



## Women's development and empowerment

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### Abstract

Women's development and empowerment are critical to achieving gender equality and fostering inclusive, sustainable growth. This paper explores the multifaceted dimensions of women's empowerment, including economic, social, political, and educational aspects. It examines the barriers women face, such as gender-based violence, discrimination, and limited access to resources and opportunities. By analyzing successful interventions and policies from various regions, the study highlights best practices and innovative approaches that have effectively promoted women's empowerment. The paper also discusses the role of education, legal frameworks, and grassroots movements in enhancing women's agency and participation in decision-making processes. Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of a holistic, intersectional approach to women's development, emphasizing collaboration between governments, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to create an enabling environment where all women can thrive and contribute to societal progress.

**Keywords:** Women, empowerment, violence, education, literacy

### Introduction

The processes and initiatives aimed at enhancing women's general well-being – being as well as providing them the ability to take charge of their life and make decisions for themselves are referred to as women's development and empowerment. The way of enhancing women's lives by expanding their access to opportunities and resources is known as women's development. This may include access to healthcare, education, employment opportunities, and involvement in politics. The procedure of improving the economic, social, and political visibility of typically less fortunate women in society is known as "empowerment of women." It's the process of protecting them against any kind of aggression. In order to empower women, a society and political climate must be established where they can live free from the mistreatment, abuse, fear, prejudice, and overall sense of discrimination that comes with being a woman in a system that has historically been dominated by men. Giving women the freedom to decide for themselves and run their own lives is the main goal of women's empowerment. It's about giving women the skills, information, and self-assurance that they require to effectively engage in society. Although women consist of 50% of the world's population, India has significantly less number of women as compared to men due to its unbalanced gender ratio. When it comes to their position in society, they are rarely treated equally with males. Women in Western nations enjoy the same rights and status as men in all spheres of life. However, prejudice and challenges related to gender still exist in India. Enhancing women's lives and their status in society is a broad idea that falls under the umbrella of women's development and empowerment. The goal of empowerment is to balance levels of opportunity so that women and men can engage in social life and economic life on the same basis. Women who are empowered have equality guaranteed, their views heard, and they are not subjected to sexist prejudice. The goal of development is to provide women with greater exposure to economic potential. This entails getting respectable employment, starting your own company, and becoming

financially independent, ensuring that women have access to high-quality medical care, a healthy diet, and mental health support is essential to their empowerment and development. Women must actively participate in politics and decision-making at all stages in order to grow.

Women's development and empowerment are essential components of global development agendas. Historically marginalized, women have faced numerous systemic barriers that hinder their full participation in economic, social, political, and educational spheres. Despite progress in some areas, significant gender disparities persist worldwide, impacting not only individual women but also broader societal and economic outcomes.

Economic empowerment is a critical aspect of women's development, as it enhances women's ability to participate fully in the labor market, achieve financial independence, and contribute to economic growth. Social empowerment, which includes access to healthcare, education, and social services, is equally vital in improving the quality of life for women and their families. Political empowerment, through increased representation and participation in decision-making processes, ensures that women's voices and perspectives are included in policy-making. Educational empowerment is the foundation upon which all other forms of empowerment rest, providing women with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate and influence their environments.

However, the path to empowerment is fraught with challenges. Women continue to face gender-based violence, discrimination, and restrictive societal norms that limit their opportunities and potential. Legal and institutional frameworks in many regions still do not adequately protect women's rights or promote gender equality. Additionally, intersecting factors such as race, class, ethnicity, and geography can exacerbate the disadvantages women face. This paper aims to explore the various dimensions of women's empowerment, identifying the key barriers and enablers that influence women's development. By examining case studies and successful interventions from

different parts of the world, the study will highlight effective strategies and policies that have led to meaningful progress in women's empowerment. The role of education, legal reforms, grassroots activism, and multi-stakeholder partnerships will be discussed in detail, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive, intersectional approach to achieving gender equality.

Ultimately, the goal of this research is to provide insights and recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and advocates working to advance women's development and empowerment. By fostering a more inclusive and equitable society, we can unlock the full potential of half of the world's population, driving sustainable development and prosperity for all.

