

VIKSIT BHARAT @2047: STRATEGIES FOR SELF-RELIANCE ESPECIALLY WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

As India is going to celebrate its 100th anniversary of independence in 2047, the vision of a "Viksit Bharat" becomes increasingly important to national discourse. This research paper explores the importance of women's empowerment in achieving this goal. Despite continuous progress, deep-rooted gender discrimination exists, particularly in areas such as education, health and workplace participation. The four pillars of Viksit Bharat are Garib (Poor), Yuva (Youth), Annadata (Farmers) and Nari (Women), which represent the GYAN framework. Among these pillars, the empowerment of women stands as a major factor in realizing this ambitious national vision. Addressing existing challenges requires strategies that emphasise education, healthcare access, financial independence and policy updates for sustaining gender equality.

INTRODUCTION

The 'Viksit Bharat 2047' agenda is a comprehensive vision plan by the Government of India, aiming to transform India into a developed nation by the year 2047, marking the 100th anniversary of its independence. The soul of the Indian version of the notion of development is emphasised through Hon'ble PM's Sankalp of Panch Pran, with Viksit Bharat being one of them and of utmost importance. At the core of this vision is the ambitious goal of building a \$30-trillion economy. The Viksit Bharat vision is more than a slogan.

The government aims to implement a business-friendly environment for the whole nation that encourages investment, economic growth, and innovation through initiatives like Make in India, Digital India, and Startup India. Building strong infrastructure is essential for this mission, with projects aimed at developing top-quality roads and railways while improving digital connectivity. Initiatives like the Smart City Mission, Bharat Mala and Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojna show the government's dedication to sustainable development.

A key pillar of Viksit Bharat is emerging technological development to improve governance and enhance transparency Programs like Aadhaar and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) that have streamlined subsidies and financial benefits, reduced frauds and ensured direct help to beneficiaries. Modi's vision for Viksit Bharat also emphasises gender equality, recognising it as essential to the nation's holistic development. Moreover, in budget announcement for 2025-26 on February 1, 2025, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that Viksit Bharat mission encompasses seventy percent of women in economic activities.

This paper has two key objectives:

- To identify the challenges women face in the current scenario.
- To propose strategies to overcome these challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach, analysing content from existing studies on women's empowerment and its role in achieving the vision of "Viksit Bharat 2047." It reviews academic articles, government reports and policy documents to find the key challenges and factors that support women's empowerment in India.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"Women, Work, and Empowerment in India" by Reema Nanavaty (2007), This book delves into the relationship between women's work and empowerment in India, exploring how economic independence can lead to greater social and political empowerment. It is particularly relevant to the GYAN framework's focus on Nari (women).

"Women and Development: Issues and Challenges" by K. Shanthi (2009) – This book is a collection of essays that discuss different aspects of women's development in India. It gives a broad understanding of the challenges and opportunities in empowering women. It is a useful resource for learning about women's empowerment in India.

"The Gendered Terrain of Development: Politics, Policy, and Everyday Life" by Saraswati Raju and Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt (2011) – This book explores how gender and development are connected in India. It focuses on how government policies affect women's lives. The authors analyse the problems women face in getting education and jobs due to social and structural barriers. This book helps in understanding the difficulties in achieving gender equality.

Financial Inclusion and Women’s Empowerment in India" by Anjali Ghosh (2015) Published in the International Journal of Social Economics, Ghosh’s article discusses the role of financial inclusion in empowering women in India. It provides insights into how financial independence can contribute to gender equality, a key component of the GYAN framework.

"Women Sports in India: Constraints and Challenges – A Case Study Based on the Indian Women’s Cricket Team" by Ms. Akansha Rehani and Ms. Arti Thakur (2021) – This study highlights that female athletes in India get much less media attention than male athletes. It discusses various studies that show the unequal coverage and support for women’s sports in India.

CHALLENGES

Women’s empowerment in Viksit Bharat faces challenges like deep-rooted social norms and gender biases that restrict their education and job opportunities. Poor facilities and safety issues also stop them from fully taking part in work and society. To solve this, better policies, social change, and special efforts are needed to give women equal chances.

Individual Level Challenges:

In India, traditional beliefs and social rules often restrict women’s chances in education, jobs, and decision-making, keeping inequality alive despite some progress. Girls, especially in villages and poor communities, struggle with education due to poverty, preference for boys, safety issues, lack of proper facilities, and fewer opportunities for higher studies.

