

**The Role of Gender Equality and Empowerment in Realizing Developed India @ 2047****Dr. Rajdhan<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Government Degree College, Pachperwa, Balrampur (U.P.)

Received: 20 March 2026 Accepted &amp; Reviewed: 25 March 2026, Published: 31 March 2026

**Abstract**

Gender equality and women's empowerment form the foundation of India's ambition to become a Developed India by 2047, marking a century of independence. This paper examines how gender equity can serve as both a driver and outcome of development. Using a qualitative, evidence based- approach, the study explores gender disparities in education, employment, health, and governance, alongside the economic and social costs of inequality. Drawing upon sources including the World Bank (2024), National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) (2021), National Education Policy (NEP 2020), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2023), the paper argues that empowering women is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic economic policy. India's gender dividend unlocking the potential of half its population could contribute significantly to GDP growth, innovation, and social resilience. The study proposes a multi-pillar strategy focusing on education, employment, digital access, safety, and leadership to accelerate progress toward a gender-equitable and prosperous India by 2047.

**Keywords:** Gender equality, women's empowerment, economic growth, India 2047, NEP 2020, SDG 5, inclusive development

**Introduction**

India's vision for Developed India @ 2047 reflects an ambitious national transformation agenda a vision of prosperity, innovation, and inclusivity as the nation completes 100 years of independence. The initiative aligns with the principles of Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) and Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, emphasizing equitable growth that leaves no citizen behind.

Among the many dimensions of development, gender equality remains one of the most critical. Women represent nearly 49% of India's population (World Bank, 2024), and their active participation in every sector is vital for sustainable progress. Studies consistently demonstrate that societies with higher gender parity in education and labour participation experience faster economic growth, better governance, and improved social outcomes (World Economic Forum, 2023).

However, despite numerous reforms, India's progress toward gender equality has been uneven. Deep-seated cultural norms, wage disparities, limited access to technology, and persistent violence against women hinder full empowerment. According to the Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2023), India ranks is 127th out of 146 countries in overall gender parity highlighting both achievements and significant challenges.

This research paper explores how gender equality and empowerment can transform India into a developed nation by 2047. It analyses progress, identifies barriers, and proposes integrated policy solutions linking education, employment, governance, and social change.

**2. Literature Review****2.1 Global Context**

The connection between gender equality and development is well established. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) explicitly calls for gender equality and the empowerment of all

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women and girls by 2030. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2022) found that closing gender gaps in the labour market could raise GDP by up to 35% in many countries. Similarly, McKinsey Global Institute (2023) estimates that advancing women's equality could add \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2030.

Historically, countries such as Iceland, Norway, and Sweden have demonstrated how inclusive policies paid parental leave, equal pay laws, and universal childcare create stable societies with high productivity. These global examples underscore that gender equality is not a social luxury but an economic necessity.

### 2.2 National Context

In India, gender equality has long been intertwined with social reform movements from Raja Ram Mohan Roy's fight against Sati and child marriage to the post-independence inclusion of equal rights in the Constitution. Article 14 guarantees equality before the law, Article 15 prohibits gender discrimination, and Article 16 ensures equal opportunity in employment. Government initiatives have reinforced these principles through policies such as:

**Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2015):** A campaign to improve the child sex ratio and promote girl-child education.

**National Education Policy (NEP 2020):** Incorporates a Gender Inclusion Fund to bridge gender gaps in education (Ministry of Education, 2020).

**Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra (2017):** Aims to empower rural women through community participation.

**Stand-Up India (2016):** Supports women entrepreneurs in establishing new enterprises.

**Women's Reservation Bill (2023):** Mandates 33% reservation for women in Parliament and state assemblies (Government of India, 2023).

### 2.3 Theoretical Framework

Amartya Sen's (1999) Capability Approach provides the conceptual basis for understanding empowerment as the expansion of individuals' capabilities and freedoms. Empowerment increases women's ability to make life choices, which enhances productivity and collective well-being. Similarly, Naila Kabeer (2005) defines empowerment as the process through which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability. This theoretical framework helps position empowerment as both an intrinsic right and an instrumental factor in achieving developmental outcomes.

