

A STUDY OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPED INDIA VISION 2047

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Abstract

The aspiration of Developed India Vision 2047 symbolizes the nation's collective resolve to build an equitable, inclusive, and progressive society by the time a hundred years have passed since the nation gained its freedom. Within this grand vision, women's empowerment stands as the moral and structural cornerstone of national transformation. This research paper undertakes a comprehensive analysis of India's evolving a strategic policy framework designed to promote the welfare and empowerment of women across social, economic, political, and educational domains. It explores constitutional provisions, legislative safeguards, and flagship initiatives such as Mission Shakti, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Stand-Up India, and Digital Saksharta Abhiyan, evaluating their relevance and efficacy in realizing the objectives of Vision 2047. Drawing upon the intellectual insights of thinkers like Swami Vivekanand, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, and Amartya Sen, the study cites women's empowerment as both an ethical imperative and a strategic necessity for sustainable national development. Through an interdisciplinary lens, it identifies the persistent challenges of socio-cultural barriers, policy fragmentation and uneven access to opportunities, while proposing a transformative approach grounded in inclusivity, capability enhancement, and participatory governance. The study concludes that the realization of a developed India by 2047 necessitates the integration of gender equity as a foundational pillar of national development. It is imperative that women transcend the role of passive recipients to become dynamic architects and equal partners in shaping the nation's transformative journey toward inclusive and sustainable progress.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Policy Framework, Vision India 2047, Gender Equality, Inclusive Development, Social Justice, Governance.

INTRODUCTION

“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.”- Kofi Annan (Former UN Secretary-General)

The Vision of Developed India 2047 articulates a strategic national commitment to advancing an equitable, inclusive, and globally competitive society by the time it reaches a century of statehood, emphasizing sustainable development, social justice, and economic resilience as the core pillars of transformation. This vision extends beyond economic growth to embrace the holistic development of human capabilities, justice, and equality. Within this framework, women's empowerment emerges as both a moral imperative and a strategic foundation for sustainable development. As Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1947) rightly observed, the true measure of a nation's progress lies in the status of its women. Despite women constituting nearly half of India's population, their underrepresentation in political, economic, and technological spheres remains a significant obstacle to inclusive growth. The Developed India Vision 2047, articulated by NITI Aayog (2021), underscores that the active participation of women in governance, innovation, and nation-building is indispensable to achieving national advancement.

The constitutional commitment to gender equality forms the cornerstone of India's policy framework for women's empowerment. Article 14, 15, and 16 of the Indian Constitution guarantee equality before the law, prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and ensure equal opportunity in public employment (Government of India, 1950). Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1948), one of the principal architects of the constitution, asserted that the progress of a community is best measured by the degree of progress its women have achieved. This vision of equality has been reinforced through legislative measures such as Equal Remuneration Act (1976), the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2013), all of which aim to safeguard women's rights and dignity. However, as Ambedkar cautioned, constitutional morality must be cultivated through social transformation; laws alone cannot guarantee gender justice.

The theoretical foundation of women's empowerment is grounded in the works of global thinkers who view empowerment as both a process and an outcome. Amartya Sen (1999), in *Development as Freedom*, conceptualized development as the expansion of individuals' real freedoms and capabilities, arguing that empowerment enables individuals to live the lives they value. Martha Nussbaum (2000) further elaborated the Capabilities Approach, emphasizing the importance of substantive freedoms that allow women to make autonomous choices. Naila Kabeer (1999) conceptualized empowerment as a process through which individuals acquire the capacity to make strategic life decisions, even within the limitations imposed by their social contexts. While Sylvia Walby (2011) argued that true empowerment requires institutional transformation to restructure gender relations across families, workplaces, and governance systems. These theoretical perspectives collectively position empowerment as a multidimensional process encompassing capability enhancement, agency, and structural transformation.