Organisation-Level Challenges:

The gender pay gap in India remains a significant challenge, driven by factors like occupational segregation, discrimination, and biases in hiring and promotion. As of 2024, India’s gender pay gap remains a significant issue. According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2024, India has closed 64.1% of its overall gender gap, ranking 129th out of 146 countries. This indicates a slight decline from previous years, with economic parity standing at 39.8%, meaning women earn approximately ₹40 for every ₹100 earned by men. Workplace harassment is another critical issue, with nearly 70% of working women reporting harassment, despite existing laws. Many women do not report the issue due to lack of awareness and fear of retaliation. To address these challenges, organisations must implement zero-tolerance policies, promote gender diversity in leadership, and provide supportive environment.

Industry-Level Challenges:

Women in India are predominantly concentrated in sectors like education and healthcare, where they constitute a significant portion of the workforce. However, they remain underrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, women make up around 30% of the workforce in 2024; and their numbers are much lower in specialised fields like engineering and technology. To encourage young women to choose jobs in STEM fields, awareness campaigns, mentorship programs, and scholarships are being introduced to boost confidence and improve abilities. Women have also struggled to break the glass ceiling in reaching important positions like heads of institutional committees.

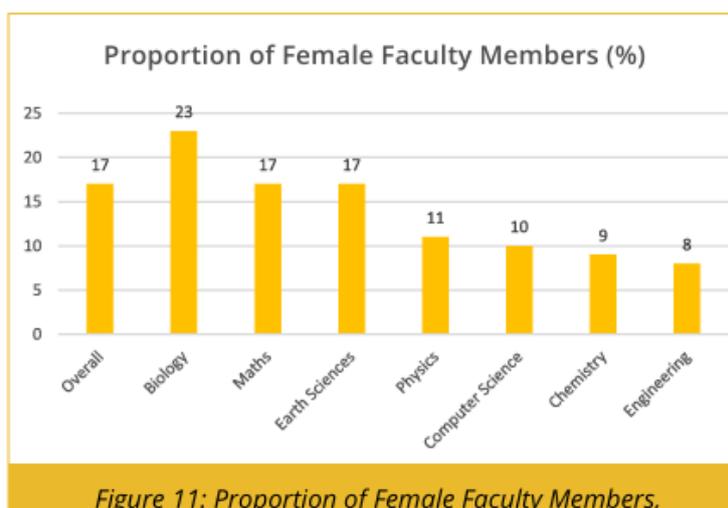


Figure 11: Proportion of Female Faculty Members,

Source: Muralidhar and Ananthanarayan (2023)

A study by Muralidhar and Ananthanarayan in 2023 found that women make up only 17% of faculty members in 100 Indian universities. Even among them, most are in Biology (23%), showing that women are still limited to certain fields in STEM.

Strategies:

India is taking strong steps to support women in all areas of life, including health, safety, education, jobs, and business. These efforts focus on fairness, equality, and encouraging women to take an active role in the country's growth and development. The following strategies will change the future of women:

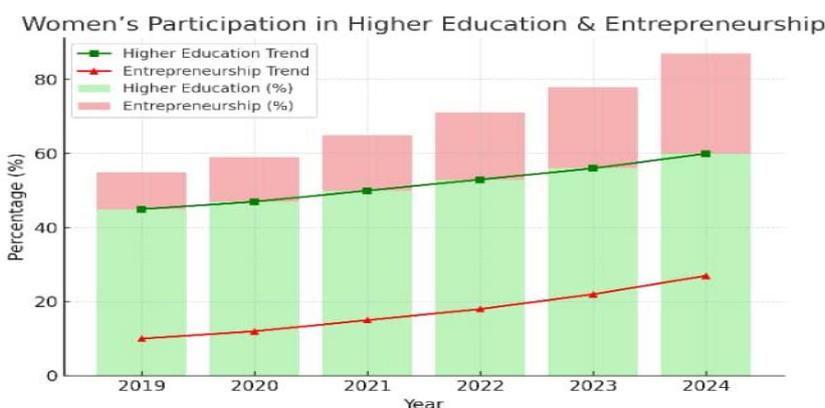
Integrated Support through One-Stop Centres: A network of 802 one-stop centres provides integrated support to over 12.10 Lakh women, offering services such as legal aid, medical care, and counselling.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Initiative: The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme started on January 22, 2015, by the Ministry of Women & Child Development, along with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. This program works to stop female feticide and encourage girls' education. As a result, the number of girls born per 1,000 boys improved from 918 to 933 in 2023-24, and more girls joined secondary school, increasing the enrolment rate from 75.51% to 79.4% in the same period.