## 3. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative-descriptive approach, analyzing secondary data from reliable sources such as: National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) (2019–21), World Bank Gender Data Portal (2024), UNDP Human Development Report (2023), Economic Survey of India (2023–24) and Peer-reviewed journals and government reports. By synthesizing these datasets, the paper aims to illustrate the multidimensional nature of gender equality economic, educational, political, and social and to propose strategies for policy integration. The analytical framework focuses on five dimensions:

1. Education and skills development. 2. Labour-force participation and economic empowerment. 3. Health and well-being. 4. Political participation and leadership. 5. Technological inclusion and innovation.

## 4. Current Status of Gender Equality in India

### 4.1 Education

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India's educational landscape for women has improved dramatically over the past few decades. The female literacy rate rose from 53.7% in 2001 to 70.3% in 2021 (Census of India, 2021). The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls in secondary education increased to 81% in 2022, reflecting the success of schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya.

However, gender disparities remain in higher and technical education. The All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) (2023) shows that women's enrolment in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields is only 29%. Addressing these disparities is vital to preparing women for leadership in emerging industries like artificial intelligence, green technology, and space science.

### 4.2 Employment and Labour Participation

The World Bank (2024) estimates India's female labour-force participation rate (FLFPR) at 32%, down from 36% in 2005. Much of women's work remains unpaid or informal especially in agriculture and domestic labour. According to the International Labour Organization (2023), nearly 80% of working women in India are in informal sectors without social security or maternity benefits.

Cultural factors such as patriarchal norms, limited mobility, and safety concerns often discourage women from seeking formal employment. Furthermore, the gender wage gap stands at approximately 20%, with men earning substantially more for similar work.

Nonetheless, positive trends are emerging. Women entrepreneurs now account for 20% of all micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (Ministry of MSME, 2023), contributing significantly to employment and innovation. The Startup India initiative has seen a rise in women-led ventures, particularly in fintech, education, and healthcare.

### 4.3 Health and Nutrition

Health is another critical determinant of empowerment. NFHS-5 (2019–21) data indicate substantial improvement in maternal health, with 89% of births now institutional and maternal mortality reduced to 97 per 100,000 live births. Yet, gender disparities in nutrition persist: 18.7% of women are undernourished compared to 15.1% of men (NFHS-5, 2021).

Women's access to reproductive health services has improved, but awareness and agency remain limited, especially in rural areas. Moreover, mental health issues—such as depression and anxiety disproportionately affect women due to social pressures and economic dependence.

### 4.4 Political Representation

India has made major strides in women's political participation. Over 1.4 million women serve in local governance institutions, thanks to the 73rd and 74th Amendments, which mandate 33% reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2022). These women leaders have championed initiatives related to health, sanitation, and education, directly impacting community well-being (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004).

However, at the national level, representation remains limited: only 15% of Members of Parliament are women. The Women's Reservation Bill (2023) seeks to correct this imbalance by reserving one-third of parliamentary and assembly seats for women an essential step toward inclusive governance.

### 4.5 Safety and Social Norms

Safety continues to be one of the largest barriers to empowerment. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) (2023) reported over 445,000 crimes against women in 2022 4% increase over the previous year.

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Lack of safe transport, workplace harassment, and inadequate enforcement of laws such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) discourage women from fully participating in public life.

Social norms, particularly in rural India, often reinforce patriarchal attitudes, limiting women's autonomy in decision-making, education, and employment. However, grassroots organizations and NGOs have been instrumental in transforming local mindsets through gender-sensitization campaigns and self-help groups.

### 5. Analysis and Discussion

#### 5.1 Economic Analysis

Empowering women economically is one of the fastest ways to achieve the 2047 vision. According to McKinsey Global Institute (2023), bridging the gender gap in labour participation could add \$700 billion to India's GDP by 2047. Increasing women's access to credit, property rights, and financial literacy has a multiplier effect improving household savings, children's education, and community investment.

The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana has sanctioned over 30 million loans to women entrepreneurs since 2015, contributing to local economic resilience. Similarly, the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM) has organized 80 million women into self-help groups (SHGs), fostering entrepreneurship and social solidarity.

#### 5.2 Social Empowerment

Social empowerment extends beyond income it involves control over decisions affecting one's life. Studies show that educated women are more likely to marry later, have fewer children, and invest more in their families' health and education (UNDP, 2023). Women's empowerment also correlates with lower fertility rates and better child nutrition, enhancing long-term human capital.

Moreover, empowerment creates positive social spillovers. Women leaders often prioritize community-oriented policies, leading to improved sanitation, education, and public health outcomes. This aligns with Sen's (1999) argument that freedom and agency are both means and ends of development.

