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# The Nationalist

Empowering Women on the Global  
Stage: India's G20 Presidency  
under PM Modi's Leadership

**Vanathi Srinivasan**

Narendra Modi: The Revivor of  
The Lost Pride of Indian Women

**Indira Goswami**

नारी शक्ति वंदन विधेयक  
महिलाओं के मजबूत प्रतिनिधित्व और  
सशक्तिकरण के युग की शुरुआत है  
डॉ दिलीप अग्निहोत्री

India's Women Empowerment  
Story: Circa 2014-2023

**Rumki Basu**

भारत की संस्कृति में  
निहित है नारी शक्ति का सम्मान  
डॉ नीलम महेंद्र





**The  
Nationalist**

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# CONTENT

## EDITORIAL

- ★ *Historic Transition From Women Development to Women-led Development Under PM Modi*  
- Prof. P. Kanagasabapathi

## PM MODI'S VISION

- ★ नारी शक्ति वंदन अधिनियम पर प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी जी के उद्घोषन

## COVER STORY

- ★ Empowering Women on the Global Stage: India's G20 Presidency under PM Modi's Leadership  
- Vanathi Srinivasan
- ★ Narendra Modi: The Revivor of The Lost Pride of Indian Women - Indira Goswami

## POLICY ANALYSIS

- ★ नारी शक्ति वंदन विधेयक महिलाओं के मजबूत प्रतिनिधित्व और सशक्तिकरण के युग की शुरुआत है- डॉ दिलीप अग्रिहोली
- ★ India's Women Empowerment Story: Circa 2014-2023  
- Rumki Basu

## POLICY ROUNDUP

- ★ भारत की संस्कृति में निहित है नारी शक्ति का सम्मान - डॉ नीलम महेंद्र
- ★ सरकार के सहयोग से मुख्य धारा में महिलाएं - अरविंद जयतिलक

## POLICY NOTE

- ★ Empowering Bhartiya Nari : Bharat's Recent Breakthrough Under PM Modi's Leadership  
- Sanjana Sinha
- ★ Unleashing Stree Shakti: Pride Of PM Modi's Naya Bharat - Joyita Pal

## POLICY OPINION

- ★ How Nine And Half Years of Modi Government Led to True Women Empowerment - Adarsh Kuniyillam

## EVENT@SPMRF



**PROF. P. KANAGASABAPATHI**

# Historic Transition From Women Development to Women-led Development Under PM Modi

them into the banking system, making them fly fighter plans and facilitating them to be part of the decision- making process, we have been witnessing different types of initiatives being implemented with a mission- mode.

**O**n the occasion of the 77th Independence day on Aug.15, 2023, Honourable PM Shri Narendra Modi emphasized that women- led development is essential to take the nation forward. Since 2014, the Government has been continuously taking multiple steps for the welfare of women and launching several initiatives to make them the major participants in the development process. Women-led development has become the mantra and a top priority agenda for the Government during the last nine years.

To achieve the objective, the Government has introduced many new and innovative schemes in different fields. From construction of toilets, to providing tapped water at homes, constructing houses in their names, providing gas connections, getting

As a result, women have become the major beneficiaries of various Government welfare programmes and incentives. There are several schemes to build their capacities in different fields such as nutrition, health and education. When we take nutrition for example, POSHAN Abhiyan is improving the key nutrition parameters of women and children, while the PM Matru Vandana Yojana is enhancing the nutritional needs of pregnant women and lactating mothers.

There are special schemes for women to make them employable and get into entrepreneurship. Self-employment of women is promoted through STEP scheme. Stand Up India facilitates loans up to one crore for at least one woman in every bank branch of all scheduled banks for setting up green field projects.

As a result, we are witnessing a historic change in the lives of women in the country. A study undertaken by Ministry of Jal Sakthi in collaboration with UNICEF and others on the performance of Swachh Bharat Mission revealed how the lives of women have transformed drastically after the construction of toilets in their homes. The study titled 'Access to Toilets and the Safety, Convenience and Self-respect of Women in Rural India' (2020) states after six

years of implementation of the scheme, 91 percent of the women reported that they were able to save up to one hour and do not have to travel up to a kilometer for defecation. Besides 88 percent of them reported that having a toilet at home has increased their pride, besides improving health and increasing safety.

Moreover, there is a huge transformation in empowering women, which had never happened earlier. Now girls constitute 43 percent of STEM education stream of students. A record number of 28.29 crore women have become the beneficiaries through Jan Dhan Yojana for the first time in their lives. This number is more than 55 percent of the total beneficiaries. Among the beneficiaries of the MUDRA Yojana around 70 percent are women, enabling them to become entrepreneurs.

The importance that the PM gives to women-led development could

be understood from the fact that he underlined his Government's approach even at the international level. In his video message at the G-20 Ministerial Conference on Women Empowerment, PM noted that 'Women-led development in India is our main priority' and mentioned that when women prosper, the World prospers. Besides, the economic empowerment of women was at the heart of India's G-20 Agenda.

Since the ancient periods, Indian civilization has always nurtured and respected women power. That is the reason why we have had scholars and leaders of exceptional expertise in different parts of the country over several centuries. Field studies reveal that in the contemporary India, women play the critical role in driving the cultural and economic systems, apart from being the backbone of our family system.

**women have become the major beneficiaries of various Government welfare programmes and incentives. There are several schemes to build their capacities in different fields such as nutrition, health and education.**

**When we take nutrition for example, POSHAN Abhiyan is improving the key nutrition parameters of women and children, while the PM Matru Vandana Yojana is enhancing the nutritional needs of pregnant women and lactating mothers.**

Our PM's initiatives to give the mothers, sisters and daughters of India the required impetus are not just make the development process more inclusive, but to make it complete, besides enabling it to move at a much faster pace. With the sustained efforts of the Government over the last nine years, the results are there before us to see. Surely a historic transformation is taking place before our us in Independent India. Let us all celebrate it.

*(The writer is Secretary & Trustee, Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation, New Delhi)*



# नारी शक्ति वंदन अधिनियम पर प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेन्द्र मोदी जी के उद्बोधन



- » मैं आज देश की हर माता को, हर बहन को, हर बेटी को बहुत-बहुत बधाई देता हूँ। कल और परसों बीस और इक्कीस सितंबर को हमने इतिहास को बनते देखा है।
- » ये हम सबका सौभाग्य है कि इतिहास बनाने का अवसर कोटि-कोटि जनों ने हमें दिया है। आने वाली अनेकों पीढ़ियों तक इस निर्णय की चर्चा होगी, इस दिवस की चर्चा होगी।
- » मैं पूरे देश को नारीशक्ति वंदन अधिनियम, संसद के दोनों सदनों में और भारी बहुमत से, और राज्यसभा में तो सर्वसम्मति से, पास होने की बहुत-बहुत बधाई देता हूँ। कभी-कभी किसी निर्णय में देश के भाग्य को बदलने की क्षमता होती है और आज हम सभी ऐसे ही एक निर्णय के साक्षी बने हैं।
- » संसद के दोनों सदनों द्वारा नारीशक्ति वंदन अधिनियम को रिकॉर्ड मतों से पारित किया जा चुका है। जिस बात का देश को पिछले कई दशकों से इंतजार था, वो सपना अब सच हुआ है। ये पूरे देश के लिए बहुत ही खास समय है।
- » आज हर नारी का आत्मविश्वास, हर नारी का आत्मविश्वास आसमान छू रहा है। पूरे देश की माताएँ बहनें और बेटियाँ आज खुशी मना रही हैं, हम सबको आशीर्वाद दे रही हैं।
- » नारीशक्ति वंदन अधिनियम ये कोई सामान्य कानून नहीं है। ये नए भारत की नई लोकतांत्रिक प्रतिबद्धता का उद्घोष है। ये अमृतकाल में सबका प्रयास से विकसित भारत के निर्माण की तरफ बहुत बड़ा बहुत मजबूत कदम है।
- » महिलाओं का जीवन स्तर सुधारने के लिए, क्वालिटी ऑफ लाइफ बेहतर करने के लिए, वीमेन लेड

डेवलपमेंट का नया युग देश में लाने की जो गारंटी, जो गारंटी मोदी ने दी थी, ये उसका प्रत्यक्ष प्रमाण है। मेरे देश की हर माता, बहन और बेटी को नारी शक्ति वंदन अधिनियम के लिए मैं फिर से बहुत-बहुत बधाई देता हूँ।

- » ये हमारा कमिटमेंट था और आज हमने उसे पूरा कर दिया है। महिला आरक्षण सुनिश्चित कराने वाले इस कानून की राह में तरह-तरह की बाधाएं थीं, दशकों पुराने अड़ंगे थे। लेकिन, जब नीयत पवित्र होती है, प्रयासों में पारदर्शिता होती है, तो परेशानियों को पार करके भी परिणाम लाती है।
- » ये भी अपने आपमें एक रेकॉर्ड है कि इस कानून को सदन में इतना व्यापक समर्थन मिला। नए संसद भवन में पक्ष-विपक्ष की सीमाओं से ऊपर उठकर करीब-करीब सबने इसके पक्ष में वोट किया। मैं इसके लिए सभी राजनीतिक दलों का, और सभी सांसद साथियों का भी अभिनंदन करता हूँ।
- » भारत को विकसित बनाने के लिए, आज भारत की नारीशक्ति को खुला आसमान देने का ये अवसर है। आज देश, माताओं-बहनों-बेटियों के सामने आने वाली हर अड़चन को दूर कर रहा है।
- » इसी सोच के साथ बीते 9 वर्षों में हमने माताओं-बहनों से जुड़ी हर बंदिशों को तोड़ने का प्रयास किया है। हमारी सरकार ने एक के बाद एक ऐसी योजनाएं बनाई हैं, ऐसे कार्यक्रम शुरू किए हैं, जिससे हमारी बहनों को सम्मान, सुविधा, सुरक्षा और समृद्धि का जीवन मिले।
- » हमने बहनों-बेटियों के जीवन चक्र से जुड़ी हर समस्या को दूर करने पर पूरी गंभीरता से ध्यान दिया है। गर्भावस्था के दौरान शिशु को पौष्टिक खाना मिले इसके लिए हमने मातृवंदना योजना चलाई, महिलाओं के बैंक खाते में पैसे भेजने शुरू किए।
- » माता मृत्यु को रोकने के लिए, नवजात बच्चों की रक्षा के लिए, हमने शिशु का जन्म अस्पताल में ही कराने का बहुत बड़ा अभियान चलाया। बेटी को कोख में ही ना समाप्त कर दिया जाए इसके लिए हमने बेटी

बचाओ-बेटी पढ़ाओ जैसे जनआंदोलन भी शुरू किए। आज वर्षों बाद देश में जनसंख्या के आधार पर महिला-पुरुष के अनुपात में सुधार आया है।