### **Importance of women's development and empowerment**

Women's development and empowerment are fundamental to achieving a fair, just, and prosperous society. The empowerment of women is not only a moral imperative but also an essential driver of economic, social, and political progress. Here are some key reasons why women's development and empowerment are crucial:

#### **1. Economic growth and poverty reduction:**

Empowering women economically leads to increased household incomes, improved family welfare, and reduced poverty. When women participate in the labor force and have access to financial resources, they can contribute significantly to economic development. Studies have shown that closing the gender gap in labor force participation can boost GDP growth. Women reinvest a significant portion of their earnings in their families, particularly in their children's education and health, creating a positive cycle of development and well-being.

**2. Gender equality:** As a basic human right, gender equality cannot be achieved without enhancing the status of women. Equality based on gender refers to the fact that men and women can engage in all facets of life with equal opportunities, privileges, and assets. Women's development and empowerment encourages gender equality and seek equal opportunities for women. The equivalent chances of education for men and boys and women and girls are guaranteed by this. In order to promote equality between men and women, norms of society and mindsets that limit women's responsibilities and possibilities must be changed. It is crucial for the development and empowerment of women because it creates the framework needed for them to realise their true abilities.

#### **3. Improved health and education outcomes:**

Empowered women have better access to healthcare and education for themselves and their children. This leads to improved health outcomes, lower maternal and child mortality rates, and better educational attainment for the next generation. Educated and empowered women are more likely to advocate for their health needs and make informed decisions about family planning, which contributes to healthier and more sustainable population growth.

**4. Sustainable development:** It is essential for attaining sustainable development. When women are equipped,

they become more able to help tackle ecological problems, eliminate inequalities, and promote a just society. Women's distinct insights and skills can be extremely useful in developing and executing mitigation and prevention of climate change methods.

**5. Human rights and social justice:** Empowering women is a matter of human rights and social justice. Gender equality is enshrined in international human rights frameworks, and ensuring women's rights is a moral obligation for all societies. Empowered women can challenge and transform discriminatory practices and norms, creating a more equitable society for all individuals, regardless of gender.

It is a constant and evolving approach that enables women to participate in decision-making in all monetary, politically active, and societal operations in the wider population, as well as improving their ability to modify the structures and conditions that prevent them from succeeding. The 73rd Amendment was a state-supported effort to empower women, with 33% of Panchayat seats and workplace positions reserved for women. Reservation in Local governments was considered as a significant milestone in India's efforts towards empowering women. It is critical for the country's economic success, especially as women make up half of the population. They make major contributions to ecological preservation. They possess an important role in natural resource management, encouraging sustainable agriculture methods, and campaigning for environmental protection. Their distinct viewpoints and understandings are critical for developing remedies for ecological problems. Their growth and enlightenment involve more than simply gaining equal treatment; they are also about realising society's greatest ability. By supporting girls' education, increasing female financial opportunities, and ensuring their political involvement, we can construct an environment in which all can prosper. It's far greater than merely an ethical necessity; it is a worthwhile investment in an increasingly well-off, equitable, and environmentally friendly tomorrow. While in most parts of the world, men and women are both considered equal, it is quite the opposite in India, and we have all witnessed many such situations where women are treated like nobody, which needs to change. The mentality of men needs to change, and only then can we progress towards development in all aspects. We are still far behind the world in terms of empowering women, as in most of India, women are still considered lower in status than men, and there are examples of some instances where even if men and women are doing the same job, men are still paid more, which is total injustice.

### **Historical development of women empowerment**

The history of women's development and empowerment in India has been exhaustive and winding, characterised by advancement and rebellion. Since ancient times to the present day, Indian women have been fighting for liberty and fairness. This path includes a lot of challenges, like restricting customs, a pursuit for education and judicial fights for equality. The history of the development and empowerment of women in India tells the story of various amazing and brave women who pushed traditional standards and set the path for future generations to follow. Whenever it comes to empowering women in India, there have been many ups and downs over the years.