#### 5.3 Political and Institutional Empowerment

Political empowerment is essential for sustainable gender equality. Women's leadership in politics not only enhances representation but also improves governance outcomes. The UN Women (2023) report indicates that countries with higher female representation in legislatures tend to pass more inclusive social policies and maintain lower corruption levels.

In India, women leaders in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have proven instrumental in transforming local governance. Research by Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) found that villages led by women invested more in clean water, education, and public health. This demonstrates that representation translates into substantive developmental outcomes.

The recent Women's Reservation Bill (2023), mandating 33% reservation in national and state legislatures, has the potential to reshape India's political culture. If effectively implemented, it could empower millions of women to influence policies on healthcare, education, and social justice, directly contributing to the Developed India @ 2047 vision.

However, representation alone is insufficient. True political empowerment requires structural reforms—capacity building, mentorship, gender-sensitive political financing, and protection from harassment. Political parties must institutionalize gender equity through quotas in leadership positions and internal training programs.

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### 5.4 Technological Empowerment and Digital Inclusion

In the 21st century, access to technology is synonymous with empowerment. The Digital India mission has transformed public service delivery and digital literacy, yet a persistent “gender digital divide” remains. According to the GSMA Mobile Gender Gap Report (2023), only 67% of Indian women own a smartphone compared to 85% of men, and women are 23% less likely to use mobile internet.

Bridging this gap is essential for economic participation and social inclusion. Digital access enables women to engage in e-commerce, online education, and telemedicine. Initiatives like PM Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan and DigiDhan Abhiyan have helped millions of women acquire basic digital skills. Moreover, platforms like Udyam Sakhi provide mentorship and marketing support to women entrepreneurs, helping them access global markets.

Integrating women into India’s growing digital economy aligns directly with the Developed India @ 2047 vision, which prioritizes a knowledge-based and technologically advanced economy. Ensuring gender parity in digital literacy, cybersecurity education, and access to credit for tech-based ventures can exponentially enhance women’s agency and the nation’s overall innovation capacity.

### 5.5 Cultural and Normative Transformation

Gender equality cannot be achieved through policy alone it requires a deep cultural transformation. Patriarchal social norms, rigid gender roles, and unconscious biases continue to hinder progress. Despite legislative protections, practices such as dowry, early marriage, and restrictions on women’s mobility persist in various parts of India (NFHS-5, 2021).

Educational reforms and media campaigns are crucial in reshaping mindsets. Initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Men Engage have begun changing attitudes by involving men and boys in promoting equality. Popular media and cinema also play an important role in normalizing women’s leadership and agency. The goal is to move from protectionism to partnership where gender equality is viewed as a shared responsibility, not a women’s issue alone.

Gender-sensitization curricula, especially in schools and teacher training institutions, can help nurture a generation that values equality. Encouraging shared household responsibilities and paternity leave policies would further break traditional stereotypes and promote balance in caregiving.

## 6. Challenges to Gender Equality in India

Despite policy advancements, several challenges hinder the full realization of gender equality in India.

### 6.1 Structural Barriers

Patriarchal structures embedded in family, community, and workplace systems continue to restrict women’s mobility and choices. In many rural and semi-urban areas, unpaid care work childcare, elder care, household chores consumes up to five hours of women’s daily time (OECD, 2022). The absence of affordable childcare services perpetuates women’s economic dependency.

### 6.2 Gender Pay Gap and Occupational Segregation

India’s Gender Pay Gap Report (Monster India, 2023) estimates a 19% wage disparity between men and women for similar roles. Occupational segregation compounds the issue women are underrepresented in high-paying sectors such as technology, finance, and engineering. Moreover, the glass ceiling effect limits advancement into managerial or leadership positions.

### 6.3 Gender-Based Violence

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Gender-based violence remains pervasive despite stronger laws. The NCRB (2023) recorded a steady rise in domestic violence, workplace harassment, and cyberbullying cases. Fear of violence deters women from pursuing education or employment, reducing public participation. Effective enforcement of existing laws such as the POSH Act (2013) and Domestic Violence Act (2005) requires stronger institutional mechanisms and gender-sensitive policing.

### 6.4 Intersectional Inequality

Gender inequality intersects with caste, class, religion, and region. Marginalized women Dalit, Adivasi, Muslim and those with disabilities are multiple layers of discrimination. Policies must adopt an intersectional approach that acknowledges diverse realities rather than assuming a uniform category of “women.”