- » हमने महिला हित में हर स्तर पर फैसले लिए, किसी के राजनीतिक स्वार्थ को महिला आरक्षण के सामने दीवार नहीं बनने दिया। जबकि इससे पहले जब भी ये बिल संसद में आया, लीपापोती हुई, सिर्फ नाम दर्ज कराए गए, निष्ठापूर्वक कभी प्रयास नहीं हुआ।
- » और बवाल हुआ, हंगामा हुआ। नारी का अपमान करने का भी प्रयास किया गया। मैं तो कल भी, सबने वोट तो दिया, लेकिन कुछ लोगों को इसमें भी तकलीफ थी कि नारीशक्ति वंदन शब्द क्यों लाए हो।
- » क्या इस देश की नारी को वंदन करना चाहिए कि नहीं करना चाहिए, क्या माताओं-बहनों को प्रणाम करना चाहिए कि नहीं करना चाहिए, क्या माताओं-बहनों का गौरव, सम्मान बढ़ाना चाहिए कि नहीं बढ़ाना चाहिए।
- » क्या हम पुरुषों को इतना अहंकार आ जाए, हमारी राजनीतिक विचारधारा को इतना अहंकार आ जाए कि हम नारी शक्ति की वंदना शब्द का प्रयोग करें तो वो भी किसी के पेट में चूहे दौड़ने लग जाए। पूर्ण बहुमत की स्थिर सरकार है, तो महिला आरक्षण बिल-नारीशक्ति वंदन अधिनियम एक सच्चाई बन गया है।
- » मुझे विश्वास है कि देश की नारीशक्ति नई और स्वस्थ संसदीय परंपराओं का भी सृजन करेगी। और4
- » ४ इसी विश्वास के साथ, आप सब इतनी बड़ी तादाद में आ कर के मुझे आशीर्वाद दिए, भारत की संसद के इतने बड़े महत्वपूर्ण निर्णय को माताओं और बहनों ने संवारा।
- » मुझे खुशी तो तब हुई जब जिसको प्रधानमंत्री आवास मिला है, वो बहन मुझे आकर के आशीर्वाद दे रही हैं। जिसको उज्ज्वला का गैस मिला है वो झुग्गी-झोपड़ी में जिंदगी गुजारा कर चुकी बहन मुझे आशीर्वाद दे रही है तब मेरा पक्का विश्वास और मजबूत हो जाता है। और इसलिए मैं फिर एक बार आप सबको अनेक शुभकामनाएं देता हूँ।

# Empowering Women on the Global Stage: India's G 20 Presidency under PM Modi's Leadership



**Vanathi Srinivasan**

**G**20 Summit 2023 has turned out to be a defining moment in global history by emerging as the epitome of transformation under the able leadership of our worthy Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. Upholding the theme of- 'One Earth, One Family, One future', the Summit has resolved to act in concrete ways to accelerate strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth, empowering countries to not only address global challenges, but also pledging to bring prosperity and wellbeing to humanity as a whole, and thereby making the planet more inclusive and sustainable.

India's maiden G20 Presidency, with representatives from 42 delegations around the world, has proved to be a resounding success, highlighting themes such as unlocking trade for growth, advancing financial inclusion, fighting corruption, accelerating progress on Sustainable Development Goals, eliminating hunger and malnutrition, strengthening global health, delivering quality education, conserving, protecting and restoring ecosystems and so on. But

the highlight and prominence of the theme of furthering empowerment of women, with the prime focus on gender equality, had a special place in this year's G20 agenda and principles.

There are many key issues that affect women in the world today, which include gender-pay gap, digital gender divide, informal work and instability, gender-based violence, limited access to education, poor reproductive health etc. G20 has doubled-down on their belief that gender equality is of fundamental importance, and that the empowerment of all women and girls would have a multiplier effect on their goal to achieve

**Women empowerment experts have highlighted that India is setting the stage for women parity on the global as well as the domestic level. The Working Group on Women's Empowerment in India has focused on several key areas to advance gender equality and women's rights including gender-pay gap, enhancing access to quality education and skills development, bridging the digital-gender gap, ensuring women's health and wellbeing, and increasing women's involvement in environmental and climatic initiatives.**



the Agenda 2030.

The G20 initiatives for gender equality encourages women-led development and remains committed to enhancing women's full, equal and meaningful participation, as decision makers for addressing global challenges inclusively and contributing in all spheres of society across all sectors and at all levels of economy. Given that gender is a cross-cutting theme affecting almost all the other development prospects, there has been a renewed emphasis on gender equality across the entirety of the G20 Agenda, and its engagement groups.

Women empowerment experts have highlighted that India is setting the stage for women parity on the global as well as the domestic level. The Working Group on Women's Empowerment in India has focused on several key areas to advance gender equality and women's

rights including gender-pay gap, enhancing access to quality education and skills development, bridging the digital-gender gap, ensuring women's health and wellbeing, and increasing women's involvement in environmental and climatic initiatives. By addressing these critical aspects, the working group aims to empower women and girls to promote active participation in various fields, fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.

Our PM Shri Narendra Modi has a strong belief that, 'when a woman prospers, the world prospers' and it has forged a women-centric development approach, that has proved to be an effective step in the empowerment of women in India. He has time and again highlighted the role of women in India in driving economic, environmental and social changes, and also about their invaluable contribution in space missions like Chandrayaan and Mission Mars etc. He even enumerated that more women in India are now enrolling for higher education than men, and the country boasts of one of the highest percentages of female pilots in Civil Aviation, with women now even flying fighter aircrafts in Indian Air Force.

On the domestic front, various programs and platforms have been launched by the Modi Government, in keeping up with the theme of women-empowerment, and are a perfect example of the Government's initiatives for bridging the gender-divide. The Government of India has decided to place women's empowerment at the heart of its Atmanirbhar

**Mission Shakti aims at strengthening interventions for women safety, security and empowerment, and Mahila E Haat is an online platform launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, to support women entrepreneurs. India has also launched Tech -equity digital inclusion platform along with G20 EMPOWER, which aims to bridge the gender- digital divide by providing women and girls with digital skills, to thrive in the technology driven global landscape.**



Bharat development agenda, with a commitment to supporting their holistic development at all stages of life. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme has led to a 16-point improvement in the sex ratio at birth since 2014. Likewise, there is MUDRA scheme that provides microfinance, has over 70% women beneficiaries, and Mission Poshan 2.0, which is an integrated nutrition support programme that seeks to address the challenges of malnutrition in children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

Similarly, Mission Shakti aims at strengthening interventions for women safety, security and empowerment, and Mahila E Haat is an online platform launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, to support women entrepreneurs. India has also launched Tech -equity digital inclusion platform along with G20 EMPOWER, which aims to bridge the gender- digital divide by providing women and girls with digital skills, to thrive in the technology driven global landscape.

Other steps — such as, from the establishment of working women's hostels and the launch of various skills-development programmes and initiatives to secure their safety and freedom from violence — all testify to India's concerted focus on ensuring the suraksha (safety), suvidha (convenience) and swabhimann (independence) of women.

Among the three critical women-development centric focal areas in G20, the most profound is invariably

the supporting of women's digital and financial inclusion. Globally, almost half (42%) of women and girls remain outside the formal financial system. Despite progress in financial inclusion rates, the gender gap has not narrowed and a 7% gap persists. Digital technology innovations, particularly for information & communication, have the potential to accelerate women's economic empowerment. Yet, there remains a Digital Gender Gap, both in access to digital technology and to digital education. India has prioritised women's digital financial inclusion through the JAM or Jan Dhan-Aadhar-Mobile platform and this has allowed significant social protection programs to reach women directly as well as strengthened women's economic empowerment. The G20, has looked at similar concrete ways to strengthen women's digital and financial inclusion.

Second, strengthening women's capacities to make them equal stakeholders in development matrix. This is important both to facilitate the entry of, and to ensure continuity in women's participation in the economy and in society. For instance, despite education being wholly acknowledged as the cornerstone of empowerment globally, only 49% have achieved gender parity in primary education, 42% in lower secondary education, and 24% in upper secondary education. Globally, around 1.1 billion women, and girls, remain outside the formal financial system, many of whom also have limited access to digital technologies. Similarly, in countries across the world women

perform significantly higher unpaid care work. Therefore, the G20 has worked together to drive consensus and actions around dismantling these long-term structural barriers that women face and their lives and at work.

Third, enabling women's leadership at all levels of decision making. Today, India is being served by over 1.90 crore women in administrative offices, over 17,000 women elected to Panchayati Raj Institutions, and over 10,000 women in the defense forces. Such an approach to women-led development will be critical for ensuring that their unique perspectives, experiences and leadership styles are brought to the table, which in turn can lead to more inclusive and effective decision-making.

G20 has decided to offer lifelong support to women and girls in attaining primary as well as higher education, and has reaffirmed their commitment to eradicating gender-based violence in the corporate world. They look forward to a complete transformation of the labour world with women taking over the domain. Further they aim to help all women and girls including those with disabilities finding work, while also promoting leadership skills to bridge the gender digital divide.

The G20 leaders agreed to create a new working group on empowerment of women to support the G20 Women's Ministerial, and look forward to the convening of its first meeting during Brazilian G20 Presidency. They are committed to halve the gender gap by 2030, by addressing gender norms and

barriers and accessibility, affordability and usage of digital technologies, and enabling women and girls to actively participate in the formulation and implementation of national digital strategies including enhancing digital literacy and skills. With women empowerment as its prominent theme, India's G20 Presidency has been successful in outlining solutions related to women's education, entrepreneurship, technology, finance and beyond.

G20, 2023 has turned out to be a pivotal point in global history, where partnerships were strengthened, mindset shifted and policies transformed, thereby consolidating the theme that regardless of where we live, gender equality is a fundamental human right. India's revolutionary leaps, has led it to the paradigm of women-led development, which has become the defining mantra of this age. G20 must pick up the baton and keep pushing the development of women in all spheres, where women aren't just beneficiaries of development but are also setting the agenda, as leaders and equal participants. Although the interlinked crises the world has faced has set us back from achieving our common development goals- India's G20 Presidency offers the opportunity for us to set the agenda for next phase development. In this window of opportunity, it is critical that we place women at the heart of our efforts so as to achieve a better tomorrow.

***(Vanathi Srinivasan is National President, BJP Mahila Morcha, and Member of Legislative Assembly from Coimbatore.)***

# Narendra Modi: The Revivor of The Lost Pride of Indian Women



**Indira Goswami**

**W**omen, in India, are perceived as 'Shakti Rupena' and worshipped as Goddesses since time immemorial. The ancient Indian scriptures give a platonic idea of women who are no less than reincarnated divine beings. Women were not only treated equal to men but were extremely free in the society as well. They were allowed to study Shastras (Weapons) as well as Saastras (scriptures). From Shastra Gyana to diplomacy and horse-riding to swordsmanship, women stood shoulder to shoulder with men in every field. During Vedic times, women were allowed to wear the Sacred Thread (Janev) so that they could perform the duties of a priestess. Brahnavadinis were the women who devoted their lives to studies of Vedas, Upanishads and other scriptures that shows that we had many women scholars in the ancient times. Gargi, Maitreyee, Apala, Lopamudra were the prominent Vidhushis during the ancient times of India.

It was during the medieval age only that the status of Indian women was completely toppled. It happened mainly due to the influences that Indians derived from orthodox and fundamentalist religions once they arrived in India. In

ancient India though, the body of a woman was seen as an aesthetic inspiration. The caves of Ajanta, Ellora celebrated the beauty of human bodies to its fullest. But in medieval ages, men started oppressing women by snatching all her rights, be it her right from her body, to her right to take decisions about her life, everything was just snatched. Indians, being highly influenced by Abrahamic religions, started to preach about morality and decency; thus, women started witnessing degradation of their quality of lives. People started looking at the woman body either as something that needs to be covered from tip to toe or a lump of muscles that quenches bodily thirst.