**Vedic age:** Women's history in India has undergone numerous developments, beginning with the equal treatment and appreciation they appreciated throughout the Vedic period, progressing via obstacles along with oppression within the mediaeval era, social transformations intended for supporting women throughout the modern period, and ultimately getting here at contemporary times, wherein they're constantly struggling for equal treatment in certain spheres of socioeconomics and politics as well. Women were highly valued during the Vedic period, and they had equivalent socioeconomic status. The earliest Rigveda described women as individuals who took part in all family tasks, including social as well as financial domains. A man cannot execute any vital function on his own. Historically, men were regarded as incomplete without women. Women enjoyed the privilege to study and memorise both religious and secular books. Many of them have fulfilled critical roles in the development of societal rules and standards of practice. Maitrayee, Gargi, and Leelavati are all highly qualified ladies who excelled in math, astronomy, and the social sciences and held prominent positions along with men of their generation. Their honourable roles extended outside of being mistresses of the house to include more significant duties for the revival and preservation of the human race. It is evident that many women continue to possess the same status today, even in the contemporary world. Women were glorified in the ballads. Feminine goddesses such as Saraswati, Kali, Lakshmi, and Durga are still revered. Women were considered the source of all strength, or energy. Historically, women were held in high regard, as evidenced by several rites and customs that still exist today. The early Vedic age, that is defined by women's significant contributions to scholarly accomplishments, was a glorious period for women. Around the beginning of this period, women used to participate in a process known as Swayamvara, a term that means "choosing a husband."

**Buddhist period:** Buddhism arose as a faith system which upheld the concepts of equal treatment, equity, and ethical perseverance, empowering women. Women had complete religious and ethical legitimacy during this era. The domestic realm followed an identical trend to that that existed during Vedic times. Their literature and principles frequently emphasised women's analytical and ethical abilities, opposing prevailing standards that limited them in their obligations at home. Prominent personalities like Mahapajapati Gotami, the first woman to pursue ordination, and Khema and Uppalavanna, recognised because of their knowledge and religious achievements, emphasised the abilities of women along with their achievements towards the faith of Buddhism. Such achievements within this period provided the groundwork for further efforts regarding achieving gender parity and rights for females, demonstrating an essential change in society's perceptions regarding women and what they can accomplish.

**Islamic period:** The Muslim invasion may have contributed for the decline in the role of women during the Islamic period. The Mughals introduced Islam in the nation of India on a large scale, bringing along it as well, certainly in the view among several Hindus, backward views regarding women, which encouraged the practice of sati. Within the Muslim era, the practice of child marriage, sati, and the parda system were implemented to protect young ones from

the terrible acts committed by Muslim invaders. Women were restricted to working inside their homes; they weren't permitted to venture outdoors without the aid of male members of their families. They were not able to visit the village's centre since unequal treatment had permeated across community. Women's access to learning had limitations during the Mughal era, and they also endured as the consequence of inappropriate behaviours like female infanticide, early marriage of children, and polygamy. Men saw women as the lesser sex and began to misuse their power against them, even denying them basic liberties. The numerous interpretations of Koranic guidelines were in line with the societal conventions that they established about the position of women. Women were not allowed to participate in the system of justice or institutions of faith. They weren't granted formal transfer of property, entitlements too. Durka, multiple marriages, plus the complete male right to file for divorce were all widespread during this era.

**British period:** The empowerment of women throughout British time indicated a watershed moment in the history of women's advancement in India, considering that numerous bad practices had previously been imposed on Indian women. Discrimination based on race was prevalent at the time, leaving women with no sense of individuality. Throughout the British term, Indian revolutionaries and government made efforts to enhance the worth of Indian women. The National Movement, headed by Mahatma Gandhi, emerged in prominent status at the beginning of the twenty-first century, advocating for the abolition of all sorts of unfair treatment towards them. Revolutionary groups headed by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar fought against customs like sati and child marriage while also advocating for the remarriage of widows and female education. Acts of legislation such as the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 and the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 established legislative structures for advancing gender equality. Female engagement in the fight for liberty strengthened their position in society, with people such as Sarojini Naidu and Kasturba Gandhi emerging as significant leaders. The advancement of women was greatly enhanced amid British rule in India, as women were liberated via the conditions of oppression and domination and began to progress towards their aim of equality with men, thanks to the growing influence of Western learning in the whole nation. Indian women experienced an uprising when their minds became aware of their long-standing hardships at the mercy of a conservative society at large, allowing them to initiate initiatives towards societal injustices. Through our lengthy reign of foreign dominance, women's well-being and schooling deteriorated. The British government has taken an interest in women's well-being and training in medicine. In 1885, the Dufferin Fund Committee was formed to offer health assistance to Indian women via female doctors. Wood's Education Dispatch of 1854 brought greater attention to the education of females. The authorities were concerned that women's desire for education was hindered by increasing family responsibilities. The schooling of women progressed slowly due to early marriage at the tender age of 9 or 10, limiting their ability to study for at least 3–4 years. In 1929, authorities established a 14-year age limit for girls to marry, that was later increased upto 18 in 1955.

