Talaq has given Muslim women the dignity and legal protection they

long deserved.

- Proposal to raise the marriageable age of women from 18 years to 21 years will help with education and employment opportunities.
- Doubling maternity leave to 26 weeks puts India among the most progressive nations in supporting working mothers.
- And with the scrapping of Article 35A, women in Jammu & Kashmir now enjoy equal property and legal rights — a historic correction of past injustice.

## Financial Inclusion and Economic Empowerment

**Financial Inclusion & Economic Empowerment**

- 68% women entrepreneurs out of 52.5 Crore PM MUDRA Yojana borrowers.
- 83% of Stand-Up India account holders are women.
- Over 10.66 Crore women have enrolled under PM Jan Dhan Yojana.
- Mahila Samman Savings Certificate launched exclusively for women in Budget 2023-24.
- More than 10.05 Crore women have been mobilized into over 90 lakh Self-Help Groups.
- Lakshpati Didi Initiative aims to financially empower 3 Crore rural women.
- 73% women beneficiaries under PM Awas Yojana - Gramin.
- EPFO contribution reduced from 12% to 8% for new women employees to boost workforce participation.

Women in India have immense potential to drive change when given the right opportunities. As the nation accelerates on its path of growth, the ambitions and expectations of women are

also rising. Recognizing this powerful shift, the Government of India has launched key initiatives to support aspiring women entrepreneurs and remove barriers to accessing institutional credit. Two flagship schemes—Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) and Stand-Up India—have played a crucial role in this transformation.

## Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)



The scheme provides loans of up to ₹20 lakh across four loan products. By March 2025, since the launch of the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY), more than 52.5 crore+ loan accounts have been extended, with a sanctioned amount of ₹34.11 lakh crore and a disbursed amount of ₹33.33 lakh crore. Notably, about 68% of these loans were granted to women entrepreneurs, underlining the scheme's pivotal role in boosting women-led businesses.

## Stand-Up India Scheme

Launched on 5th April 2016, the Stand-Up India Scheme facilitates bank loans between ₹10 lakh to ₹1 crore to at least one SC/ST and one woman borrower per bank branch for setting up greenfield enterprises. The scheme was extended in 2019-20 to cover the 15th Finance Commission period from 2020 to 2025. As of March 2025, over 2.73 lakh accounts

have been sanctioned under the scheme, out of which 2,04,058 loans, i.e. approx. 83% have been sanctioned to women, amounting to over ₹47,704 crore.

### **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**



The scheme aims to empower rural women by promoting self-reliance, skill development, and sustainable livelihoods. Under it, **over 10.05 crore women** have been mobilised into **90.90 lakh Self Help Groups (SHGs)**. Taking this empowerment a step further, the **Lakshpati Didi Initiative** has emerged as a game-changer. As of March 2025, it has enabled **1.48 crore SHG members** to earn a **minimum annual income of ₹1 lakh** through diversified and sustainable livelihood activities.

#### **Safety and Security**

##### **Mission Shakti**

Launched in mission mode, Mission Shakti is a flagship initiative by the Government of India to ensure the safety, security, and empowerment of women across all stages of life. Moving beyond piecemeal approaches, it adopts a

lifecycle-based strategy to transform women into equal stakeholders in the nation-building process. It also fosters convergence across schemes and encourages community participation, particularly through grassroots initiatives.

#### **Two Pillars of Mission Shakti:**

- **Sambal**
- **Samarthya**

**Sambal – Focuses on women's safety and security, with upgraded schemes such as:**

##### **One Stop Centre (OSC):**

Designed to support women facing violence in private or public spaces, OSCs now include a provision for a dedicated emergency rescue vehicle with an annual grant of ₹4.5 lakh per centre. A new digital feature, “Book Appointment at OSC”, has been added to the Mission Shakti Dashboard, allowing distressed women to schedule appointments online for timely support.

As of 28th February 2025, 908 OSCs have been approved, with 819 operational, assisting over 10.98 lakh women since their inception on 1st April 2015.

**Women Helpline (WHL):** Fully integrated with ERSS 112 in 35 States/UTs (excluding West Bengal). It is also integrated with the Child Helpline in 33 States/UTs and with 536 OSCs.

Since inception, 214.78 lakh calls have been received and 85.32 lakh women have been assisted nationwide.

**SHe-Box Portal:** Launched on



29th August 2024, this Sexual Harassment Electronic Box is a digital platform under the SH Act, 2013, offering a user-friendly mechanism for women to report workplace harassment and seek redressal.