Marriages stooped to reciprocation of commodities from the platonic idea of exchanging hearts, and women became a mere part of those commodities by now. The sacrosanct idea of marriage remained in scriptures only. Thousands of regressive customs were made part of day-to-day life. Every single custom introduced was an insult to womanhood. Women were stopped from getting basic education, they remain illiterate and oblivion of the outside world. Child marriage, polyandry, veil system, dowry, illiteracy, forceful marriage, all evil systems that a reasonable and prudent person can imagine, were introduced to our society and the lives of women were made miserable; unbearable.

Indian women lost their pride and freedom in a drastic manner, revival of which seemed to be a really tough job

until Mr. Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister in 2014. Women are slowly regaining their status as they had in the ancient days.

From providing education schemes, skill development trainings, business loans, Law-making to providing help to women in distress, working women, financially deprived women, the Government led by Mr. Modi spread their lights to each and every aspect of a woman's life to drag them up from the level they have been pushed down to.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Andolan, one of the most successful schemes of the Modi Govt. aims at providing education to all female child and also eradicating uneven male-female sex ratio. STEP or Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP) scheme, although introduced in the year of 1987-1988, gained in traction after 2014 only. PM Modi led Government of India through National Skill Development Corporation, and its training partners such as Mann Deshi Foundation, Shri Mahila Sewa Sahkari Bank Limited and Sri Sarada Math Rasik Bhita are working exclusively on skill development of women, especially in rural areas. The training includes imparting digital, accounting and entrepreneurial skills so as to widening the possibility of setting up their own business. NSDC in collaboration with the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, is also driving skill development of workers for Swachh Bharat Mission and has roles such as mason training for twin pit toilets and cow dung gas (bio fuel), which has seen encouraging participation from women. Under Pradhan Mantri Mahila

**The Modi Govt has not only highlighted women empowerment but has taken the already empowered women to the limelight, it shows the farsightedness of a government. Women are given power at every important sector, from executive to legislative to judiciary, all three pillars are seeing important roles played by eligible and empowered women. Smt. Draupadi Murmu is the first woman President of India who hails from a tribal background. India right now has 9 women Ministers (2 cabinet ministers) to glorify its name.**

Kaushal Kendra (PMMKK) scheme more than 6000 women have been trained for Self Employed Tailor, Beauty Therapist, Customer Care Executive, Hair Stylist, Yoga Trainer etc.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Scheme, underprivileged women, especially from rural areas, are supported with free Gas Cylinders. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana is also a very successful scheme providing easy loans to women entrepreneurs. Apart from Mudra Yojna, Stand Up India and Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme are the schemes specially designed to help women in setting up their own business.

National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), Pradhan Mantri Vyay Vandana Yojana (PMVVY) and Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG), Sabla aims at supporting women and girls who are



socially insecure, the initiatives like Samagra Shiksha, Scheme of National Overseas Scholarship, Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojna, Swachh Vidyalaya Mission, etc. ensure that schools are girl-friendly especially for underprivileged sections of the society and have adequate facilities in place to fulfil their needs that involves extra care.

The aforementioned Schemes are mainly for women in general and for financially underprivileged women. Nevertheless, the Modi led Govt formed schemes to help women who are victims of domestic or sexual violence to lift them up from the abyss of the society and start living in the streamline again. Women Helpline and One Stop Centres (OSCs) are one of those noble initiatives taken by the Modi Govt.

A successful Government is not the one that focuses only on the underprivileges but also gives ample opportunity and resources to the well-educated sections of the society. The Modi Govt has not only highlighted women empowerment but has taken the already empowered women to the limelight, it shows the farsightedness of a government. Women are given power at every important sector, from executive to legislative to judiciary, all three pillars are seeing important roles played by eligible and empowered women. Smt. Draupadi Murmu is the first woman President of India who hails from a tribal background. India right now has 9 women Ministers (2 cabinet ministers) to glorify its name.

In a historic moment, the Indian Parliament passed the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam that secures 33% reservation

for women in the Parliament for equal representation of women in the Indian politics which will encourage more women from every corner of the country to take an active interest in politics. All Indian women hail this movement of the Modi Govt to the core of their hearts and generations to come will remember this reservation as an act of upholding womanhood, politically, socially and economically, to its peak.

That judiciary is also not behind in the era of Modi when it comes to women empowerment. Hon'ble Miss Justice B.V. Nagarathna was elevated to the Supreme Court of India in 2021 and she will grace the nation as the First woman Chief Justice of India in history. India has seen five female Judges in the Supreme Court of India in 2021 which is the highest number of women in the Supreme Court the nation has witnessed till date. From Judges to Additional Solicitor Generals of India, women can be seen to be successfully doing justice to all these roles.

To sum up, it can be said that what women had in ancient times are being given back slowly to them by the Govt led by Shri Narendra Modi ji. Women have been given so many opportunities in so many sectors in the current regime that it cannot be added all in a mere article. It is hoped and wished that the Bharatiya Naris under the aegis of PM Narendra Modi will take their Bharat to a height that the world never imagined.

***(Indira Goswami is a New Delhi based Advocate. She practices at the Delhi High Court. Views expressed are her own)***

# नारी शक्ति वंदन विधेयक महिलाओं के मजबूत प्रतिनिधित्व और सशक्तिकरण के युग की शुरुआत है



डॉ. दिलीप अग्निहोत्री

**य**ह देश की महिलाओं की लिए वाकई में गर्व करने के लिए सबसे बड़ा पल था। लोकसभा और विधानसभाओं में उनके लिए एक तिहाई आरक्षण सुनिश्चित होने का रास्ता साफ हो गया। प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी ने 128वें संविधान संशोधन विधेयक के गुरुवार को संसद से पारित होने को देश की लोकतांत्रिक यात्रा का एक ऐतिहासिक क्षण बताया था और कहा कि यह भारत की महिलाओं के लिए मजबूत प्रतिनिधित्व और सशक्तिकरण के युग की शुरुआत है।

उन्होंने यह टिप्पणी विधेयक को राज्यसभा से मंजूरी मिलने के बाद की। लोकसभा ने बुधवार को ही इसे मंजूरी दे दी थी। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने एक्स पर एक पोस्ट में कहा- हमारे देश की लोकतांत्रिक यात्रा में एक निर्णायक क्षण। 140 करोड़ भारतीयों को बधाई। उन्होंने इस विधेयक के पक्ष में मतदान करने वाले सभी सदस्यों का आभार जताया और कहा कि इस तरह का सर्वसम्मत समर्थन वास्तव में खुशी देने वाला है।

उन्होंने कहा-संसद में नारी शक्ति वंदन विधेयक के पारित होने के साथ, हम भारत की महिलाओं के लिए मजबूत प्रतिनिधित्व और सशक्तिकरण के युग की शुरुआत कर रहे हैं। यह केवल एक विधेयक नहीं है, यह उन अनगिनत महिलाओं के लिए एक श्रद्धांजलि है जिन्होंने हमारे राष्ट्र को बनाया है।

भारत उनके लचीलेपन और योगदान से समृद्ध हुआ

है। यह बिलकुल सच है कि मोदी सरकार ने दशकों से लंबित अनेक योजनाओं को पूर्णता तक पहुंचाया है। इस विधेयक के पारित होने से इसमें नया अध्याय जुड़ गया है।

नए संसद भवन का निर्माण मोदी सरकार का ऐतिहासिक कार्य है। इसके प्रथम सत्र में भी इतिहास बना। लोकसभा में नारी शक्ति वंदन अधिनियम विधेयक 454 वोट से पारित हुआ। विरोध में मात्र दो मत पड़े। महिला आरक्षण बिल लाने का यह पांचवां प्रयास था। देवगौड़ा से लेकर मनमोहन सिंह के कार्यकाल तक चार बार इस विधेयक को लाने का प्रयास किया गया। हंगामा हुआ। मारपीट हुई। इसी के साथ यह ओझल हो गया।

अब प्रधानमंत्री मोदी के प्रयास से यह अंजाम तक पहुंचा। वस्तुतः इससे पहले जो प्रयास हुए उनमें नेकनीयत का अभाव था। अनेक नेताओं ने इसे अपनी राजनीति का माध्यम बना लिया था। उनकी रुचि महिला आरक्षण में नहीं थी। इसके नाम पर वह मात्र राजनीति कर रहे थे। सत्ता पक्ष के तर्कों ने इनकी राजनीति बंद कर दी।

**नए संसद भवन का निर्माण मोदी सरकार का ऐतिहासिक कार्य है। इसके प्रथम सत्र में भी इतिहास बना। लोकसभा में नारी शक्ति वंदन अधिनियम विधेयक 454 वोट से पारित हुआ। विरोध में मात्र दो मत पड़े। महिला आरक्षण बिल लाने का यह पांचवां प्रयास था। देवगौड़ा से लेकर मनमोहन सिंह के कार्यकाल तक चार बार इस विधेयक को लाने का प्रयास किया गया। हंगामा हुआ। मारपीट हुई। इसी के साथ यह ओझल हो गया।**



वर्तमान में लोकसभा सदस्य सामान्य, एससी, एसटी तीन श्रेणियों में चुने जाते हैं। अब महिलाओं के लिए एक तिहाई सीटें आरक्षित हो जाएंगी। अमित शाह ने ठीक कहा कि परिसीमन आयोग देश की चुनावी प्रक्रिया को निर्धारित करने वाली एक महत्वपूर्ण कानूनी इकाई है। पारदर्शिता के लिए जरूरी है कि परिसीमन आयोग यह काम करे। इसके पीछे की वजह सिर्फ पारदर्शिता सुनिश्चित करना है।

ओबीसी के लिए बोलने का दावा करने वालों को पता होना चाहिए कि यह भाजपा ही है जिसने देश को ओबीसी प्रधानमंत्री दिया है। सोनिया गांधी ने महिला बिल का पूरा श्रेय लेने की कोशिश की और बिल के पास होने से पहले जाति जनगणना, एससी, एसटी और ओबीसी महिलाओं कोटा देने की मांग की। लोकसभा में भाजपा सदस्य निशिकांत दुबे ने उनकी सभी दलीलों को खारिज कर दिया।

ओबीसी दलितों के नाम पर राजनीति करने वालों को अमित शाह ने जबाब दिया। उन्होंने कहा कि पिछड़ा वर्ग, अनुसूचित जाति-जनजाति के सर्वाधिक प्रतिशत विधायक, सांसद और मंत्री भाजपा के हैं। पिछड़े दलितों के लिए लोकसभा में दहाड़ने वालों को यह बताना चाहिए कि उन्हें इस वर्ग की महिलाओं को तीस प्रतिशत टिकट देने में क्या कठिनाई रही है।

देश की राजधानी दिल्ली में भारतीय जनता पार्टी के महिला मोर्चा ने पार्टी मुख्यालय में प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी का अभिनंदन किया है। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने यहां भी कहा कि यह विधेयक कोई सामान्य कानून नहीं है बल्कि नए भारत की नई लोकतांत्रिक प्रतिबद्धता का उद्घोष है। यह बहुमत के साथ एक मजबूत सरकार की वजह से संभव हो सका है।

*(लेखक हिन्दू पीजी कॉलेज में एसोसिएट प्रोफेसर हैं। ये उनके निजी विचार हैं।)*



# India's Women Empowerment Story: Circa 2014-2023



**Rumki Basu**

**I**f women constitute roughly half the population of the globe, then bridging gender gaps constitute the most important development issue in the world today. One of the facts of life that we take for granted and which does not rivet our attention always is the near universal practice of gender discrimination and the fact that there is no truly gender just society anywhere in the world. In India and many other countries of the developing world – the women's movements have battled for 3 entitlements: freedom from social and cultural restrictions, equality of opportunities and empowerment through a package of gender specific rights.