Nevertheless, these developments primarily benefited urban areas and upper-caste women, discarding village and lower-caste women behind. Regardless of these restrictions, the era created the foundations for post-independence activities, paving the way for subsequent developments in the advancement of women and their rights in India.

**Independent India:** Women's rights in India after it gained independence have changed dramatically, with both success and continued issues. Since independence, the position of women and their place in Indian society have significantly improved. Women in the nation have the right to vote under the Constitution. It has put women on the same status with males. Our Constitution states that equality between men and women is an inherent right. Several years following independence, our nation has clearly retreated from its previous status.

Therefore, at various points in time, learning, franchise, and work are viewed as not only crucial within one another yet also as milestones in the direction of obtaining greater power for women. Women have become more involved in school, with rates of literacy rising dramatically, yet disparities persist, especially in remote regions. They have also increased their financial engagement, joining a variety of occupations and making contributions to many industries. Their participation in politics has gotten better, as shown by the Panchayati Raj system, which reserves seats in local government. Nevertheless, significant difficulties remain, namely violence against women, salary disparities, as well as low representation in higher-level government and corporate positions. Social traditions and prejudices against women persist to prevent true equality. Regardless of these difficulties, women's activity and representation continue to get stronger, resulting in gradual advancements and a more diverse community. Female journeys within an independent India represent a complicated combination of legislative accomplishments, communal struggles, and ongoing efforts for complete justice.

Lastly, the long legacy of women's development and empowerment in India demonstrates their endurance and unwavering dedication towards justice. Women's standing has developed throughout history, from admiration in the ancient Vedic period to backward behaviours during the mediaeval era, revolutionary changes in the British era, and constitutional commitments in an independent India. The fight for empowerment is inextricably linked to the nation's larger socioeconomic environment, demonstrating both substantial advancement along with the persisting pursuit of equality for men and women. They perform a critical role in propelling a country forward and steering it in the direction of growth. These are key components of a vibrant humankind necessary for national advancement; thus, if we desire to gain insight into the encouraging future of women in this nation, educating them should be a top priority. Empowerment entails transitioning from an inferior status to a powerful position. As the years went on, women's positions were challenged, and many of them were denied the same rights as men. From the start, in the mediaeval era, women's responsibilities were restricted to a simple one: caring for their families. They were frequently left out from community gatherings. The goal of an environmentally friendly community would remain elusive unless all women around the globe are given the same opportunities. In order to guarantee that women have the same opportunities in all aspects of daily lives, authorities, people, as well as institutions must all work together.

### Different types of empowerment

Empowerment is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various dimensions through which individuals and groups can gain control over their lives and circumstances. For women, empowerment involves overcoming barriers and gaining access to opportunities that enable them to realize their full potential. The different types of empowerment include:

Social empowerment is a crucial aspect of women's development, focusing on enhancing women's social status, participation, and well-being within their communities and societies. It involves ensuring that women have access to essential services and opportunities that contribute to their overall quality of life. One key component of social empowerment is access to comprehensive healthcare services, including reproductive health, maternal care, and mental health support, which are fundamental for women to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. Additionally, social empowerment addresses gender-based violence by promoting legal protections, providing support services, and raising awareness to combat such violence, thereby ensuring women's safety and dignity.

Another important facet of social empowerment is the encouragement of women's involvement in social networks, community groups, and social organizations. These platforms provide women with opportunities to connect, share experiences, and advocate for their rights and interest.

**Political empowerment:** Politics serves as one of the oldest and most persuasive methods for creating an impact on the world. It provides women with the trust and capacity that they need to be on par with males in the community. Furthermore, women's engagement in legislative endeavours is crucial to the formation of a stable government. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that all individuals have the privilege to participate in governance and to have a say about public matters. It refers to women's engagement in politics and other decision-making bodies. The involvement of females in all government systems is required because it is the only way for them to truly take control of themselves at this time. Women across the globe are trying to escape the chains of enslavement, subordination, discrimination, and various forms of abuse inside as well as out of their own households. Their existence is extremely challenging until they are brought inside the corridors of authority so that they can create and execute initiatives and schemes. With no involvement in politics, women would have trouble trying to develop their efficacy and competence while also confronting the dominant system of power and misogynistic worldview. Governance determines who will receive when and from where. Individuals with limited influence need to speak up and participate actively in the growth and decision-making processes. Women's inability to participate in initiatives for growth is primarily because of barriers erected by a male-dominated society. Further, this is accurate: "absolutely nobody is capable of empowering anybody." True influence will only be achieved through an individual's efforts.