Globally, the connection between women's empowerment and national development is well established. Kofi Annan (2005) famously stated that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. This claim is backed by empirical findings, with the McKinsey Global Institute (2018) estimating that advancing gender parity could add nearly USD 770 billion to India's GDP by 2025. However, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (2024), India ranks 127th among 146 countries, indicating that significant barriers to gender equality persist (WEF, 2024). The UN women India report (2023) similarly notes that while various government initiatives have promoted awareness and institutional reforms, challenges related to resource allocation and cultural resistance continue to impede progress. Scholars such as Chakraborty (2021) have observed that schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and Mission Shakti have had a positive impact but require stronger community engagement and localized implementation to be fully effective.

The policy framework for women's empowerment in India has evolved from welfare-oriented interventions to capability-based and participatory approaches. Initiatives such as Mission Shakti (2021), Stand-Up India (2016), and Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (2015) have emphasized economic independence, and financial inclusion. Complementary programs like Digital India and Skill India aim to bridge the gender gap in technology and employability—key pillars of India's developmental vision for 2047. NITI Aayog (2021) imagines a transformative future in which women stand as equal partners and co-creators in shaping innovation, leadership, and policy—echoing the spirit of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5 that places gender equality and women's empowerment at the heart of sustainable progress.

Nevertheless, persistent challenges remain. Deep-rooted patriarchy, social resistance, digital exclusion, and limited access to quality education continue to hinder women's full participation in the developmental process. The UN Women (2023) report underscores the persistent and widening digital gender divide, drawing attention to the significant underrepresentation of women within the domains of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It reflects the enduring structural and socio-cultural barriers that hinder women's equitable participation in the technological and scientific spheres. Furthermore, policy fragmentation and inadequate monitoring mechanisms weaken the overall impact of empowerment initiatives. Scholars concur that although India has achieved remarkable progress in creating gender-sensitive legislation, the translation of policy intent into measurable social and economic outcomes remains uneven.

Synthesizing the perspectives of Sen (1999), Nussbaum (2000), and Kabeer (1999), empowerment from the perspective of a Developed India Vision 2047 can be interpreted through three interrelated dimensions: the strengthening of capabilities via improvements in education and healthcare; the strengthening of agency and leadership; and structural transformation to ensure institutional equality. These dimensions collectively emphasize that empowerment is not merely about resource access but about expanding women's capacity to participate, influence, and lead across all facets of life. As Amartya Sen (1999) aptly stated, empowerment is both the means and the measure of development—a nation cannot claim to be truly developed unless every individual, especially women, as vital contributors, possess the freedom and opportunity to flourish. Thus, within the scope of Vision 2047, women's empowerment stands not only as a developmental goal but as the defining principle of India's journey toward inclusive progress and social justice.

Accordingly, the objectives of this paper are:

1. Critically examine the existing constitutional and policy for framework governing women's empowerment in India and its alignment with the goals of Developed India Vision 2047.
2. Analyse the role of flagship government programs such as Mission Shakti, Stand-Up India, Skill India, and Digital India in promoting women's social, political, and economic participation.
3. Evaluate the impact of these policies on gender equality indicators, including education, employment, entrepreneurship, and political representation.
4. Identify the key challenges, policy gaps, and institutional constraints that hinder the realization of gender parity within the developmental agenda.
5. Propose policy recommendations and strategic reforms aimed at achieving holistic and sustainable empowerment of women as envisioned in the Developed India 2047 framework.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical research design to study the progressive policy framework advancing women's empowerment under the paradigm of a Developed India vision 2047. The research employs a descriptive - exploratory approach, integrating theoretical insights, policy analysis, and secondary data interpretation to understand how government initiatives, constitutional mandates, and socio-economic programs collectively influence the advancement of women in India.

The study is primarily doctrinal in nature, relying on secondary sources such as government reports, policy documents, national and international databases, and scholarly literature. Key policy materials include NITI Aayog's Vision India @2047 Framework (2021), National policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001), and recent initiatives like Mission Shakti (2021) and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2015). Academic and empirical studies from sources such as UN Women (2023), the World Economic Forum (2024), and the McKinsey Global Institute (2018) have been reviewed to identify patterns, gaps, and progress in India's gender empowerment trajectory.