The quest for gender equality has come a long way though it remains an unfinished agenda across the globe. Movements to grant women equality take time to be realized into law and much later into practice with societal acceptance. The 19th Amendment to the U.S. constitution, which actually gave white American women their right to vote was first introduced in the US Congress in 1878, it became a law 42 years later in 1920. It took another 45 years for Black women, Native American women, Asian American women and women from other ethnic and racial groups to vote after

the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 in the USA, whereas Indian women got the right to vote with the inauguration of our constitution in 1950. The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), often described as an international bill of rights for women, was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979. The United States alongside Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Nauru, Palau and Tonga are the seven countries yet to ratify CEDAW.

The question remains: should it take 132 years to attain gender equality (World Economic Forum 2023 Gender Gap Report) when evidence shows that women are co-contributors to global development? Gender equality often is linked to other institutionalized and social driven inequalities. Embracing equity (the quality of being fair and impartial) is the larger principle that needs to be embraced today in all sectors including policy initiatives to further gender equality.

Now let us discuss specific policy initiatives taken by the current political regime in India after 2014 which relate to women's empowerment. Being a developing country with a high population density, India was struggling to maintain international sanitation levels. Active participation of women was needed when women empowerment programmes were being inaugurated one by one after 2014. To eliminate open defecation, the Swachh Bharat Mission was launched first



**In a written reply to a question, Union Minister of State for Health S P Singh Baghel had recently said in parliament that women account for approximately 49 per cent of Ayushman card recipients. Women also account for 46.7% of the total authorized hospitalization under Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY), according to a study by the National Health Authority (NHA).**

on 2nd October 2014. The government allocated a separate budget for awareness programmes to bring behavioural changes in society and it has been seen that rural women have played a significant role here. The need for women specific policies was most keenly felt by rural women. After the launch of the Swachh Bharat Mission, India is swiftly progressing towards achieving open defecation free status, though still there are many related areas in the field of health and sanitation which also need to be covered by the government. Nevertheless, the village panchayats and many NGOs are playing a key role in making Swachh Bharat Mission a success.

In 2015, government data revealed that the greatest number of deaths due to pollution occurred in India, of which 1.24 lakh premature deaths can be accounted to indoor air pollution alone. This was typical of households below the poverty line (BPL), and is particularly true for rural areas due to the wide usage of traditional energy sources (coal and

wood) for household needs, particularly for cooking.

In the light of this problem, the *Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana* (PMUY) was launched under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India, which aimed to provide five crore LPG connections over three years to BPL households, with a subsidy of Rs. 1,600 per connection. Till date, Rs. 8,000 crores have been allocated for the implementation of this programme, and it has provided 4.5 crore BPL households with LPG connections (PMUY official website).

Empowerment of women is closely linked with the country's energy economy and this goal is driving investments in the entire value chain. PMUY now works in the form of a social movement, enabling social change and catalyzing empowerment of women. By adding 7 crore beneficiaries in the Ujjwala family, it is empowering women to lead smoke-free lives, a healthier lifestyle reducing drudgery and enabling them to pursue

**Under the Centre's flagship health scheme, women beneficiaries have availed maximum treatment in medical specializations such as Oncology (58%) and Ophthalmology (51%) than male patients under the scheme. Also, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Sikkim have observed higher female utilization under AB PM-JAY than male patients.**

other income enhancing pursuits.

To take this initiative forward, *Pradhan Mantri LPG panchayats* as peer learning platforms, are providing support, catalyzing behaviour changes among Ujjwala beneficiaries and also encouraging safe and sustainable use of LPG. As many as 87,876 LPG panchayats have been conducted across the country.

*Ujjwala Didi*, a CSR handholding initiative, aims at creating a force of 10,000 grassroot educators who can take the two messages till the last mile, viz. (i) Clean Cooking Fuel is to be universally available, (ii) Clean Cooking fuel is safe and affordable. *Ujjwala Didis* will facilitate refill, address any fear around LPG safety, help in resolving grievances and facilitate new connections. Thus, these empowered women will contribute to overall women empowerment through their panchayats.

The *Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana* has made a conscious effort to put women at the centre of the national conversation on health. In a written reply to a question, Union Minister of State for Health S P Singh Baghel had recently said in parliament that women account for approximately 49 per cent of Ayushman card recipients. Women also account for 46.7% of the total authorized hospitalization under Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY), according to a study by the National Health Authority (NHA). Under the Centre's flagship health scheme, women beneficiaries have availed maximum treatment in medical specializations such as Oncology (58%) and Ophthalmology (51%) than male patients under the

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Stand up India Scheme launched on 5th April 2016 (now extended to 2025), was meant to promote entrepreneurship at grassroot level focusing on economic empowerment and job creation. Recognizing the challenges that aspiring SC, ST and women entrepreneurs on the whole may face in starting business ventures, Stand-Up India was launched to promote entrepreneurship amongst women, to help them in starting enterprises in manufacturing, services the trading sector and activities allied to agriculture.

On the occasion of its 7th anniversary, Union Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman noted recently, "It is a matter of pride and satisfaction for me to note that more than 1.8 lakh women and SC/ST entrepreneurs

**On the occasion of its 7th anniversary, Union Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman noted recently, “It is a matter of pride and satisfaction for me to note that more than 1.8 lakh women and SC/ST entrepreneurs have been sanctioned loan for more than Rs. 40,600 crore”.**

have been sanctioned loan for more than Rs. 40,600 crore”. The scheme has created an eco-system which facilitates and continues to provide a supportive environment for setting up green field enterprises through access to loans from bank branches of all Scheduled Commercial Banks, touching numerous lives by ensuring access to hassle-free affordable credit to unserved/underserved segments of society. More than 80% of loans given under this scheme have been provided to women.

The World Economic Forum Gender Gap report of 2023 states that the political empowerment gender gap has the widest range of dispersion amongst countries, and manifests the largest remaining gender gap. Let us look at the India story. The current Lok Sabha has the highest representation of women at 14.3% with 78 women MPs, higher than 62 in 2014. Women’s active participation in electoral competitions is an efficient indicator of a healthy democracy in a country. As women in India are approximately about 48% of the total population, their representation in democratic institutions is expected to be in the same ratio. But the reality is totally different. As far as representation

of women in Lok Sabha is concerned, India ranks 149th in a list of 193 countries with only 14.3% women, (78 women) in 543 Members of Parliament in the Lower House.

Introduction of the Reservation system may be regarded as a watershed moment for women in India’s politics. After the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments in 1992, women were provided with reservation of one third of the seats in Panchayat and Municipal elections. Women now form more than 46 percent of the approximately total 13.5 lakh elected representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions across the country. As of now about 20 states have further increased the women’s reservation level to 50 percent. In India the only power roles in which women have a presence commensurate with their share in population are in the urban & rural local bodies, in the third tier of governance. Now, three decades later, we have a law that allows for similar reservations in the Union Parliament and State Legislatures. The *Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam* is a significant step towards more gender equality in Indian politics and governance.

Over the past 27 years, while continuously shifting responsibility for their collective failure to pass the Women’s Reservation Bill in India most political parties have relinquished their role in nurturing women leaders. Now that the 128th Constitution Amendment Bill has become an Act, let us celebrate the fact that in contrast to worldwide trends indicating a noticeable decline in democracy since 2006, India is experiencing a democratic surge in relation to women’s political

participation in their roles as voters & candidates. There has been a seven-fold increase in women contesting elections across assembly constituencies all over India. This is a silent revolution. Women have now emerged as predominant agents of change.

The battle for inclusion and representation of women in the economy or politics, according to some is mere tokenism and not real empowerment. Empirical studies have shown that representation and inclusive work policies lead to women acquiring, enjoying and exercising real power gradually e.g. the first generation women local government leaders in India probably were 'proxies' for their husbands or other male members in their families, but there has been a change with every generation in India. Whether it is through subsidy or direct cash transfer, concrete steps like work from home, a hybrid work model, organizations should be going the extra mile to listen to this new-age workforce with a calculated focus on improving learning and growth, flexibility in work models to benefit women.

Other worries remain. The decline of women in the labour force from 2004-05 is one of India's enduring mysteries. Why would women, across demography, geography and income, quit paid work in such large numbers? Why would they quit when educational attainment was up, fertility was down, and the economy was growing? The decline in unemployment rate for women indicates that they are not moving from unemployed to employed but out of the labour force altogether. Indian women's labour force participation rate is one of the lowest, even among developing

countries of the world.

Empowerment is a buzzword today – and economic empowerment is the bedrock on which other kinds of empowerment rests. The word empowerment is being still debated in both academic & non-academic worlds. To me, it means the capability to make independent choices on key aspects of one's life - education, marriage, employment, reproduction or the right to spend one's income in one's way.

I would like to conclude by saying that women's empowerment is like the proverbial glass that is currently half full, fraught with opportunities as well as challenges. Past women's movements, have shown us the way – we have now to build on our strengths. When women are educated, employed, independent, confident and productive, society and economy gain and with it every one gains - parents, husbands, employers and the state, therefore all have a role to play in this movement for a gender equal and gender just society. There is a window of opportunity today for reform minded political leaders, activists and intellectuals to work together, to correct historically embedded gender disabilities. We need a focused fight that involves government, the private sector and civil society. To educate women is only half empowerment, the rest half happens when they go to work.