However, it must be noted that women's empowerment does not imply that women gain and utilise authority and status to oppress and rule their male counterparts or a specific category of women over another. This wouldn't be desirable at all. Empowering women entails giving men and women equivalent autonomy and influence and fostering an atmosphere without dominance and subjugation.

**Economic empowerment:** Economically independent women are regarded to be influential individuals. Fair chances for employment possibilities and participation in every kind of marketplace can assist them in breaking down inequalities and defying established gender stereotypes. A crucial method to economically strengthen them is by providing them the freedom to operate their households as they see fit. Many believe that money is incapable of purchasing contentment; however, being economically disadvantaged might deny you the opportunity to become powerful. Those in need, without a home, destitute, or disadvantaged individuals do not have possession of the same resources as those who are well off. Reducing this imbalance would effectively place everybody on the same playing field, with women, in addition, gaining a greater percentage of influence over substance, individuals, intelligence, and monetary assets. The Selfemployed Women's Association (SWEA), which advocates for women's rights by promoting fulltime labour and autonomy for impoverished and remote abused women. Numerous institutions have recognised the need for economic empowerment and are constantly attempting to promote entrepreneurs who are women and establish microlending services. Increasing work options for women can help lessen impoverishment in this nation.

Educational empowerment is fundamental to women's development, providing the foundation for achieving gender equality and enabling women to reach their full potential. Access to quality education at all levels, from primary to tertiary, is essential for equipping women with the knowledge and skills necessary for personal and professional growth. Education opens doors to better employment opportunities, higher incomes, and economic independence, breaking the cycle of poverty that many women face. Furthermore, education empowers women to make informed decisions about their health, family planning, and participation in civic and political life, thereby enhancing their overall quality of life.

Literacy and lifelong learning programs are critical components of educational empowerment, ensuring that women have the opportunity to continue their education and skills development throughout their lives. These programs help women stay relevant in the job market, adapt to changing economic conditions, and pursue their interests and passions. Encouraging women to engage in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education is particularly important, as it opens up new and often high-paying career paths that have traditionally been dominated by men. By fostering an inclusive educational environment that supports and encourages women in these fields, societies can harness a broader range of talents and perspectives, driving innovation and progress.

Educational empowerment also involves addressing and dismantling the barriers that prevent girls and women from accessing education. These barriers can include cultural norms, financial constraints, safety concerns, and inadequate infrastructure. By implementing policies and initiatives that provide scholarships, safe learning environments, and community support, governments and organizations can create a more equitable educational landscape. Ultimately, educational empowerment is not only about improving individual lives but also about fostering sustainable development and societal transformation. Educated and empowered women are key agents of change, contributing to the economic, social, and political advancement of their communities and nations.

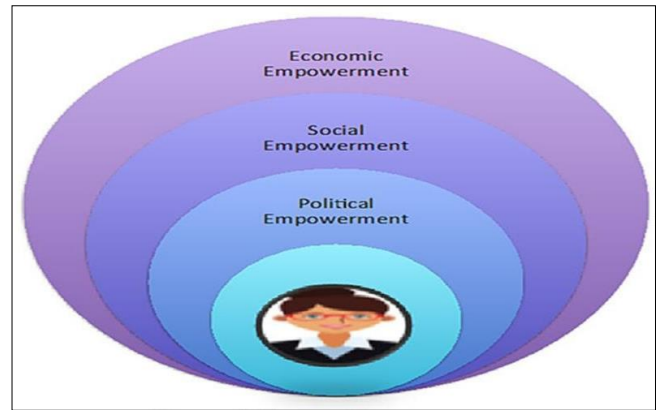


Fig 1: Types of empowerment

### Obstacles and barriers to women's development and empowerment in India

In India, women's development and empowerment face numerous obstacles and barriers that are deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors. One of the primary barriers is the pervasive gender-based discrimination and societal norms that dictate traditional roles for women, often restricting their opportunities for education, employment, and participation in public life. Patriarchal attitudes and practices continue to dominate, leading to limited decisionmaking power for women both within their households and in broader societal contexts. Genderbased violence, including domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and human trafficking, poses significant threats to women's safety and well-being, further hindering their ability to participate fully in society.

