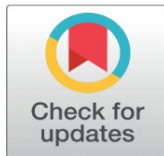


THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE VISION OF VIKSIT BHARAT 2047

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ABSTRACT

The vision of a developed India by 2047, often referred to as “Viksit Bharat,” is built on four central pillars—collectively termed ‘GYAN’: Garib (the underprivileged), Yuva (the youth), Annadata (farmers), and Nari (women). Among these, empowering women is crucial to realizing this national aspiration. Despite progress, India still faces entrenched structural challenges and social norms that limit women’s access to education and reduce their participation in the workforce. To overcome these barriers, focused efforts are needed to expand educational opportunities, improve access to healthcare, strengthen financial autonomy, and introduce effective policy measures that advance gender equality. Enhancing women’s roles in both the economy and governance can drive meaningful social and economic progress, resulting in higher productivity, resilient communities, and more representative institutions. By placing women’s empowerment at the center of its development strategy, India can accelerate its journey toward becoming a fair, inclusive, and prosperous nation by 2047.

Keywords: Women's Empowerment, Viksit Bharat, Challenges, Strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

“Viksit Bharat”, or Developed India, represents a broad and forward-looking vision for the country’s progress, aiming for balanced advancement across economic, social, and cultural spheres. Promoted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it is more than a slogan—it serves as a guiding framework for India during its “Amrit Kaal,” often described as a defining phase of growth and opportunity. At its core, this vision seeks to ensure that every citizen can actively contribute to and benefit from the economy, creating a dynamic and inclusive system with ample employment and entrepreneurial possibilities. To achieve this, the government emphasizes policies that attract investment, stimulate growth, and encourage innovation. Programs like “Make in India,” “Digital India,” and “Startup India” reflect these efforts to build a supportive ecosystem for businesses, generate jobs, and unlock the country’s economic potential. An essential dimension

of this vision is the pursuit of gender equality. Far from being symbolic, it is a foundational element of inclusive national development. Advancing women's empowerment and eliminating gender-based inequalities are critical to fully realizing India's ambitions. Although progress has been made, deep-rooted structural barriers and social attitudes continue to restrict women's educational opportunities and participation in the workforce. Strengthening women's role in society is therefore not only a matter of fairness but also a key driver of sustainable growth and long-term prosperity. By placing greater emphasis on gender equity, India can move closer to its goal of becoming a more prosperous, inclusive, and just nation by 2047.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1) To analyze the transformative impact of the 'Viksit Bharat' vision on women across various socio-economic and political dimensions.
- 2) To meticulously identify and categorize the contemporary challenges hindering women's empowerment in India at individual, organizational, and industry levels.
- 3) To propose actionable and sustainable strategies aimed at overcoming these identified challenges, thereby facilitating comprehensive women's empowerment towards achieving Viksit Bharat 2047.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a qualitative research approach, primarily relying on a comprehensive review of existing literature, policy documents, and reports related to women's empowerment in India and the 'Viksit Bharat' vision. Secondary data from academic studies, government publications, and reputable organizational reports, such as those from the World Economic Forum and the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), were systematically analyzed to identify key challenges, evaluate existing strategies, and understand the impact of various initiatives on women. The methodology involved content analysis of published research papers and governmental schemes to synthesize information on gender disparities, economic participation, social welfare, and policy reforms concerning women's roles in national development. The aim was to provide a holistic overview of the current landscape, drawing insights from diverse sources to support the challenges identified and the strategies proposed for women's empowerment in the context of Viksit Bharat 2047.

4. CHALLENGES

Empowering women in the vision of **Viksit Bharat** (Developed India) is crucial, yet it faces significant hurdles. These challenges span individual, organizational, and industry levels, rooted in deeply ingrained societal norms, inadequate infrastructure, and systemic biases. Overcoming these barriers demands a multi-pronged approach involving policy reforms, cultural shifts, and targeted interventions to ensure equitable opportunities and full participation for women.

5. CHALLENGES AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

In India, long-standing gender norms and social expectations continue to shape women's roles within both the household and the wider community. These expectations often confine women to traditional responsibilities, restricting their access to education, employment, and participation in decision-making. Even with gradual progress, deeply rooted beliefs still limit women's independence and opportunities.

Ensuring equal access to education for girls remains a significant challenge, particularly in rural and disadvantaged areas. Economic hardship, preference for educating boys, and concerns about safety frequently lead to higher dropout rates among girls. At higher levels of education, issues such as inadequate facilities, lack of female mentors, and limited academic opportunities further hinder their progress.

Various forms of violence against women persist across the country, including domestic abuse, sexual harassment, dowry-related violence, and unsafe public environments. Although laws exist to address these issues, their enforcement is often uneven. Social attitudes that stigmatize victims or normalize such behavior contribute to underreporting and allow these problems to continue.