**Nari Adalat:** A grassroots initiative promoting community-based women-led justice mechanisms, currently operational in: 50 Gram Panchayats each in Assam and Jammu & Kashmir. Soon to be expanded in 10 Gram Panchayats each in Bihar, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, and 5 in Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

**Samarthya – Focuses on empowerment and self-reliance through education, skill development, and institutional support:**

**Shakti Sadan (formerly Swadhar Greh and Ujjawala Homes):** From 2014-15 to 31st December 2024, over 2.92 lakh women have benefited, with ₹630.43 crore released to States/UTs for its implementation.

**Sakhi Niwas (formerly Working Women Hostel):** In the same period, 5.07 lakh women have been supported under the scheme, with ₹196.05 crore allocated to States/UTs.

#### **#AbKoiBahanaNahi Campaign**

Launched on 25th November 2024 by Hon'ble Minister Smt. Annpurna Devi, this national campaign against gender-based violence is a joint initiative by the Ministries of Women & Child Development and Rural Development, with support from UN Women.

#### **Conclusion**

Over the last 11 years, the Modi

government's unwavering commitment to women's empowerment has transformed social welfare from a safety net into a springboard for leadership, dignity, and opportunity. In the last decade, India has laid the foundation for a future where women are no longer just participants — they are leaders, innovators, protectors, and entrepreneurs. From space missions to grassroots governance, from kitchens to boardrooms, Nari Shakti is marching ahead — stronger, freer, and more determined than ever.

The journey from welfare to leadership is well underway. And the next chapter of India's story will undoubtedly be written by its empowered women.

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Session - II  
Wednesday, June 18, 2025  
AT 12:00 Hours to 13:30 Hours

**Women-Led Development: Channelizing New Horizons of  
Empowerment during the PM Narendra Modi Era for Viksit Bharat**

<b>Keynote Address</b>	<b>Smt Rekha Sharma</b> Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha Former Chairman, National Commission for Women
<b>Principal Guest</b>	<b>Prof. Alok Chakrawal</b> Vice Chancellor, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalay Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh
<b>Chair</b>	<b>Aadaraniyaa Rajmata Ambika Ji</b> Spiritual Leader
<b>Principal Guest</b>	<b>Dr. Pankaj Mittal</b> Secretary General Association of Indian Universities
<b>Guests of Honour</b>	<b>Prof (Dr) K G Suresh Ji</b> Director Inia Habitat Centre
	<b>Dr Anurag Batra</b> Founder Chairman, Exchange 4 Media
	<b>Aadaraniya Prof Madan Mohan Goel Ji</b> Former Vice-Chancellor Visiting Professor, IAS Shimla
	<b>Aadaraniyaa Sadhvi Pragya Devi</b> Spiritual Leader & Co Founder Sambhav Int Foundation, New Delhi
	<b>Ms. Mridula Tripathi</b> CEO , Uni Kaushal, Mumbai
<b>Moderator</b>	<b>Dr Anna Mirza</b> Associate Professor, Delhi University
<b>Inaugural Remarks</b>	<b>Prof Jasim Mohammad</b> Managing Trustee/ Chairman, CNMS
<b>Vote of Thanks</b>	<b>Prof Divya Tanwar</b> Founder, Divye Foundation



## Centre for Narendra Modi Studies (CNMS)

Technical Session -III - June 18, 2025 AT 14:30 Hours to 15:45 Hours at IIC

**Power Within: Women Reimagining Governance for Global Impact**

Tagline: From Panchayats to Policy Tables-

How Women in India Are Recasting Governance as a Soft Power Tool

<b>Chief Guest</b>	<b>Prof. Usha S Nair</b> Vice Chancellor, National Sports University, Imphal, Manipur
<b>Chair</b>	<b>Dr Ashwani Lochan</b> President, Arunachal University of Studies (AUS) Namsai
<b>Guests of Honour</b>	<b>Ms Preeti Singh Mundra</b> Additional Director General National Real Estate Development Council (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Govt of India)
	<b>Prof Payal Kanwar Chandel</b> Central University of Haryana, Jant-Pali, Mahendergarh, Haryana
	<b>Ms. Vrindda Khanna</b> National Secretary, Sant Eshwer Foundation, Business Women & Lawyer
	<b>Smt Kalpana Singh</b> Gram Pradhan, Sikanderpur, Aligarh
	<b>Prof Harpreet Kaur</b> Principal Mata Sundri College of Women's, DU
	<b>Dr Syeda Saadia Azim</b> Chief Operating Officer, Bangla Sahayata Kendra, Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms, Government of West Bengal
<b>Moderator</b>	<b>Dr Kaynat Kazi</b> Distinguish fellow Viksit Bharat Fellowship 2025
<b>Welcome Remarks</b>	<b>Prof Jasim Mohammad</b> Chairman CNMS
<b>Vote of Thanks</b>	<b>Ms Tushita Bhandari, Fellow</b> Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

## OUR PUBLICATIONS



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