A comparative policy analysis method is also employed to evaluate India's progress against global benchmarks outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5) and to assess in conformity with international norms in gender-inclusive governance. Data are thematically analyzed to identify the interplay between constitutional vision, policy intent, and implementation realities. The methodological orientation, therefore, emphasizes interpretive analysis, policy coherence, and the integration of gender perspectives within India's developmental discourse.

Ethical considerations have been maintained throughout by relying exclusively on credible academic, institutional, and governmental sources. The study refrains from individual or community-level data collection to preserve confidentiality and focus on macro-level policy evaluation.

Justification of the Methodology

The choice of a qualitative and analytical framework is justified by the complex, multidimensional nature of women's empowerment, which cannot be adequately captured through quantitative indicators alone. As Creswell (2018) notes, qualitative inquiry allows researchers to interpret social and policy phenomena through contextual understanding and critical reasoning. By synthesizing theoretical insights with policy realities, this approach enables a nuanced examination of how empowerment is conceptualized, institutionalized, and operationalized in India's development discourse. The research thus seeks not only to describe policies but also to interpret their transformative potential in shaping an inclusive and equitable India by 2047.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The trajectory of women's empowerment in India reflects a slow but deliberate transformation from welfare-oriented policies to rights-based and capabilities-centered frameworks. In alignment with Developed India Vision 2047, this transformation underscores the recognition that gender equality transcends being solely a social concern but a cornerstone of sustainable national development. The present section critically analyzes the existing policy framework, evaluates the impact of major government initiatives, and identifies challenges and opportunities for achieving women's empowerment by 2047.

1. Constitutional and policy Foundations

The Indian Constitution (Government of India, 1950) provides the normative basis for gender equality through Article 14, 15, and 16, ensuring equality before the law, prohibition of gender discrimination, and equal opportunity in employment. Directive principles such as Article 39 mandate the State to provide equal pay for equal work and adequate means of livelihood for both men and women. These constitutional provisions have inspired successive policy reforms and legislative interventions oriented toward fostering women's participation in the socio-economic and political landscape. The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) constituted a landmark measure dedicated to fostering women's overall development through education, health, and economic participation. Building upon this foundation, the NITI Aayog's Vision India @2047 (2001) conceptualizes empowerment as central to achieving a developed, self-reliant, and inclusive India. The policy framework reflects the government's shift from protective legislation to proactive participation-promoting the recognition of women as catalysts of social change instead of dependents on welfare provisions.

2. Major Government Initiatives and Their Impact

2.1 Mission Shakti (2021)

The launch of Mission Shakti represents a consolidated effort to strengthen women's safety, security, and empowerment through two sub-schemes— Sambhal (safety and protection) and Samarthya (empowerment and inclusion). It integrates previous programs such as One Stop Centres, Women Helplines, and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, enhancing administrative coherence (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2021). Preliminary evolutions indicate increased reporting of crimes and improved promotion of legal literacy among women in non-urban and peripheral communities. (UN Women, 2023).

2.2 Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2015)

Launched in January 2015, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign was conceived initially to address India's deeply declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) in select districts, but over time it has evolved into a multidimensional programme that seeks to promote child survival, education of girls, and social recognition of the girl child as a valued citizen. Latest