***(Prof Rumki Basu was formerly the Head of Department of Political Science at Jamia Millia Islamia University, and presently heads the Centre for Public Policy and Governance, New Delhi. Views expressed are her own)***



# भारत की संस्कृति में निहित है नारी शक्ति का सम्मान



डॉ नीलम महेंद्र

**भा**रत आदिकाल से ही एक ऐसा देश रहा है जिसकी पहचान उसकी सांस्कृतिक विरासत एवं विविधता ही नहीं बल्कि उसके लोकतांत्रिक मूल्य और समावेशी विचार भी रहे हैं। जहां महिला और पुरुष के बीच समानता की नहीं बल्कि अर्धनारीश्वर की संकल्पना के साथ स्त्री और पुरुष के एकदूसरे के पूरक होने की बात की जाती है। भारत वो भूमि है जहां प्रभु श्री राम ने भी सीता माता की अनुपस्थिति में अश्वमेध यज्ञ उनकी सोने की मूर्ति के साथ किया था।

भारत की संस्कृति वो है जहाँ कृष्ण भगवान को नन्दलाल कहा जाता है, तो वो देवकीनन्दन और यशोदानन्दन भी हैं। श्री राम दशरथ नन्दन हैं तो कौशल्या नन्दन और सियावर भी हैं। भारत वो राष्ट्र है जहाँ मैत्रेयी, गार्गी, इंद्राणी, लोपामुद्रा जैसी वेद मंत्र दृष्टा विदुषी महिलाएं थीं तो कैकई जैसी रानीयां भी थीं जो युद्ध में राजा दशरथ की सारथी ही नहीं थीं बल्कि युद्ध में राजा दशरथ के घायल होने की अवस्था में उनकी प्राण रक्षक भी बनीं।

लेकिन इसे क्या कहा जाए कि स्त्री शक्ति के ऐसे गौरवशाली सांस्कृतिक अतीत के बावजूद आज भारत में महिलाओं को सामाजिक रूप से सशक्त करने की दिशा में सरकारों को विभिन्न प्रयास करने पड़ रहे हैं। इसे विडंबना ही कहा जाएगा कि हमें भारत की संसद में महिलाओं को 33 प्रतिशत आरक्षण दिलाने के लिए वर्षों का संघर्ष करना पड़ा। 1996 में जब पहली बार महिला आरक्षण विधेयक संसद में पेश किया गया था तबसे लेकर आज 2023 तक इस संघर्ष ने काफी फासला तय किया है।

महिला आरक्षण विधेयक पर चर्चा वर्ष 1996 में पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेई के कार्यकाल से ही की जाती रही है। चूंकि तत्कालीन सरकार के पास बहुमत नहीं था, इसलिये विधेयक को मंजूरी नहीं मिल सकी। 1996 में पहला महिला आरक्षण विधेयक संसद में पेश किया गया। 1998 से 2003 तक सरकार ने 4 अवसरों पर विधेयक पेश किया लेकिन पारित नहीं करा पाई। 2010 में राज्यसभा द्वारा विधेयक पारित हुआ लेकिन लोकसभा में लंबित ही रह गया। यह सुखद है कि आज प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व में भाजपा सरकार ने महिला आरक्षण विधेयक को लोकसभा में पारित कराकर देश की महिलाओं के अधिकारों को सुनिश्चित किया है।

2011 की जनगणना के मुताबिक, देश में इस समय महिलाओं की आबादी 48.5% है। लेकिन इसे क्या कहा जाए कि जिस संसद और विधानसभाओं में कानून बनते हैं, वहां उनका प्रतिनिधित्व बहुत कम है। एक तथ्य यह भी है कि आजादी से अब तक 17 बार लोकसभा चुनाव हो चुके हैं। लेकिन 2014 के आम चुनाव में पहली बार महिलाओं का वोटिंग प्रतिशत 60% के ऊपर गया था। 2014 में 65.6% महिलाओं ने वोट दिया था। वहीं, 2019 के चुनाव में ये और बढ़कर 67.2% चला गया था।

खास बात यह है कि 2019 के चुनाव में पुरुषों से ज्यादा महिलाओं ने वोट डाला था। ये दिखाता है कि अब राजनीति में महिलाओं की दिलचस्पी बढ़ रही है,

**महिला ई-हाट, स्टार्टअप स्कीम, पोषण अभियान, महिला हेल्पलाइन, बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ, सुकन्या समृद्धि योजना जैसे कदम महिलाओं के सामाजिक-आर्थिक एवं शैक्षणिक उत्थान के लिए मोदी सरकार की प्रतिबद्धता को दर्शाते हैं।**



लेकिन इस क्षेत्र में उनका प्रतिनिधित्व काफी कम है। इन परिस्थितियों में मोदी सरकार द्वारा राजनीति के क्षेत्र में महिलाओं की भागीदारी सुनिश्चित करने हेतु 'नारी शक्ति वंदन अधिनियम' के माध्यम से महिला सशक्तिकरण की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण इबारत लिख दी गई है।

वैसे तो वर्तमान भाजपा सरकार ने इससे पहले भी महिलाओं को सामाजिक रूप से और आर्थिक रूप से सशक्त करने के साथ साथ उनके स्वास्थ्य को बेहतर बनाने एवं उन्हें शिक्षित करने के लिए भी अनेक कदम उठाए हैं। महिला ई-हाट, स्टार्टअप स्कीम, पोषण अभियान, महिला हेल्पलाइन, बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ, सुकन्या समृद्धि योजना जैसे कदम महिलाओं के सामाजिक-आर्थिक एवं शैक्षणिक उत्थान के लिए मोदी सरकार की प्रतिबद्धता को दर्शाते हैं। यह भी वर्तमान सरकार की नीतियों का ही परिणाम है कि आज महिलाएं भारतीय सेना की तीनों टुकड़ियों में लड़ाकू जहाज उड़ाने, युद्धपोत चलाने से लेकर तोप चलाने में भी अपना योगदान दे रही हैं।

गौरतलब है कि वर्तमान परिदृश्य में महिलाएं विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में अपनी उपस्थिति ही दर्ज नहीं करा रहीं बल्कि स्वयं को साबित भी कर रही हैं। लेकिन जब बात देश की राजनीति की आती है, देश की संसद की आती है, तो वहाँ पर महिलाओं की उपस्थिति न के बराबर ही होती है। कहने को कहा जा सकता है कि इस देश को इंदिरा गांधी के रूप

में महिला प्रधानमंत्री मिली तो प्रतिभा पाटिल एवं द्रौपदी मुर्मू के रूप में महिला राष्ट्रपति भी मिली हैं तथा मीरा कुमार एवं सुमित्रा महाजन के रूप में महिला लोकसभा अध्यक्ष भी मिली हैं।

लेकिन यह भी सच है कि दोनों सदनों में महिला सांसदों की संख्या एवं जिला पंचायत से लेकर नगरपालिका तथा विधानसभा से लेकर लोकसभा तक राजनीति के क्षेत्र में महिलाओं का प्रतिनिधित्व हमेशा अत्यंत अल्प ही रहा है। इतना ही नहीं बल्कि जिला स्तर पर तो महिला आरक्षित सीटों पर सरपंच पति और पार्षद पति ही अक्सर कार्य करते देखे जाते रहे हैं।

इन परिस्थितियों में जब हम महिला सशक्तिकरण की बात करते हैं और विशेष रूप में राजनीति में, तो यह आवश्यक हो जाता है कि नारी शक्ति वंदन अधिनियम अपने लक्ष्य को यथार्थ में भी चरितार्थ करे। वैसे वर्तमान सरकार का योजनाओं/कानूनों की रचना और क्रियान्वयन के मामले में जो पिछला रिकॉर्ड रहा है, उसे देखते हुए निश्चित रूप से यह उम्मीद की जा सकती है कि यह अधिनियम भी अपने निर्धारित लक्ष्यों को सही प्रकार से प्राप्त करेगा तथा राजनीति में महिलाओं की समुचित भागीदारी सुनिश्चित होगी।

*(लेखिका स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं। ये उनके निजी विचार हैं।)*

# सरकार के सहयोग से मुख्य धारा में महिलाएं



अरविंद जयतिलक

मो

दी सरकार के 9 साल के शासन की नीतियों और सहयोग से भारतीय महिलाओं ने सदियों से गढ़ी-बुनी वर्जनाओं की खोल को धूल-धुसरित कर राष्ट्र निर्माण में अपनी शानदार भूमिका को रेखांकित करना शुरू कर दिया है। इन 9 सालों में मोदी सरकार ने महिलाओं के हित में ढेर सारे निर्णय लिए हैं और उसी का नतीजा है कि आज वे अपने लक्ष्य का प्रस्तावना खुद लिख रही है। इस प्रस्तावना ने उनमें असमानता और अन्याय के खिलाफ तनकर खड़ा होने की शक्ति, विकास पथ पर आगे बढ़ने का माद्दा और नवाचारों का बीज रोपने की हिम्मत दी है। इसी हिम्मत से बदलाव की सहज प्रतिध्वनि प्रस्फुटित हो रही है जिससे लैंगिक असमानता की लौह-बेड़ियां पिघल रही हैं। हाल ही में मोदी सरकार ने ऐतिहासिक निर्णय लेते हुए संसद का विशेष सत्र आहुत कर दशकों से बर्फखाने में पड़े महिला आरक्षण बिल को पारित करा आधी आबादी को उनके अधिकारों से लैस किया है। इस क्रांतिकारी फैसले से अब लोकसभा और राज्य विधानसभाओं में महिलाओं के लिए 33 फीसदी सीटें सुरक्षित-आरक्षित हो गई हैं। निःसंदेह इस पहल ने व्यवस्थापिका में महिला सशक्तिकरण को नया आयाम दिया है। इस उपलब्धि से देश भर की महिलाओं का इकबाल बुलंद हुआ है। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने सच कहा है कि भारत के इतिहास में यह एक निर्णायक क्षण है। गौर करें तो नए संसद में पारित होने वाला यह पहला विधेयक है जो भारतीय नारी की गौरव और आनुपातिक भागीदारी की गरिमा को सुनिश्चित किया है। विचार करें तो अभी तक देश के अधिकांश राज्यों की विधानसभाओं में महिलाओं का प्रतिनिधित्व 10 फीसदी से भी कम है। देश के किसी भी

राज्य में 15 फीसदी से अधिक नहीं है। लेकिन मोदी सरकार ने 33 फीसदी आरक्षण की पहल कर बदलाव के चक्र की चाबी भर दी है। अब संसद और राज्य विधानसभाएं महिला प्रतिनिधित्व से गुलजार दिखेंगी। गौर करें तो पहली बार नहीं है जब मोदी सरकार ने महिलाओं के हित में क्रांतिकारी निर्णय लिया है। 2014 में सत्ता संभालते ही प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने लैंगिक असमानता मिटाने का संकल्प लिया। इसके लिए उन्होंने महिला केंद्रित योजनाओं को आकार देने के की पहल शुरू कर दी जिसका उल्लेख आवश्यक है। मोदी सरकार ने 1 मई, 2016 को उत्तर प्रदेश राज्य के बलिया जिले से उज्ज्वला योजना का शुभारंभ किया। आज इसका लाभ देश भर की उन सभी गृहणियों को मिल रहा है जो आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर हैं। गृहणियों के गृहस्थी में रसोई गैस सिलेंडर की उपलब्धता न सिर्फ उनकी बुनियादी जरूरत को पूरा कर रहा है बल्कि उनके आत्मसम्मान में भी वृद्धि का कारक है। किसी से छिपा नहीं है कि परंपरागत तौर पर मिट्टी के चूल्हे और कोयले की आग से निकलने वाला धुंआ किस तरह गृहणियों की आंख को नुकसान पहुंचाता था। जहरीले धुएं से न सिर्फ उनकी आंख खराब होती थी बल्कि उनके स्वास्थ्य पर भी प्रतिकूल प्रभाव पड़ता था। लेकिन उज्ज्वला योजना के अमल में आने से महिलाओं के स्वास्थ्य को नया जीवनदान मिला है। आज की तारीख में तकरीबन 9.6 करोड़ गृहणियां उज्ज्वला योजना का लाभ ले रही हैं। गौर करें तो 2014 से पहले भोजन पकाने के ईंधन से वंचित जिन गरीबों की तादाद 52.9 फीसदी हुआ करती थी वह आज घटकर 13.9 फीसदी रह गई है। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने बालिका लिंग अनुपात में गिरावट को रोकने एवं महिला सशक्तिकरण को बढ़ावा देने के लिए 22 जनवरी, 2015 को 'बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ' योजना का शुभारंभ हरियाणा के पानीपत से किया। यह योजना आज देश भर में 'बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ' अभियान और आंदोलन का रूप धारण कर लिया है। उसी का नतीजा है कि आज देश भर में बालिकाओं की शिक्षा और सुरक्षा को लेकर जागरूकता