Women in STEM: Women comprise 43% of students in STEM fields in India, reflecting the country's commitment to enhancing women's participation in high-tech sectors.

Digital Literacy and Empowerment: The Pradhan Mantri Grameen Digital Saksharta Abhiyan has empowered over 52% of its participants, who are women, by promoting digital literacy.

Support for Women Entrepreneurs: Initiatives like the Mudra Yojana provide collateral-free loans, supporting women-led businesses, while schemes like Stand-Up India and Startup India reserve funds for



women-led startups. Under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), the amount sanctioned and disbursed in the financial year 2023-24 under various categories:

Shishu	Kishore	Tarun
₹1,08,472.51 crore	₹1,00,370.49 crore	₹13,454.27 crore

Table: Women Borrowers

National Mission for Empowerment of Women: The Government of India has launched several schemes to support women's empowerment and financial independence. Mahila e-Haat, created by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, is an online platform where women entrepreneurs can showcase and sell their products, helping them grow their businesses. The National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) works to strengthen women's rights and ensure equal opportunities. Additionally, the MUDRA Bank provides financial support to women entrepreneurs, helping them start and expand their businesses. These initiatives aim to improve women's economic and social status across the country.

NEP 2020 and Women's Education: "If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a whole family," as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru famously stated. The provision calls for the creation of special education zones and a gender inclusion fund to support fair education for disadvantaged girls. The NEP 2020 gives special importance to women's education and empowerment by helping them develop their skills and talents. It aims to make women more active and successful in society, the economy, and entrepreneurship, ensuring they have equal opportunities to grow and succeed. Open Educational Resources (OER) and mobile learning play an important role in empowering women under NEP 2020. This policy focuses on gender-inclusive education, ensuring that women and girls, who have faced educational barriers in the past, get equal learning opportunities through online and mobile platforms. Various initiatives regarding OER adopted by the Government of India are: SWAYAM, SWAYAM PRABHA, PATHSHALA and E-GYANKOSH. NEP is all about skills oriented training and vocational course to be self-reliant.

Improving Women's Lives with Basic Necessities: Providing essential resources like clean cooking fuel, safe drinking water, and proper toilets at home greatly benefits women. It reduces the time and effort they spend collecting firewood or fetching water, improving their health and hygiene. With these facilities, women can focus more on education, work, and other important activities, leading to a better and more independent life.

PoSH Act (2013): The Prevention of Sexual Harassment (PoSH) at Workplace Act in India requires all organisations to establish clear policies, preventive measures, procedures, and guidelines regarding sexual harassment for their employees. Many amendments have been made in the PoSH Act for women's

empowerment by offering better access to financial services, insurance, and savings schemes through post offices, helping promote financial inclusion and empowering workplace complainants by extending complaint timelines and mandatory formal enquiries.

Affordable Sanitary Napkins: Sanitary napkins are sold at ₹1 per pad and are tax-exempt, promoting menstrual hygiene.

Impact

Empowering women helps build a stronger and more developed India. When women have better access to education, job opportunities, and social support, they can play a big role in the country's growth. Economically, empowered women help grow the economy by working, starting businesses, and taking leadership roles. This increases the number of people working and makes the economy more productive. Studies show that when men and women have equal opportunities, the economy does better. Well educated and highly skilled female teacher in the STEM field can become a role model for young girls to strive for their dreams irrespective of men's majority. Moreover, knowledge accessed during education can become awareness not for just the individual but for the family about how health and hygiene can be maintained.

CONCLUSION

As India moves toward 2047, focusing on empowering women will be important for creating a country where everyone, no matter their gender, can contribute to the nation's growth and prosperity. Achieving gender equality will not only make India stronger but also create a fairer and better future for all its people. Therefore, equal chance to get education in any field, support from family, equal salary and workload irrespective of gender, zero tolerance at the workplace and government's policies to motivate and help women to start a journey of entrepreneurship will definitely improve the situation and only then, will women be able to contribute to Nation's economy.

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