Economic barriers also play a critical role in impeding women's empowerment. Women in India often have limited access to financial resources, land ownership, and inheritance rights, which affects their economic independence and ability to invest in their own development. Employment opportunities for women are frequently confined to low-paying, informal sectors with little job security or benefits, perpetuating cycles of poverty and economic dependence. Educational disparities remain a significant challenge, with girls and women facing higher dropout rates due to factors such as early marriage, household responsibilities, and inadequate school infrastructure.

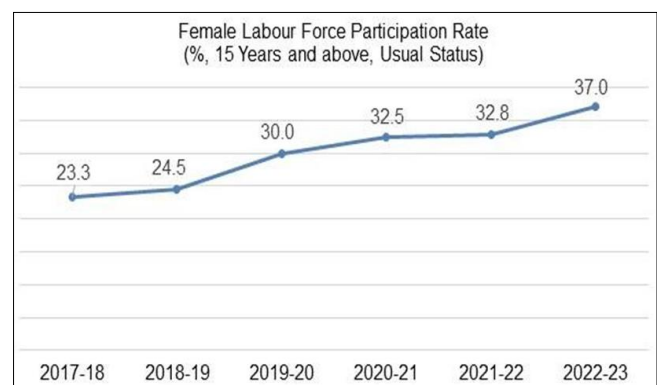
Healthcare access is another critical issue, with many women lacking essential reproductive health services, maternal care, and general healthcare facilities, particularly in rural areas. This lack of access contributes to high maternal and infant mortality rates and poor health outcomes for women. Additionally, political participation and representation of women remain low, with Women facing significant barriers to entering and succeeding in political arenas, including discrimination, lack of support, and the dual burden of professional and domestic responsibilities.

Addressing these multifaceted barriers requires comprehensive strategies that include legal reforms, educational initiatives, economic support programs, and social awareness campaigns. Efforts to change deeply entrenched cultural norms and promote gender equality must be sustained and supported by all sectors of society, including government, civil society, and the private sector. By tackling these obstacles, India can make significant strides toward achieving true empowerment and development for its women, leading to broader societal progress and prosperity.

Violence Based on Gender- Domestic abuse, sexual abuse, bullying, as well as dowry-related offences everything affects women both mentally and emotionally, limiting their liberty and prospects. The significant prevalence of different kinds of misconduct towards women, such as assault at home or harassing behaviour, limits women's rights to mobility along with their capacity to engage freely within financial arenas. Abuse at home frequently remains undetected owing to cultural prejudice, the threat of retaliation, plus the absence of protection platforms. Violence against women in the outdoors reduces female liberty as well as movement. The legislative structure, although strong on document, is plagued by poor implementation, legal interruptions, and insufficient assistance for victims, increasing the effect of assault upon the lives of ladies. Furthermore, the trafficking of humans for enslavement along with grooming continues to be a major concern. Women and girls from financially poor communities remain especially at risk. Although legislation such as the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act exists, slavery persists because of hunger, the absence of schooling, along with ineffective security measures. They have a small say in the governing procedures across the country as well as at the local stage, which makes it difficult to incorporate female opinions and concerns into legislation. Their legislative presence within the nation is critical for guaranteeing that their needs and concerns have adequate consideration within the formulation of policies. Nevertheless, women are still severely neglected in governmental posts. As of the year 2023, women occupy approximately fourteen percent of seats within the parliament. The number of representatives remains even lower within legislative bodies in states and municipal councils. Social traditions & assumptions portray political issues as mainly male sphere, deterring women from entering career paths in politics. Women frequently do not have the required education and mentoring to advance in leadership. Female leaders routinely endure assault, oppression, and discrimination, discouraging them from getting involved in leadership. The reservation of seats for women in local legislative bodies had a favourable impact, but similar initiatives at both the state and national levels are required to promote women's involvement in politics.

- **Firmly rooted social conventions and sexist prejudices:** It can limit female movement, learning, & financial possibilities. In numerous areas throughout the nation, boys are preferred over girls, so they face unfair treatment. Firmly established cultural standards and sexist mentalities are key impediments to female empowerment. These conventions reinforce sexism, emphasizing male supremacy and female subjugation. These restrict the independence of women's capacity to make decisions and their accessibility to possibilities and assets. Stereotypical views reinforce violence against women, unfair treatment, and marginalisation, limiting female involvement in schooling, finances, and governance. These standards are strongly embedded in social organisations, traditions, and faiths, rendering them difficult to alter. Confronting and altering these conventions is critical for achieving a level playing field & empowering women to realise their full abilities. This demands constant attempts to foster an environment of equal treatment for women & an equitable society.