बढ़ी है। उसी जागरूकता का परिणाम है कि महिलाओं के प्रति घरेलू मारपीट व हिंसा की दर में कमी आ रही है। यह भारतीय समाज के लिए शुभ संकेत है। मोदी सरकार ने महिलाओं के प्रसव को भी सुरक्षित करना सुनिश्चित किया है। अब प्रसव 100 फीसदी तक अस्पतालों और प्रशिक्षित नर्सों की निगरानी में हो रहा है। इस प्रयास से शिशु मृत्यु दर में लगातार कमी आ रही है। यह दर 4.5 फीसदी से घटकर 1.5 पर आ गई है। मोदी सरकार ने महिलाओं को आत्मनिर्भर बनाने के लिए फ्री सिलाई मशीन योजना को जमीन पर उतारा है। 20 से 40 वर्ष की महिलाएं इस योजना का भरपूर लाभ उठा रही हैं। इससे उनकी आर्थिक स्थिति मजबूत हुई है और आत्मनिर्भर बन रही हैं। 22 जनवरी, 2015 को प्रारंभ हुई सुकन्या समृद्धि योजना मील का पत्थर साबित हुई है। उल्लेखनीय है कि यह योजना 10 साल से कम उम्र की लड़कियों-बच्चियों की उच्च शिक्षा और विवाह के लिए है। एक किस्म हम इसे लड़कियों-बच्चियों की सुरक्षित भविष्य की बचत योजना कह सकते हैं। इस योजना से आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर लड़कियों-बच्चियों की उच्च शिक्षा की राह आसान हुई है। दूसरी ओर 2017 में प्रारंभ हुई महिला शक्ति केंद्र योजना गांव-गांव की महिलाओं को सामाजिक भागीदारी के माध्यम से सशक्त कर रही है। मोदी सरकार ने 30 जुलाई, 2019 में तीन तलाक विधेयक पारित किया। उसके बाद अब मुस्लिम समाज में तीन तलाक देना अपराध की श्रेणी में आ गया है। मोदी सरकार के इस फैसले का मुस्लिम समाज में चतुर्दिक सराहना हुई है। मोदी सरकार की महिला केंद्रित योजनाओं के सकारात्मक परिणाम का असर है कि इन 9 वर्षों के दरम्यान लैंगिक असमानता में तेजी से कमी आयी है। अभी गत वर्ष ही राष्ट्रीय परिवार सर्वेक्षण के आंकड़ों से खुलासा हुआ कि महिला स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में बेहतरीन सुधार हुआ है। महिलाओं के खिलाफ घरेलू हिंसा की वारदातों में कमी आयी है। यह दर पिछले एक दशक में 37.2 फीसदी से घटकर 25 फीसदी के नीचे आ गया है। सरकार के सकारात्मक रुख से बेटियों को राष्ट्रीय रक्षा अकादमी (एनडीए) की प्रवेश परीक्षा में शामिल होने की मंजूरी मिल गई है। अब यहां भी समानता के मीनार पर आधी-आबादी अपना झंडा लहरा रही हैं। राष्ट्रीय महत्व

के संस्थानों, व्यवसायिक पाठ्यक्रमों में भी आधी-आबादी की मौजूदगी तेजी से बढ़ रही है। अखिल भारतीय उच्च शिक्षा सर्वे (एआईएसएचई) की रिपोर्ट से उद्धाटित हुआ है कि राष्ट्रीय महत्व के संस्थानों और व्यवसायिक पाठ्यक्रमों में बेटियों का नामांकन बढ़ा है। 2014-15 से 2020-21 की अवधि के दरम्यान नामांकन में लगभग 61 फीसदी की वृद्धि हुई है। शिक्षा मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी सर्वे रिपोर्ट 2020-21 के मुताबिक छात्राओं का नामांकन दो करोड़ के पार पहुंच गया है। 2014-15 के मुकाबले 44 लाख अर्थात् 28 फीसदी की वृद्धि हुई है। इसी तरह पूर्वोत्तर क्षेत्र में 2014-15 से 2020-21 के दरम्यान अन्य पिछड़ा वर्ग की छात्राओं के नामांकन में 34 फीसदी की वृद्धि हुई है। कुल नामांकन में छात्राओं के नामांकन का प्रतिशत जो 2014-15 में 45 फीसदी था, से बढ़कर 2020-21 में 49 फीसदी हो गया है। फैकल्टी शिक्षकों में महिलाएं की भागीदारी 42.9 फीसदी हो गई है। आर्थिक उपक्रमों में भागीदारी की बात करें तो भारत की कंपनियों में महिला निदेशकों का अनुपात 18 फीसदी के पार पहुंच चुका है। 2014 से पहले यह 6 फीसदी से भी कम था। श्रम के क्षेत्र में नजर दौड़ाएं तो यहां भी महिलाओं का प्रतिनिधित्व बढ़ा है। प्रशासनिक नौकरियों में महिलाओं की भागीदारी अब 20 फीसदी के पार है। इसी तरह बैंकों में भी यह आंकड़ा 25 फीसदी से अधिक है। मोदी सरकार ने महिलाओं की नौकरियां और उनके आर्थिक उन्नति की राह में आने वाली कई कानूनी बाधाओं को खत्म किया है। इसी का असर है कि नौकरियों के अलावा राजनीति में भी महिलाओं की भागीदारी तेजी से बढ़ रही है। अभी चंद महीने पहले देश के सबसे बड़े राज्य उत्तर प्रदेश में पंचायत चुनाव संपन्न हुआ। इस पंचायत चुनाव में पुरुषों से ज्यादा महिलाएं पंच परमेश्वर चुनकर आयी हैं। 53.7 फीसदी पंचायतों की बागडोर अब महिलाओं के हाथ में है। राज्य में ग्राम प्रधान के 58,176 पदों पर चुनाव हुए जिसमें 31,212 पद पर महिलाएं चुनी गईं। ऐसा ही आंकड़ा देश के अन्य राज्यों में भी देखने को मिल रहा है। यह महिला सशक्तिकरण को ही रेखांकित करता है और इसका श्रेय मोदी सरकार को जाता है।

*(लेखक वरिष्ठ टिप्पणीकार हैं। प्रस्तुत विचार उनके निजी हैं।)*

# Empowering Bhartiya Nari : Bharat's Recent Breakthrough Under PM Modi's Leadership



**Sanjana Sinha**

**W**hen the H. D. Deve Gowda-led administration tabled the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament 27 years ago, in September 1996, it began a contentious legislative history. In reality, the UPA Government was successful in doing so in the Rajya Sabha in 2010; since then, practically every administration has attempted to approve it. Lack of political will and absence of consensus caused the campaign to fail, but twenty-seven years later, on September 20, the bill to amend the Constitution and grant women a one-third reservation in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies was passed in the Lok Sabha with almost universal support.

The bill reserves one-third of all seats for women in the Lok Sabha, state assemblies and also in the capital, Delhi, which is a federally-administered territory but has an elected assembly.

The law will also apply to the seats that are already reserved for some of India's most disadvantaged communities known as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In the 545-member Lok Sabha, 131 seats are reserved for these two groups and add up to thousands in state assemblies.

India boasts a history of powerful women in politics, both in the past and the present. The country had a female Prime Minister as early as in 1966 and some of the biggest political parties are headed by women. Female Chief Ministers have run some of India's largest states and several women helm powerful ministries at federal and state levels. The country has also had two female heads of state, including current President Draupadi Murmu.

## All you need to know about Delimitation

According to the Election Commission of India (ECI), delimitation is the act or process of establishing the limits or boundaries of geographical constituencies in a nation. Delimitation, to put it simply, entails redrawing the borders of the Parliamentary and Assembly seats, increasing the number of constituencies in accordance with the most recent population figures. The Census

would serve as the foundation for the delimitation process. When both of these procedures are completed, the Bill becomes operative.

This is done for every state to ensure a balance between the number of constituencies and the population, to provide a portion of the population equal representation, and to set aside a certain number of seats for the designated categories, which are currently women.

In order to establish balance and give



equal representation, the Delimitation Commission must ensure that the boundaries of each seat or constituency are drawn in a way that ensures that the population inside each is equal. The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are also given to the Commission to carry out the same responsibility.

There have only been four delimitation exercises in India: in 1952 under the Delimitation Commission Act of 1952, in 1963 under the Delimitation Commission Act of 1962, in 1973 under the Delimitation Act of 1972, and in 2002 under the Delimitation Act of 2002. And because of COVID-19, the Census of 2021 was postponed.

The number of Lok Sabha seats was fixed at 543 in the 2002 delimitation process till

2026. The Women's Reservation Bill may only be passed before the 2029 general elections, depending on the outcome of a delimitation procedure that is in line with the Census report, as the Lok Sabha election in 2024 is only a few months away.

### **Women Reservation Bill redefines Bhartiya Nari Role in Politics and the Road to Equality**

*“This is a historic moment, this is a moment of pride for us,” PM Modi said in his speech as he introduced the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam or Women's Reservation Bill.*

Women's reservations are supported by their claim to representation that is proportionate to their numbers as well as by their historical disadvantage. In actuality, the “one nation, one election”



plan would be a far smaller change than proportional representation of all the varied segments of our people. At the very least, the variety of the country must be reflected in our legislators.

Up until recently, even our judiciary reflected the patriarchal worldview and supported nominal equality above genuine equality. Therefore, Justice Chagla in *Dattatrya v. State of Bombay*

(1952) regarded the particular provision for women in Article 15(3) only as a “proviso” that cannot undermine the parent provision of Article 15(1) rather than an expansion of equality. As a result of so-called “protective discrimination,” rules safeguarding women were preserved because they were considered “weak.”

Given that women make up around 50% of the population, their active involvement in politics helps increase the populace’s representation in the government. Women are more likely to have their own viewpoints and goals taken into account when making decisions. The realization of gender equality in our country will depend

heavily on the political engagement of women. The measure makes it obvious that women can and should hold leadership positions in society just like men. This will support the fight against deeply ingrained gender conventions and prejudices. Women often handle political issues in a number of ways. Their participation might result in laws and policies being created that more effectively address issues like gender-based violence, women’s health, education and economic empowerment.

Moreover, calling it a “bold” and “transformative” step, Susan Ferguson, Country Representative of UN Women India, underlined the importance of political representation for women’s sustained empowerment. UN Women also welcomed the proposed Bill’s reservation of seats for women leaders from scheduled castes and tribes as an “important step” that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals and its core objective of leaving no-one behind. It’s a significant record that makes India one of the top performing nations in the world in facilitating women’s political empowerment at the local level, leaving behind other major countries like France, the U.K., Germany, and Japan. Proudly, India was one of the first Asian countries to give women the right to vote and be elected as Members of Parliament. The passage of the women reservation bill is another milestone in the history of the world’s largest democracy. It certainly needed massive political will, and this time with PM Modi at the helm of affairs, there was no dearth of the same.