Access to healthcare is another area where women face multiple barriers, including distance from medical facilities, financial limitations, and cultural restrictions. Critical health concerns—such as maternal care, reproductive health, and illnesses like breast cancer—are often neglected or insufficiently addressed. Social taboos surrounding women’s health can delay treatment, leading to poorer health outcomes overall.

6. CHALLENGES AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

One of the major issues in India’s workplaces is the ongoing gender pay gap. Women frequently receive lower salaries than men for similar roles, largely due to occupational segregation, discriminatory practices, and biases in recruitment and promotion. In addition, social expectations often steer women toward lower-paying jobs or industries. Reports such as the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2021 place India at 140th out of 156 countries in wage equality, noting that women earn approximately 19% less than men in comparable positions. This highlights the urgent need for transparent pay structures and fair compensation policies.

Another key challenge is the difficulty women face in balancing professional careers with family responsibilities. Traditional gender roles place a disproportionate share of caregiving duties on women, which often limits their career growth and affects their well-being. Limited availability of affordable childcare and flexible working arrangements further intensifies this burden. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), urban women spend nearly six hours a day on unpaid care work, while men spend less than one hour. This gap underscores the importance of workplace reforms such as parental leave, flexible schedules, and remote working options.

The “glass ceiling” continues to restrict women’s advancement into senior leadership positions. Unconscious bias, lack of mentorship opportunities, and organizational cultures that often favor male leadership styles contribute to this barrier. As a result, women remain significantly underrepresented in top roles. For instance, in 2020, only about 7.3% of board positions in NSE-listed companies were held by women, reflecting their limited presence in corporate decision-making. Addressing this imbalance requires leadership training, mentorship programs, and stronger policies promoting gender diversity.

Workplace harassment also remains a serious concern despite legal protections such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act. However, enforcement of these measures is inconsistent, and many organizations lack effective complaint and redressal systems. Social attitudes that downplay or normalize harassment further discourage reporting. A 2020 survey by the Indian National Bar Association found that nearly 70% of working women reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment. This highlights the need for stricter enforcement, regular awareness programs, employee training, and strong grievance mechanisms to ensure safer workplaces.

7. CHALLENGES AT THE INDUSTRY LEVEL

In India, women are largely employed in sectors such as education and healthcare, where their participation is relatively high. However, their presence in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields and manufacturing remains quite limited. This uneven distribution across industries reinforces traditional gender stereotypes and restricts women’s access to high-paying and more technical career opportunities. Data from around 2020 indicates that women made up only about 14% of India’s STEM workforce, highlighting a significant gender imbalance in these important sectors.

Women entrepreneurs also face several structural challenges in India, particularly in accessing finance, mentorship, and professional networks. Although government schemes like Stand-Up India and the Mudra Yojana aim to support women-led enterprises, obtaining credit is often difficult due to strict collateral requirements and implicit bias in lending practices. Research by Bain & Company and Google shows that women-led startups in India receive only about 2% of total venture capital funding. This sharp gap points to the need for stronger financial inclusion measures and better support systems to help women entrepreneurs grow and succeed.

Even though policies promoting gender diversity exist in India’s corporate sector, their impact is often limited due to weak implementation and inconsistent compliance. For example, the Companies Act, 2013 encourages transparency regarding board diversity, yet women’s representation in leadership roles remains low. According to Catalyst, women accounted for only around 17% of board positions in NSE-listed companies in 2020. This underlines the importance of

not only strengthening regulations but also ensuring their proper enforcement. Companies need to take proactive steps to improve gender balance in leadership and create more inclusive decision-making environments.

Addressing these multi-faceted challenges requires concerted efforts from policymakers, employers, financial institutions, businesses, and civil society to dismantle barriers, promote gender equality, and empower women across all sectors of the economy for a truly Viksit Bharat.

8. EMPOWERING WOMEN: INDIA'S MULTIFACETED APPROACH

India is implementing a comprehensive strategy to empower women across all spheres of life, focusing on health, safety, education, employment, and entrepreneurship. These initiatives are designed to ensure gender justice, equality, and the full participation of women in shaping the nation's socio-economic, political, and cultural landscape.