governmental findings suggest that the birth sex ratio (SRB) has improved from 918 girls per 1,000 boys in 2014-15 to approximately 930 in 2023-24. Simultaneously, girls' gross enrolment ratio in the proportion of students receiving secondary education has improved from about 75 % in 2014-15 to near 79.4 % by 2021-22. These upward trends reflect the positive impact of concerted interventions such as mass awareness campaigns, strengthened monitoring of gender-selective practices under the PC-PNDT Act, and district-level convergence of health, education and protection services. Nonetheless, scholars such as Chakraborty (2021) argue that while the quantitative indicators have shown improvement, the deeper challenge lies in translating awareness in into sustained behavioural change—a process that necessitates rigorous community participation, local ownership of social-norms reforms and robust micro— level monitoring structures. In many districts, the improvements remain fragile and uneven— some regions show regression or stagnation in CSR despite exchange of resources, hinting at persistent patriarchal structures, variations in implementation quality and data lags. For instance, investigative reporting in states such as Haryana reveals that even with BBBP in operation, SRB in some districts has declined, underscoring that awareness campaigns must be complemented by institutional accountability, local stakeholder engagement and sustained cultural transformation. In sum, the evolution of BBBP from a CSR- corrigendum initiative to a broader empowerment endeavour is laudable, yet its full potential is still unrealized contingent upon scaling up grassroots participation, integrating gender-sensitive governance and ensuring equitable distribution of resources across rural, tribal and marginalized communities.

Table 1. Outcomes of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Initiatives

Indicator	Baseline (2014-15)	Latest/Provisional (2023-24)
National Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB)	918 (girls per 1,000 boys)	930
Girls in Secondary Education - Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)	75.51 %	78%
Institutional Deliveries	61%	97.3%
First-Trimester ANC Registration	~61%	~80.5%

The data presented in the table illustrates the progressive outcomes of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative, implemented over the past decade, has emerged as a cornerstone in promoting gender parity and women's empowerment within the framework of India's Vision 2047. Initiated in 2015, it was designed to counter the adverse trends in the Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and encourage the protection and study of girls through a convergent, multi- ministerial approach. The most recent figures (2023-24) demonstrate a noteworthy national improvement in several critical indicators, although with regional variations that warrant continued attention.

2.3 Stand-Up India (2016) and Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (2015)

The Stand-Up India (2016) and Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) (2015) initiatives represent two landmark policies initiated by the Government of India to promote women's active involvement in the entrepreneurial and financial ecosystems, particularly within the framework of Developed India Vision 2047. Both schemes are designed to democratize access to finance, stimulate self- employment, and integrate women into the nation's economic mainstream—a pivotal move toward realizing inclusive and sustainable growth.

The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), launched in April 2015, focuses on providing collateral-free microcredit to non-corporate, non-farm small and micro enterprises. Loans are categorized under Shishu (up to ₹50,000), Kishor (₹50,000-₹5 lakh), and Tarun (₹5-₹10 lakh), thereby supporting women at multiple stages of enterprise creation. According to the Ministry of Finance (2023), over 70% of individuals availing Mudra loans are women, highlighting a significant gender shift in credit distribution patterns. This statistic highlights a remarkable penetration of microfinance among rural and semi-urban women, many of whom are first-generation entrepreneurs. Between 2015 and 2023 approximately ₹27 lakh crore in loans were sanctioned under PMMY, of which a substantial portion went to women-led micro-enterprises, indicating progress in financial inclusion and gender-responsive lending (Ministry of Finance,2023). The Stand-Up India Scheme, launched in April 2016, complements PMMY by encouraging enterprise development among women and Scheduled Caste communities (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs). It mandates every bank branch to facilitate at least one women entrepreneur and one SC/ST entrepreneur in setting up a greenfield enterprise, providing loans between ₹10 lakh and ₹1 crore . As of 2024, more than 2 lakh women entrepreneurs have been empowered through the Stand -UP India Scheme, with notable representation in manufacturer, services, and the trading sector (Press Information Bureau, 2024). This reflects an encouraging structural transformation, shifting women from the informal economy to more formalized enterprise frameworks.