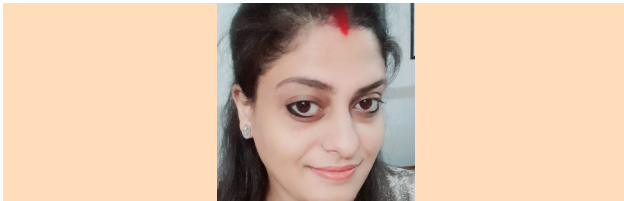
*(Sanjana Sinha is an Associate with Youth Engagement Group of G20 India. Views Expressed are Her Own)*

**(1952) regarded the particular provision for women in Article 15(3) only as a “proviso” that cannot undermine the parent provision of Article 15(1) rather than an expansion of equality. As a result of so-called “protective discrimination,” rules safeguarding women were preserved because they were considered “weak.”**

# **Unleashing Stree Shakti: Pride Of PM Modi's Naya Bharat**

“The economic empowerment of women fuels growth and the most effective way to empower women is through a women-led development approach.”

~ Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi



**Joyita Pal**

**S**tree Shakti has always been considered as mortal mirror reflection of the various manifestations of Adi Shakti who we worship in the form of Devi Durga, Dus Maha Vidya, Maa Lakshmi, Maa Saraswati and many more. Stree Shakti has been no less than a blessing to this world. As mother, sister, wife, teacher or friend, she has perpetually been the epitome of silent support behind the success of every man.

Since time immemorial, Stree Shakti has been the silent foundation on which great civilizations and societies were created. Yet, a walk down the alleys of past centuries, one can witness innumerable tales of their horrific suffering and brutal oppression that the pages of history are replete with.

It was not just oppression but much more than that in some cases. In case of India, for decades there were deliberate attempts to willfully brush aside the immense contribution of countless

iconic women in the freedom struggle of Bharat.

Names like Uda Devi Pasi, Kuyili, Rani Gaidinliu, to mention a few, barely get recognized by our own people. The list though infinitely long.

Fortunately though, Naya Bharat has been on a new journey for almost the last one decade to revive the glories of their passion, their sacrifices and their dedication toward this nation, by paving the path of creation of a new generation of women entrepreneurs and change agents.

From the time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi formed Government in 2014, recognizing the intrinsic essence of Nari Shakti has been witnessing a paradigm shift in terms of the due respect they now get, important responsibilities being bestowed upon them, and also in terms of efforts being made to unleash the true potential of Indian women in the society, and especially the economy.

Beyond the indispensable roles of being mothers, sisters, wife and daughters, women are also working shoulder to shoulder in the realm of business and governance as well. Not that it did not happen before, but the scale of their involvement has indeed gone up manifold in the last few years.

Needless to say, it would not have happened without the active support from the top, led by PM Modi.

It is on record that over 70% of the MUDRA loan beneficiaries are women who are now like the shining armour of India's MUDRA Yojana aimed at expanding the horizon of entrepreneurship, as well as providing institutional lending to micro enterprises at grassroots levels, to alter economic landscape of Bharat.

In the words of PM Modi, 'Today, 10 crore women are associated with women self-help groups. If you go to a village, you will find women working with banks, you will find women working in Anganwadis, you will find women who give medicines.'

In fact, over the last nine years, the manner in which, under the leadership of PM Modi, MUDRA Yojana, Self-Help Groups and various other Central Government schemes such as PM SWANidhi or Stand-Up India, have been utilized as catalysts to change the landscape of Women Entrepreneurship in Bharat, must be immensely celebrated, cherished, and put up as examples for the rest of the world, to narrate as to what kind of transformation can happen in a society when women, who in Indian context constitute nearly 50% of the population, are financially empowered to boost the economic fortune of any country.

It must also be mentioned that sustained empowerment of women in India, has also acted as one of the key resilient factors for Indian economy that

continues to stand tall in spite of several challenges the world faced over the last three years because of Covid pandemic, post pandemic economic challenges, supply chain disruptions as well as conflict triggered rise in price of critical commodities in the world. The reason being that the concept of livelihood was now no more dependent merely on availability of jobs but on making the availability of finance easier, and then let the creative minds find their own path of self-employment and entrepreneurship. In other words, making people self-sufficient in terms of earning livelihood through small business generation by they themselves was the key.

Interestingly, the impact of MUDRA loans on women entrepreneurs in Bharat is nothing less than being astounding. Its national impact in terms of making the society stronger by creation of a new generation of women entrepreneurs by breaking down the barriers can simply not be ignored. If we see the numbers, which are significantly growing, over 70% of MUDRA loan beneficiaries are women, reflecting their increasing participation in entrepreneurial ventures without any fear and with ease. Millions of women have availed MUDRA loans and are paving their way towards Atma Nirbharta or being Self Reliant.

Reiterating the importance of the resilience factor, it has often been seen that when the male earning member gets incapacitated due to unforeseen circumstances, or succumbs to ailments or accidents, the dependent family becomes helpless and stare at an



uncertain future. The same happens in case of a sudden divorce. In such a scenario, the best way to make sure than no women or her children suffer, is by ensuring that she is in a position to earn her livelihood, not just merely by working somewhere else, but more so by becoming an entrepreneur herself, which would ensure a sustained future and through that, may also create a place to provide livelihood to others in need or in destitution. After all, there can never be employment for future unless employers are created today. That is exactly what PM Modi has been striving to do through various schemes to boost entrepreneurship and especially women entrepreneurship in India.

Since its inception, MUDRA loans worth Rs 23 lakh crore has been provided to 41 crore beneficiaries. Today it is not surprising to witness a young lady who was working in a beauty parlour, taking the bold steps of availing MUDRA loan to start her own venture as a beautician or a bridal make-up professional, or someone working in a ladies' boutique, taking the initiative to start her own tailoring shop, or someone initiating a home-delivery business of lunch and dinner, or other food items.

From the perspective of women empowerment, these are incredible steps. It is these steps, especially the easy availability of collateral free capital through MUDRA Scheme, coupled with various skill development projects, that are now becoming the most critical enabling factors in empowering women, something that was not possible to imagine for decades in India, before

2015. One should not be surprised if many of such micro enterprises, with the right kind of support systems, eventually in future emerging as major brands like Nykaa Fasion or Sugar Cosmetics.

Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana thus stands as a beacon of hope for women empowerment, illuminating the path for women with aspiring dreams in Bharat.

It must be remembered, that if India today has emerged as the fifth largest economy of the world, if it is taking major steps to become a \$5 trillion economy in the next few years, the importance of steps taken by PM Modi led NDA Government to reinvigorate entrepreneurship in India through MUDRA and various other schemes to make collateral free business capital easily available among the aspiring masses in India, has to be acknowledged.

Being a woman, it brings immense happiness and excitement to witness that we are the ones, inspired by PM Modi's vision, who are standing tall shoulder-to-shoulder and contributing in shaping our country's future and are not being brushed away under the carpet anymore,

Stree Shakti, from managing the home, to holding the gun in the battlefield, to emerging as architects of new enterprises, is finally getting unleashed to revive her glorious past, and that of Bharat.

***(Joyita Pal works with Ministry of Culture, Government of India. Views expressed are her own)***

## 'NAMOSMRITHI: ADVAITHA TO AADHUNIKATHA'

# How Nine And Half Years of Modi Government Led to True Women Empowerment

तस्मादेताः सदा पूज्या भूषणाच्छादनाशनैः ।  
भूतिकामैरैर्नित्यं सत्कारेषूत्सवेषु च ॥ 59 ॥

*tasmādetāḥ sadā pūjyā bhūṣaṇācchādanāśanaiḥ |*

*bhūtikāmairnarairnityaṁ satkāreṣūtsaveṣu ca || 59 |*

Manusmrithi 3.59



Adarsh Kuniyillam

**T**his famous sloka from Manusmrithi says that men who seek ( their own) welfare should always honor women on festivals with ( gifts of) ornaments, clothes, and food. Without the welfare of women, men cannot progress, and society will be in chaos. Our tradition has always given utmost respect to women. Liberals often misquote Manusmrithi as misogynistic and being against women. However, this smrithi which is one of the ancient sources of our Sanskar, made it mandatory for men to treat women with respect. For generations, our lives were inspired

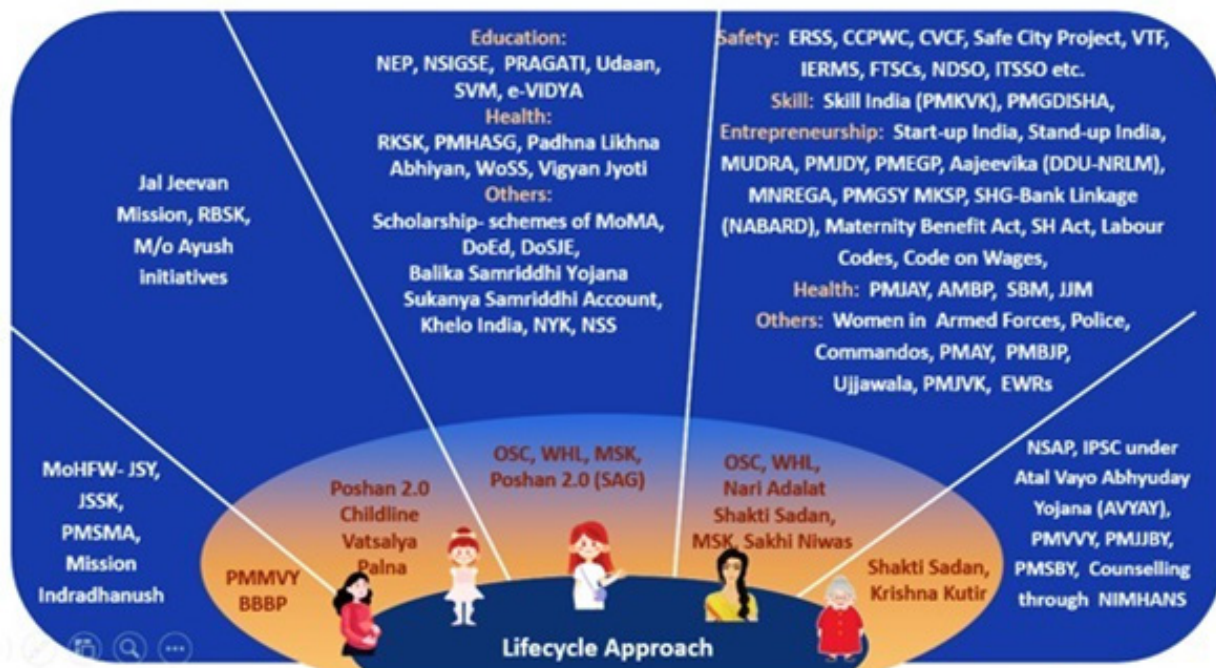
by these sets of 'smritis'. However, the coming generations will venerate nine and half years of the Modi government as ' NAMOSMRITHI'.