- **Low labour force involvement:** In India, female labour force participation remains comparatively low. In addition, India experiences a smaller share of paid workers than mainland China and Bangladesh. Low labour-force participation is a fundamental barrier to women's empowerment. Regardless of accounting for 50% of the world's inhabitants, female labour force involvement rates are considerably lower than those of men. It's because of several causes, such as neglected jobs and domestic Obligations, that overwhelmingly land on women. Insufficient accessibility to schooling and employment possibilities, inequality and prejudice in job settings, which includes sexism, assault, and bullying. An absence of workplace flexibility which is suitable for families, as well as norms of society and cultural norms that place women's position as carers ahead of the primary earners. As an outcome, women are far more inclined to be employed in unofficial, low-wage, and hazardous employment with little insurance or advantages. It maintains disparities between genders, reduces female financial autonomy, and also hinders the chances for progress. To increase female participation in the workforce, we have to tackle such obstacles, adopt measures such as paid leave for parents, workplace flexibility, plus fair wages for comparable labour, and challenge social standards that limit female financial potential.



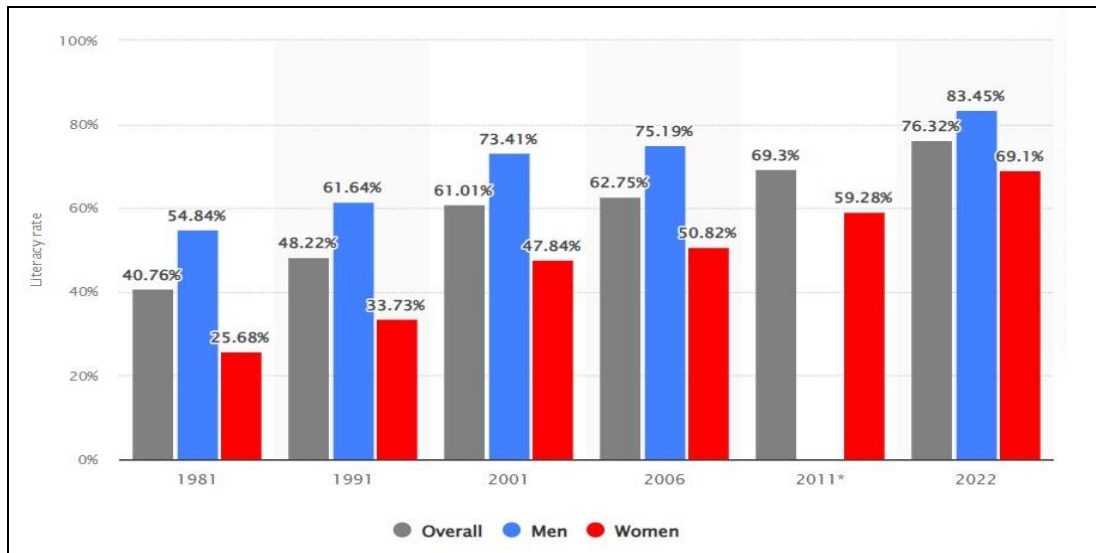
Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey 2022-23

Fig 2

- **Limited education:** It is a major hindrance to the empowerment of women. Women and girls confront barriers for receiving an adequate education, such as a shortage of institutions of learning, violence against females, premature marriage, plus social norms that prioritise household chores. It leads to reduced levels of education, fewer career possibilities, and more openness to abuse. Learning is critical for female empowerment because it supports their capability to gain abilities and confront cultural norms in order to make responsible choices. Women lacking schooling have to stick to employment with low salaries, enjoy little liberty, as well as prohibited from participating in democratic and societal procedures. Eliminating such obstacles is critical for attaining equal rights for everyone, along with empowering women. Voicing these challenges and providing girls' and female's ability to obtain adequate schooling are critical steps towards attaining egalitarian outcomes and the advancement of women.

Regardless of their important and beneficial roles in the household and society, women are sometimes underestimated. They are frequently viewed as inferior to men. Women continue to be largely devalued, in spite of their many roles. Globally, women and girls are in greater danger of impoverishment, mistreatment, and assault, as well as experiencing malnutrition, and are less knowledgeable than men. Women are frequently perceived as vulnerable, and as a result, females obtain less importance than males, irrespective of their significant

contribution to society's improvement. Such obstacles are likely to have effects on women's inadequate skills or abilities, inspiration, or eagerness, as well as their capacity to engage in the growth of communities. Other obstacles to female engagement include social norms, schooling, native duties, medical issues, low self-confidence, relocation, impoverishment and strategy for society involvement, the local government framework, decreased possibilities for improvement initiatives, and limited mobility and authority above property.