However, despite their significant outreach and scale, several challenges constrain the transformative potential of these initiatives. The World Bank (2023) and NITI Aayog (2024) note that while access to credit has improved, the absence of sustained financial literacy programs, inadequate market linkages, and limited integration of digital technologies restrict the scalability and sustainability of women-led enterprises. Many women entrepreneurs, particularly in rural India, face barriers in transitioning from micro to small-scale industries due to insufficient managerial training, lack of collateral, and gendered socio-cultural constraints (OECD,2022). Furthermore, the majority of enterprises funded under PMMY and

Stand-Up India remain concentrated in low-income, low-growth sectors such as tailoring, handicrafts, and food processing —indicating that while inclusivity has expanded economic diversification within-led enterprises remains limited. Nonetheless, these programs have catalyzed a paradigm shift in India's approach to women's economic empowerment. By promoting credit inclusion and entrepreneurial participation, they have made meaningful contributions to income generation but also advanced women's agency and decision-making power within households and communities. As Amartya Sen (1999) emphasized, “empowerment is not merely about wealth creation, but about the expansion of human capability and choice.” From this perspective, PMMY and Stand-Up India represent crucial instruments in transforming financial access into socio-economic empowerment.

For India's vision 2047, it is essential to strengthen these schemes through digital financial literacy, market mentorship, gender-sensitive entrepreneurship training, and integration with e-commerce platforms. Linking women entrepreneurs with emerging sectors such as green technology, agri-innovation, and digital services can further enhance inclusivity and productivity. Only by bridging the gap between access to finance and capacity to grow can India truly achieve gender-equitable development in its journey toward becoming an economically advanced nation by 2047.

Table 2. Comparison of Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) and Stand-Up India (SUI) Schemes

Aspect	Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY, 2015)	Stand-Up India (SUI, 2016)	Analytical Insights / Impact
Objectives	To provide collateral-free microcredit to non-corporate, non-farm small and micro enterprises.	To facilitate bank loans for women and SC/ST entrepreneurs to establish greenfield enterprises.	Both schemes aim to democratize access to finance and promote entrepreneurship among marginalized groups.
Targeted Group	Micro and small women entrepreneurs in informal sectors (urban & rural)	Women, SC and ST entrepreneurs setting up new ventures.	Focused on first-generation entrepreneurs, especially in underserved regions.
Loan Range	Shishu:<₹50,000; Kishore: ₹50,000- ₹5 lakh; Tarun:₹5- ₹10 lakh.	₹10 lakh -₹1crore for setting up new enterprises.	Graduated loan structure under PMMY supports business growth from micro- small; SUI covers higher-scale ventures.
Women Beneficiaries	~70% of all Mudra beneficiaries are women (2023)	>2 lakh women entrepreneurs have availed loans (2024).	Indicates strong gender outreach; women are emerging as key drivers of MSME growth.
Sectoral Focus	Services, trade, handicrafts, food processing, small manufacturing.	Manufacturing, services, trading (greenfield focus).	PMMY supports livelihood activities; SUI pushes women into formal entrepreneurial ecosystems.
Major Achievements	₹27 lakh crore disbursed (2015-2023); majority to women-owned enterprises.	Expansion to all scheduled commercial banks; improved representation of women entrepreneurs in the formal sector.	Substantial increase in financial inclusion and women's access to institutional credit.
Key Challenges	Limited financial literacy, poor digital integration, inadequate market access.	Limited post- loan hand-holding, technology adoption, and mentorship support.	Access is not equal to empowerment— Scaling and sustainability require ecosystem support.
Impact on Women's Empowerment	Enhanced self-employment, decision-making power, and income security.	Shift from informal work to formal entrepreneurship; breaking socio-economic barriers.	Together, both schemes reinforce the financial pillar of women's empowerment within Vision 2047.

Together, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana and Stand-Up India represent a dual-tiered framework for inclusive financial empowerment—the former expanding access to micro-credit, and the latter nurturing entrepreneurial mobility into the formal sector. Their synergy enhances women's agency by integrating credit access with enterprise creation, thus embodying the Vision 2047 commitment to a self-reliant and gender-balanced economy. However, their long-term success hinges on capacity-building, digital training, and market linkage reforms, ensuring that access to finance evolves into sustained economic empowerment.

2.4 Digital India and Skill India: Bridging the Digital Gender Divide

The Digital India (2015) and Skill India (2015) initiatives were envisioned as cornerstone programs for transforming India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge-based economy. Both initiatives have immense potential to enhance women's involvement in digital, technological, and entrepreneurial ecosystems, aligning directly driven by the aspiration Developed India 2047 framework, which envisions inclusive and sustainable growth.