### 6.5 Political and Institutional Challenges

While local governance has seen substantial female participation, institutional bias and tokenism persist. Women leaders often face social resistance and lack of administrative support. The Women’s Reservation Bill (2023) could face implementation delays due to census and delimitation requirements. Furthermore, the absence of robust monitoring mechanisms may dilute its impact.

## 7. Policy Recommendations and Roadmap to 2047

To transform India into a developed, equitable, and empowered nation by 2047, gender equality must be mainstreamed across all policy domains. The following recommendations provide a roadmap for achieving this vision:

### 7.1 Strengthening Education and Skills

- Fully implement the NEP 2020 Gender Inclusion Fund to ensure universal access to education for girls at all levels.
- Promote STEM education among girls through scholarships, mentorship and coding programs.
- Expand digital and vocational training under Skill India and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana to prepare women for Industry 4.0 jobs.
- Introduce comprehensive gender-sensitivity education from primary levels to foster equality as a core societal value.

### 7.2 Enhancing Women’s Economic Empowerment

- Provide tax incentives and low-interest credit to women-led startups and MSMEs.
- Recognize and redistribute unpaid care work through social protection schemes and community childcare centers.
- Enforce equal pay laws and introduce gender audits in public and private sectors.
- Expand women’s access to land and property rights, especially in rural areas, through simplified legal frameworks.

### 7.3 Ensuring Safety and Justice

- Strengthen community policing and digital complaint systems to address gender-based violence.
- Establish fast-track courts for crimes against women.
- Train law enforcement personnel in gender sensitivity and victim support.

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- Promote bystander intervention programs to encourage societal responsibility in preventing violence.

### 7.4 Promoting Political and Institutional Leadership

- Implement the Women's Reservation Bill (2023) efficiently at all levels of governance.
- Mandate gender quotas in corporate boards, universities and civil services.
- Establish mentorship and leadership training programs for women politicians and administrators.

### 7.5 Bridging the Digital Divide

- Expand broadband access in rural areas with a focus on women's digital inclusion.
- Provide digital literacy programs specifically targeting women entrepreneurs and homemakers.
- Encourage technology companies to adopt gender-inclusive hiring and design policies.
- Develop gender-responsive cybersecurity policies to ensure safe digital participation.

### 7.6 Advancing Cultural Change

- Launch nationwide campaigns celebrating women achievers in diverse fields.
- Encourage men's involvement in promoting equality through community engagement and education.
- Support gender-inclusive media content that challenges stereotypes and portrays women as leaders.

## 8. The Role of Men in Gender Equality

Men's engagement is crucial to sustainable gender transformation. The HeForShe campaign (UN Women, 2018) highlights the importance of involving men as allies in dismantling discriminatory practices. In India, programs like Men Engage and Parivartan have successfully involved male community leaders in promoting women's rights and reducing domestic violence. Encouraging shared domestic responsibilities, flexible work policies for fathers, and male advocacy in leadership positions can accelerate cultural change. Gender equality must be reframed as a collective goal, not a women's issue alone.

## 9. The Economic Dividend of Equality

Gender equality yields a tangible economic dividend. If India achieves parity in labour-force participation by 2047, GDP could grow by an additional 1% annually (McKinsey Global Institute, 2023). Moreover, women's entrepreneurship enhances innovation diversity and resilience, particularly in emerging sectors such as clean energy, AI, and sustainable agriculture.

Empowered women also strengthen social capital. Their participation in community-based organizations improves governance and transparency. As UNDP (2023) notes, countries with higher gender equality, experience faster human development progress, reduced poverty rates and higher educational attainment.

Thus, gender empowerment is not merely a social reform it is an economic strategy essential for achieving India's development goals.

## 10. Conclusion

Gender equality and women's empowerment are not peripheral elements of development they are the central pillars upon which the Developed India @ 2047 vision must stand. Empowering women in education, employment, technology, and governance will unlock India's vast demographic potential and propel it toward inclusive growth.

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As India commemorates 100 years of independence, the nation must ensure that freedom and opportunity extend equally to all genders. The empowerment of women is, in essence, the empowerment of the nation. By adopting gender-responsive policies, fostering social inclusion, and transforming cultural norms, India can emerge not only as an economic powerhouse but also as a global leader in human development and equality.

A truly developed India in 2047 will be one where every woman and man can realize their potential equally free from discrimination, empowered by education, and united in the mission of nation-building.

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