Source: Statista

Fig 3: India: Literacy rate from 1981 to 2022, by gender

**Initiatives introduced by government to encourage women’s development and empowerment in India**  
**Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**

- On January 22, 2015, the Indian government formally launched its extremely significant Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) project.
- The central government implemented the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) programme in order to tackle issues related to sexism and the advancement of women in this nation.

The term Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao means 'Save the girl child, educate the girl child'. The project attempts to inform residents about prejudice against women while enhancing the effectiveness of social programmes for females.

**One stop centre (OSC)**

- In 2015, India introduced the "One Stop Centre" programme to assist women who have been victims of abuse. It has been established by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- The main objective of the programme is to provide women who have been victims of abuse with easier opportunities for a variety of assistance.
- The Department of Women and Child Development of the national government in India stated its intention to work alongside the Department of Foreign Affairs in order to create One Stop Centres (OSCs) across ten distinct nations.
- The inaugural OSCs will be implemented in Australia, Canada, Singapore, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the UAE, & Saudi Arabia.

- It seeks to assist women who have experienced abuse in public as well as private environments such as their homes, neighbourhoods, or job settings.
- The programme's goal is to create a single-window portal for women who have experienced assault. Individuals can get a variety of amenities there, such as juridical assistance, health care, and therapy.
- The Nirbhaya Fund predated the OSCS concept. This fund was established in 2013, following the brutal rape and murder of a young lady in the capital.
- The Nirbhaya Fund had been utilised for a variety of projects aimed at preventing and responding to assault towards women, such as the OSCS programme.
- The One-Stop Centre Programme is intended to help women of every age, both over and under eighteen, who might be in danger of abuse, irrespective of social class, relationship status, faith, or gender identity.
- This initiative is available to people of all ages in instances of adversity, assuring that all people can take advantage of their assistance programmes.

**Mission shakti**

- Mission Shakti is a government programme aimed at achieving a national agenda for the advancement of women. The Indian government has announced a number of projects to benefit women.
- The goal of Mission Shakti is to build a community in which women are powerful. They possess the same opportunity to achieve across every aspect of existence.
- It seeks to fulfil this goal by giving women the necessary knowledge and assets, along with the encouragement these individuals require.

### Pradhan mantri mahila shakti kendra (PMMSK)

- The Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra scheme is the Indian government's most prominent programme. It reports to the Department of Women and Child Development. It made its debut in the year 2017. It seeks to strengthen rural women via engagement with society.
- This plan will give voice to rural women via interaction with society, fostering an atmosphere where individuals can reach maximum achievement.
- Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendras are being formed within each gram panchayat area. It promotes regional female autonomy by coordinating governmental programmes.
- Each Kendra serves roughly 5,000 people in rural areas throughout 3–4 localities. These serve as one-stop centres for regional females.
- These centres offer rural women an abundance of educational opportunities, namely employment, nutritional instruction, knowledge of technology, & vocational training. This PMMSK plan assists rural women in determining how they really stand in the community.

### Conclusion

The empowerment of women is the process of enhancing the emotional, societal, informative, race, as well as financial stability of people and communities of women. Female empowerment in the country depends extensively on a variety of factors, including place of origin (city or rural regions), level of schooling, status within society (race and position), and their age. Female empowerment programmes operate at the national, state, and provincial (Panchayat) levels across a variety of industries, namely medical care, schooling, etc. The empowerment of women is critical to the growth of the household, society, and country. Women are sometimes regarded as less significant than men, particularly those who live in remote regions. Usually, their responsibilities remain confined to chores at home. In society, women have to look out for the members of their household, accompany their spouse, assure everybody's everyday needs are met, and guarantee that the kids develop and succeed. Throughout implementation, today's women take on a greater variety of yet challenging tasks in numerous facets of life, notably positions of authority. It demonstrates that women are vital contributors to society. They could contribute to improving education, wellness, and well-being, that includes both loved ones and those in society. Therefore, it is important to empower women because it allows them to enhance themselves, strengthen the state of their families, while contributing towards social growth.

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