Under Digital India, efforts such as Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) and Digital Sakhi have aimed to strengthen women's digital literacy, particularly in rural areas. As of 2024, more than 5.6 crore individuals have evolved as a tendency under PMGDISHA, with around 55% being women (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY, 2024). These programs have facilitated women's access to e-governance services, online education, and digital banking, thereby fostering autonomy and social inclusion. Moreover, the Common Service Centres (CSCs) have employed over 3.5 lakh “Women Village Level Entrepreneurs” (VLEs) who serve as local digital facilitators (NITI Aayog, 2023).

Simultaneously, the Skill India Mission—implemented through schemes like Pradhan Mantri Mudra Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)—has focused on enhancing employability through vocational and technical training. Accordingly to the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (2024), over 40% of Skill India trainees are women, with a growing emphasis on non-traditional segments such as robotics, IT, and green technologies. The emergence of Women Empowerment Skill Hubs and partnerships with industry leaders has helped bridge gender disparities in access to high-skill occupations.

However, the benefits of these programs remain uneven due to the persistence of the digital gender divide. The World Economic Forum (2024) notes that although women constitute approximately 33% of STEM graduates, fewer than 20% of India's digital entrepreneurs are women. This gap reflects structural inequalities rooted in restricted access to devices, poor internet connectivity within rural settings, and socio-cultural barriers that constrain women's mobility as well as involvement in digital ecosystems. Bridging this divide requires a multi-pronged approach, combining infrastructure development, gender-sensitive policy design, and community-level digital literacy campaigns. Initiatives like G20 Digital Inclusion Roadmap (2023) and India's National Digital Nari Program (2024) represent progressive steps towards equitable access, aiming to integrate women into emerging domains like artificial intelligence, e-commerce, and digital finance. As Amartya Sen (1999) asserted, “development as freedom” — and true freedom in the 21st century entails digital freedom, empowering women not merely as consumers but as active creators in India's digital future.

3. Political Representation and Leadership

Women's representation in political institutions represents one of the leading vital pillars of holistic empowerment and democratic inclusivity. Political empowerment not only grants women a voice in policymaking but also reshapes the moral and institutional foundations of governance. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, “To call women the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to women. If strength is meant by moral power, then woman is immeasurably superior to man's superior.” This moral assertion now finds structural validation through India's constitutional and policy landscape.

The enactment of the Women's Reservation Bill (The Constitution, 106th Amendment Act, 2023) represents a historical moment in India's democratic evolution. The Bill mandates 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, to be implemented following the next delimitation exercise. This legislation builds upon decades of advocacy and aligns directly with Vision Developed India 2047, which envisions gender parity as a cornerstone of inclusive governance.

According to Kumar and Sharma (2024), political empowerment enhances women's capacity to influence policy formulation, resource distribution, and governance accountability. Studies indicate that women legislators often prioritize issues such as education, healthcare, sanitation, and social welfare—sectors that directly contribute to sustainable development (World Bank, 2030). Moreover, empirical evidence from the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)—where one-third of seats have been reserved for women since 1993—demonstrates how grassroots participation fosters leadership confidence, transparency, and community responsiveness (NITI Aayog, 2024).

The Women's Reservation Bill thus marks a transformative shift from symbolic representation to substantive participation. As India progresses towards 2047, the presence of women in legislative spaces is expected to redefine leadership paradigms, ensuring that governance structures reflect the diversity and dynamism associated with the Indian populace. Political inclusion is more than just an end in itself—it is a method for gender-just governance that recognizes women as architects of the nation's democratic and developmental destiny.

However, challenges persist. Socio-culture barriers, political tokenism, and patriarchal party structures continue to limit women's agency within political institutions. To address these, capacity-building programs, political mentorship networks, and institutional accountability mechanisms must accompany legal reforms. The synergy of constitutional guarantees, digital literacy, and leadership development can ensure that the “numerical empowerment” of women transforms into genuine participatory governance by 2047.