9. KEY INITIATIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Integrated Support Systems:** A robust network of 759 **one-stop centers** provides integrated support and assistance, benefiting over 8.3 lakh (830,000) women.
- **Improving Sex Ratio:** The **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** program has addressed the root causes of female feticide, leading to an improved sex ratio at birth from 918 to 933 females per 1000 males.
- **Gender-Sensitive Education:** India's new education policy promotes a **gender-sensitive curriculum** and needs-based education, resulting in parity in the gross enrollment ratio for girls and boys in higher education.
- **STEM Participation:** India proudly has one of the highest proportions of women enrolled in **STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)** disciplines globally, with 43% of students being women.
- **Financial Inclusion & Economic Growth:** Initiatives like the **JAM Trinity** and financial inclusion targets promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth. Notably, women hold over 55% of accounts opened under the **Prime Minister's Jandhan Yojana**.
- **Digital Literacy:** The **Pradhan Mantri Grameen Digital Saksharta Abhiyan** highlights the importance of digital literacy, with over 52% of enrollees being women.
- **Self-Help Groups & Housing:** **Self-help groups** connect approximately 100 million women, significantly transforming the rural economic landscape. Additionally, over four crore (40 million) houses have been built for the poorest, with benefits availed only if the property is in a woman's name or jointly held.
- **Maternal Healthcare:** Maternal health remains a priority, with India witnessing a significant decline in the **maternal mortality ratio** from 167 to 97. Frontline healthcare, supported by programs like **Asha** and the **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana**, provides financial support to over 3.31 crore (33.1 million) expectant mothers.
- **Women Entrepreneurship:** The **Mudra Yojana** provides collateral-free loans, supporting women entrepreneurs who lead one out of five non-farm businesses and 45% of manufacturing enterprises. The **Stand Up India** and **Startup India** schemes further benefit women entrepreneurs, reserving 10% of funds for women-led startups.
- **Improved Living Standards:** India has provided access to clean cooking fuel for 10 crore (100 million) households, safe tap water for 14 crore (140 million) households, and constructed over 13 crore (130 million) household toilets, reducing time poverty and care burdens on women.
- **Menstrual Hygiene:** To enhance accessibility, sanitary napkins are now 100% tax-exempt in India and are sold through government stores at one rupee per pad.
- **Political Representation:** India boasts over 14 lakh (1.4 million) elected women representatives, constituting 46% of the total representatives in panchayats and municipal corporations. The **Women's Reservation Bill 2023** further empowers women by reserving one-third of seats for them in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies.
- **Women in Aviation:** India has a remarkable 15% women pilots in civil aviation, significantly higher than the global average of 5%.

- **Budgetary Allocation:** The current financial year's budgeting allocation for these initiatives exceeds **\$37.3 billion**, underscoring the government's commitment.

10. THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

Empowering women in India has profound implications across societal, economic, and political spheres. By enhancing women's agency through education, economic opportunities, and social initiatives, the nation sees significant contributions to its overall development.

11. KEY AREAS OF IMPACT

- **Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction:** Empowered women are crucial drivers of economic growth. Their increased participation in the workforce, entrepreneurship, and leadership roles expands the labor force and boosts overall productivity. This directly contributes to **GDP growth** and **poverty reduction**, as women are better equipped to generate income and invest in their families' education, health, and nutrition, creating a ripple effect of well-being.
- **Health and Well-being:** Women's empowerment directly translates to improved health outcomes for themselves and their families. Educated and empowered women are more likely to access healthcare services, leading to better **maternal and child health** and reduced mortality rates.
- **Education:** Empowering women expands access to education for girls and elevates overall educational standards. Educated women are more likely to prioritize their children's schooling, fostering a positive, intergenerational cycle of education and empowerment.
- **Political and Social Participation:** As women gain empowerment, their ability to participate in decision-making processes at all levels, from local communities to national politics, increases. This leads to more **inclusive policies** and better representation of women's interests, fostering more supportive and equitable communities.
- **Gender Equality:** Women's empowerment is a fundamental driver of gender equality. It challenges discriminatory practices and stereotypes, fostering a society where women and men have **equal opportunities and rights**, contributing to social justice and harmony.
- **Innovation and Development:** When women are empowered to participate in STEM fields and entrepreneurial ventures, they bring diverse perspectives and talents, sparking creativity and driving **technological advancements** and overall innovation.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Women often play vital roles in natural resource management and environmental conservation. Empowering them strengthens their ability to advocate for **sustainable practices** and contribute to environmental stewardship.
- **Peace and Stability:** Empowered women actively contribute to **peacebuilding and conflict resolution** efforts within their communities. Their involvement promotes stability and resilience in the face of various societal challenges.
- **Cultural Transformation:** Women's empowerment challenges traditional gender roles and norms, fostering a more inclusive and progressive society. This encourages a shift towards values of **equality, respect, and dignity** for all individuals.

12. CONCLUSION

Empowering women is not only a question of fairness or basic rights; it is also a crucial strategy for India's long-term growth and sustainable development, especially in the context of achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047. It enables the country to fully utilize the potential of nearly half its population, thereby building a more balanced, resilient, and prosperous society. To realize this potential, India needs continued and focused efforts to close persistent gender gaps in education, employment, and leadership roles. This includes expanding equal access to quality education, ensuring fair and inclusive economic opportunities, and strictly implementing laws that promote gender

justice. Along with economic progress, women's empowerment also strengthens democratic participation and leads to more representative and inclusive governance systems. As India progresses toward 2047, prioritizing women's empowerment will be essential in shaping a society where every individual, regardless of gender, has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to national development.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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