Table 3. Women's political Representation in India—Trends and Future projection

Category	Before Women's Reservation Bill (2023)	Post-2023 Projections (Vision 2047)	Key policy Implications
Lok Sabha	78 women MPs (14.4%)	Estimated 33% women MPs after	Greater gender balance in

Representation	in 17th Lok Sabha (2019)	next delimitation (approx. 180+ members)	national policy agenda
State Assemblies (Average)	9% average female representation (2022)	33% mandated representation post-implementation	Broader state-level inclusion and decentralization
Panchayati Raj Institutions	Over 46% of seats held by women (2023)	Expected to serve as leadership incubator for higher offices	Strengthened grassroots democracy
Cabinet and Ministerial Roles	11% women ministers (2023)	Anticipated 25-30% by 2047 with structural reforms	Gender-sensitive governance
Political Party Participation	Low female candidacy (10-12% on average)	33% target representation with party reforms and mentorship programs	Institutional gender mainstreaming

The analysis of women's political representation in India reveals a decisive transition from marginal participation to institutional empowerment. Before the Women's Reservation Bill (2023), women held only 14.4% of Lok Sabha seats and 9% in state assemblies, reflecting persistent gender imbalances. With the Bill's mandates of 33% reservation, India moves toward a transformative era of inclusive governance, potentially increasing women MPs to over 180 and reshaping legislative priorities. Evidence from Panchayati Raj Institutions, where women already hold 46% of seats, demonstrates that political inclusion enhances transparency, social welfare, and community responsiveness. However, meaningful empowerment requires more than numerical representation—it demands leadership training, party reform, and equitable access to resources. Aligned with Vision Developed India 2047, the reforms promise to redefine power structures and foster gender-just governance rooted in democratic inclusivity.

4. Persistent Challenges and Policy Gaps

Despite substantial progress, systemic barriers persist. Socio-cultural constraints, including patriarchal norms, gender-based violence, and occupational segregation, continue to limit women's agency. The Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2024) ranks India 127th out of 146 countries, reflecting disparities in economic participation, educational attainment, and political empowerment. Furthermore, policy fragmentation and unequal resource distribution hinder effective implementation at the grassroots level.

Another challenge lies in the urban-ruler divide. Rural women often face compounded marginalized due to intersecting factors such as caste, class, and illiteracy. Studies by Kabeer (2012) and Deshpande (2020) suggest that empowerment must be localized, context-sensitive, and participatory to ensure inclusivity. Moreover, gender-responsive budgeting, while conceptually strong, remains inadequately institutionalized across ministries (Planning Commission, 2021).

5. Towards Vision 2047: Transformative Pathways

As India approaches its centenary of independence, women's empowerment must transition from policy rhetoric to measurable transformation. Drawing from Amartya Sen's (1999) Capabilities Approach and Martha Nussbaum's (2000) framework, empowerment must be understood as the expansion of substantive freedoms—enabling women to lead lives they value. The Vision India @2047 (NITI Aayog, 2021) framework rightly emphasizes innovation, education, entrepreneurship, and digital inclusion as the key pillars of gender-responsive development.

A transformative policy approach for Vision 2047 should focus on:

- Strengthening institutional accountability through gender-sensitive governance.
- Bridging the digital and educational divide to prepare women for the knowledge economy.
- Enhancing leadership pathways through mentorship, political participation, and civic engagement.
- Integrating intersectional perspectives that address the needs of marginalized groups—rural women, tribal communities, and informal-sector workers.

In this vision, women are active agents rather than mere beneficiaries of welfare but active architects of India's progress. As Michelle Obama (2016) aptly stated, "No country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half its citizens." Achieving Developed India 2047 will therefore depend on ensuring that women's empowerment becomes not just a policy priority but a lived reality across every sphere of national life.

Challenges and recommendations

Women's empowerment under the scope of Developed India Vision 2047 stands at the intersection of policy progress and persistent structured barriers. Despite landmark projects such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2015), Skill India (2015), Digital India (2015), and the Women's Reservation Bill (2023), several challenges continue to limit the transformative potential of these frameworks. Deep-rooted patriarchal norms, socio-cultural biases, and gender stereotypes still restrict women's educational opportunities, labor participation, and leadership roles, particularly in rural and marginalized communities (NITI Aayog, 2024). The economic gap remains wide, given the rate of women's participation in the labor force hovers around 28%, and women continue to face barriers to credit, market access, and entrepreneurship. Moreover, while digital and skill initiatives have advanced inclusivity, only 33% of STEM graduates and less than 20% of the digital

entrepreneurs are women (World Economic Forum, 2024), reflecting a persistent digital divide. In politics, even with the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, implementation delays and patriarchal party structures often prevent substantive representation. Additionally, fragmented inter-ministerial coordination and weak monitoring mechanisms hinder the long-term effectiveness of empowerment programs.

Overcoming these challenges calls for an all-encompassing, gender-sensitive, future-oriented policy approach. The government must create an integrated Gender Equality Mission 2047 that aligns education, economy, health and governance policies under one unified vision strengthening education and skill development, especially in STEM and digital domains, will enhance employability and innovation potential among women.

Economic empowerment must be bolstered through financial inclusion, microcredit access, mentorship programs, and gender-responsive budgeting. Political empowerment should be deepened by ensuring the timely implementation of the 33% reservation, coupled with leadership training and institutional reforms to promote women's agency in decision-making. Bridging the digital gender divide through infrastructure expansion, digital literacy drives, and women-led innovation hubs will prepare India's female workforce for the global digital economy. Equally vital is the establishment of a National Gender Data Observatory under NITI Aayog to systematically track and evaluate progress, ensuring evidence-based policymaking.

Ultimately, realizing Developed India Vision 2047 demands that women's empowerment move beyond welfare-centric policies toward rights-based, inclusive, and transformative development. Empowering women across political, economic, and digital spheres will not only enhance equality but also redefine India's democratic and developmental trajectory, promoting the acknowledgement of women as equal architects of the Nation's future.

CONCLUSION

The vision of Developed India 2047 encapsulates beyond economic prosperity, it also entails the development of a society founded on equality, justice, and inclusivity. Within this broader national aspiration, women's empowerment emerges as the catalyst of sustainable development. The evolution of India's policy framework— from early welfare-oriented measures to contemporary rights-based and participatory initiatives — reflects the nation's steady march toward gender parity. Programs such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2015), Stand-Up India (2016), Digital India (2015), Skill India (2015), and the historical Women's Reservation Bill (2023) have together established a robust foundation for bridging gender divides across education, economy, governance, and technology. These initiatives signify a paradigm shift in India's development narrative— from perceiving women as passive recipients of welfare to recognizing them as active architects of progress and agents of transformation.

Yet, empowerment cannot be confined to policy alone; it must permeate the social, cultural, and institutional consciousness of the nation. The persistence of patriarchal structures, economic inequities, and digital disparities indicates that empowerment must be reimagined as a holistic process— encompassing access, agency, and autonomy. By 2047, India envisions itself as a developed and knowledge-driven democracy, and this aspiration is inseparable from the empowerment of its women. Empowered women represent the living embodiment of national progress— educating families, strengthening communities, and shaping policies designed to be more equitable and humane. Their participation transforms governance into a reflection of social conscience and economic systems into engines of equity. The vision of Developed India 2047 thus calls for a holistic and interlinked approach, where gender equality becomes a guiding principle across education, health, technology, economy, and governance.

In essence, the empowerment of women is the empowerment of India itself. It is both the means and the measures of true development. A nation that invests in its women invests in its future— a future built not merely on economic might but on the foundations of justice, compassion, and collective progress. As India moves toward its tryst with 2047, the promise of a truly developed nation will be fulfilled only when every woman stands not behind the progress of the nation, but at its ery forefront— as a leader, innovator, and equal architect of destiny.

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