'Namosmrithi' centered upon 'Narishakthi'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reiterated in every address to the people the role of Narishakthi in the progress of our nation. He firmly believed that the empowerment of women is the bedrock of our society's development and that their leadership, especially at the grassroots, is crucial for our inclusive and sustainable progress. Right from taking over office in 2014 to till date, PM Modi led Government of India, has been fully committed to realizing the vision of Narishakthi. From Swach Bharat to passing of women's reservation bill in Parliament, this government has demonstrated the

commitment it has to women's empowerment. This commitment is undoubtedly drawn from the strength of our glorious past and combining elements of 'Advaita to Adhunikatha'. Tireless efforts from day one

## Women's Universe – Gol Initiatives



## Hub for Empowerment of Women

Modi Government's women empowerment initiatives began the day one of oath taking. On the ramparts of the Red fort in 2014, Prime Minister initiated the most revolutionary scheme world has ever seen. It was to be a jan baghidari event. As per WHO/UNICEF (2017), 892 million people practiced open defecation worldwide in 2015. About 520 million of them were in India, of which nearly 490 million were in rural areas. This has largely affected the health of women and children. The lack of proper household toilets have led to insecurity and fear amongst India's rural women. Over 11.72 crore toilets were built under the scheme till date by Modi Government. Swachh Bharat Mission is to date the largest sanitation initiative

in the world in the modern era in terms of sheer size and spread. Swachh Bharat Mission shifted focus from output-based programme implementation to outcome-based programme implementation. According to National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS), conducted by an Independent Verification Agency (IVA) under the technical guidance of the World Bank, found that 93.6 percent of households in 2017-18 and 96.5 percent of households in 2018-19, which have access to toilets, regularly use them. This implies that approximately 72 percent of households in 2017-18 and 90 percent of households in 2018-19 used toilets regularly. The statistics prior to the implementation of the scheme painted a



grim picture. As per the UNICEF-WHO JMP, nearly 41 percent of households in rural areas and 67 percent of households in urban areas used improved sanitation facilities. This increase in coverage and the hundred percent target realization of this scheme has led to a decrease in large number of diseases and an improvement in health outcomes amongst women. As per the report titled "Access to toilets and the safety, convenience and self-respect of women in rural India", after the construction of toilets, 93% of women reported that they were no longer afraid of being hurt by someone or harmed by animals while defecating; 93% of women reported they are no longer afraid of contracting health infections; 92% of women said they were no longer afraid of going to the toilet in the dark of night, which is a huge jump from the pre-toilet construction stage (12%); and 93% of the women reported no longer having to stop having food or water to control the urge to defecate or urinate.

### **Daughters Our Pride**

The Beti Bachao Beto Padhao scheme has ensured that every girl child is the pride of our nation. In 2014-15, the sex ratio at birth was 918. This has significantly improved to 933 in 2022-23 (as per Health Management Information System, MoH&FW) and as per UDISE data of the Ministry of Education, there is a considerable increase in the gross enrolment ratio of girls at school secondary levels from 75.51 percent in 2014-15 to 79.4% in 2021-22. Participatory campaigns such as 'My daughter, my pride' have led to a rise in awareness about supporting daughters. More than 56% of bank accounts

opened under the Jan Dhan scheme belong to women, thereby bringing more than 50 crores of women into the formal banking system. An amount of more than Rs 80509 crores is the cumulative deposit in 2.26 crore Sukanya accounts till October 2021.

Due to sustained efforts of the government, the BBBP scheme has resulted in the improvement of various indicators. Sex Ratio at Birth at the National level has improved by 19 points from 918 (2014-15) to 937 (2020-21); Enrolment of Girls in secondary education has increased from 75.51% in 2014-15 to 79.46% in 2020-21; Gross Enrolment in higher education increased by 18% from 2015 to 2020; Percentage of Institutional Deliveries has also shown an improvement from 87% in 2014-15 to 94.8% in 2020-21, and percentage of 1st Trimester Antenatal Care (ANC) Registration has shown improvement from 61% in 2014-15 to 73.9% in 2020-21. Further, for the first time in the country, the Sex Ratio of the total population (females per 1000 males) has reached 1020 (NFHS-5, 2019-21).

### **Health Empowerment led to Wealth Creation**

Today more than 80 percent of women have bank accounts and more than 89% of women participate in household decision-making. The financial empowerment provided under the initial years of the Modi Government has given voice to crores of women. Women now had a say in matters of health and wealth. More than 11 thousand crores were allocated for fighting malnutrition amongst women. The bank accounts and Aadhar-enabled verification ensured that the benefits


trickle down directly to the beneficiaries. The National Family Health Survey data for 2019-21 illustrates a significant improvement in an array of indicators with regard to women. Most of the health indicators concerning women and children have shown improvement. As per the NFHS 4 conducted in 2015-16, women whose body mass index is below normal, was 26.7 percent in rural areas. This figure has declined to 21.2 percent in NFHS 5 conducted in 2019-21. There is also an increase in the number of women who participate in Household decisions from 83% to 87.7% in rural India. Women having a bank or savings account that they themselves use rose from 48.5% in 2015-16 to 77.4% in 2019-21. During the same period, there is also a rise in the number of women who use the internet and mobile phones. Thus technology and awareness

creation have led to this remarkable progression. Mission Indradhanush was launched in 2014 with the aim of rapidly intensifying full immunization coverage of children to 90 percent and sustaining it thereafter. This was then followed by the launch of Intensified Mission Indradhanush in 2017. As of December 2022, a total of 11 phases of Mission Indradhanush have been completed covering 701 districts across the country under which a total of 4.5 crore children and 1.1 crore pregnant women have been vaccinated. NFHS 5 shows a 14.4 percent increase in full immunization coverage from NFHS 4.0. More than. Thus, the Government has over the years empowered women by investing in their health which has now led to the creation of wealth in the form of improved health indicators.

	NFHS-4 (2015-16)	NFHS-5 (2019-21)
Households with any usual member covered under a health insurance/ financing scheme (per cent)	28.7	↑ 41.0
Total fertility rate (children per woman)	2.2	↓ 2.0
Current Use of Family Planning Method- Any Method (per cent)	53.5	↑ 66.7
Mothers who had at least 4 antenatal care visits (per cent)	51.2	↑ 58.1
Institutional births (per cent)	78.9	↑ 88.6
Neonatal mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	29.5	↓ 24.9
Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	40.7	↓ 35.2
Under-five mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	49.7	↓ 41.9
Children age 12-23 months fully vaccinated based on information from either vaccination card or mother's recall (per cent)	62.0	↑ 76.4
Children under age 6 months exclusively breastfed (per cent)	54.9	↑ 63.7
Children under 5 years who are stunted (height-for-age) (per cent)	38.4	↓ 35.5
Children under 5 years who are wasted (weight-for-height) (per cent)	21.0	↓ 19.3

Children under 5 years who are underweight (weight-for-age) (per cent)	35.8	↓ 32.1
Children under 5 years who are overweight (weight-for-height) (per cent)	2.1	↑ 3.4
Women who are overweight or obese (BMI≥25.0 kg/m <sup>2</sup> ) (per cent)	20.6	↑ 24.0
Men who are overweight or obese (BMI≥25.0 kg/m <sup>2</sup> ) (per cent)	18.9	↑ 22.9
Women age 15-24 years who use hygienic methods of protection during their menstrual period (per cent)	57.6	↑ 77.3

Source: National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) 2015-16 and 2019-21, MoHFW

<b>Women Empowerment</b> 	Currently married women who usually participate in three household decisions <sup>54</sup> (per cent)	83.0	↑ 87.7
	Women who worked in the last 12 months and were paid in cash (per cent)	25.4	↑ 25.6
	Women owning a house and/or land (alone or jointly with others) (per cent)	40.1	↑ 45.7
	Women having a bank or savings account that they themselves use (per cent)	48.5	↑ 77.4
	Women having a mobile phone that they themselves use (per cent)	36.9	↑ 46.6
	Women who have ever used the internet (per cent)	na	24.6
	Women age 20-24 years married before age 18 years (per cent)	31.5	↓ 27.0

Source: National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) 2015-16 and 2019-21, MoHFW

## Legislative Empowerment

There were two major legislations that stand unique amongst all the initiatives taken by the Modi government for women's empowerment. The first was the abolition of triple talaq through The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act 2019 and the other was the passage of the women's reservation bill in Parliament. The Triple Talaq bill made instant talaq a criminal offence thereby giving relief to minority Muslim women. This law provides for imprisonment for a term of up to three years and a fine to the husband who practised instant Triple

Talaq. While the orthodox clergies and politicians who control the minority vote bank condemned the law, the Muslim women shouted with joy saying 'Shukriya Modi ji'.

Further, strict legal provisions were made in the laws of rape through the criminal law amendment Act in 2018 and more than 1023 fast tracks courts were established for the speedy trial of cases related to women. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act was amended to give an abortion period of 24 weeks and maternity leave was increased to 26 weeks. The recently concluded Parliament session has passed



the historic Nari Shakthi Vandan Act 2023 which shall provide for 33 percent reservation for women in parliament and state legislative assemblies. It is expected that this legislation will lead to an increase in women's participation in assemblies thereby leading to gender empowerment. Prior to this in the year 2016, the Modi Government made 33 percent reservation for women in constable forces of central paramilitary forces. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhitha introduced by Home Minister Amit Shah ensures that stringent punishments are given for all those crimes against women. Once this bill is passed, there will be strict legal provisions that ensure that the dignity of women is protected at all costs and punishments shall be ensured to create a sentiment for stoppage of crimes against women and children. Thus unlike the previous governments, there has been consistent legislative support to empower women.

### **Empowering through Entrepreneurship**

McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) estimates that India could boost its GDP by USD 0.7 trillion by bringing 68 million more women into India's workforce by 2025. The World Bank reports that India could increase GDP growth by 1.5 percentage points by including 50% of the women in the workforce. However according to NITI Aayog Women's economic contribution in India accounts for 17% of the GDP, which is less than half the global average. India has 63 million micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), of which around 20% are women-owned, employing 22 to 27 million people. Estimates suggest that by accelerating women's entrepreneurship, India could create more than 30 million

women-owned enterprises, potentially creating 150 to 170 million jobs. In order to formalize the female labour force the most important need is shelter and access to credit. To address the gaps in the erstwhile rural housing schemes and in view of the Government's commitment to providing "Housing for All" by 2022, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 20, 2016, with the objective of constructing 2.95 crore houses. As of February 2023, over 2.16 crore houses have been constructed out of the 2.85 crore sanctioned houses. Amongst this over 69% of houses are either solely or jointly owned by women.

Also, there are about 1.2 crore self-help groups in India, of which 88 percent are entirely women's self-help groups. Over 9 crore women are involved in these self-help groups. These self-help groups were given continuous support by the government. The time for giving collateral-free loans to women's self-help groups was increased from Rs ten lakh to twenty lakhs. In 2018-19 the participation of women in MGNREGA was roughly 54.6 percent (Ministry of Rural Development). This has risen to 56.3 percent in the year 2022-23. More than 38.4 crore loans, amounting to Rs 21.5 lakh crores have been sanctioned since the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana scheme. About 68 percent of these loans have been sanctioned to women entrepreneurs. The Ministry of Women and Child Development implements 'Mission Shakti' an integrated women empowerment program, as an umbrella scheme for safety, security, and empowerment of women



**McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) estimates that India could boost its GDP by USD 0.7 trillion by bringing 68 million more women into India's workforce by 2025.**

**The World Bank reports that India could increase GDP growth by 1.5 percentage points by including 50% of the women in the workforce.**

for implementation during the 15th Finance Commission period. Women's entrepreneurship can contribute to the economic well-being of the family and society.

### **Namosmrithi**

Today about 15% of the unicorn start-ups of India contain a women founder and the combined value of these women-led start-ups is over 40 billion dollars. Nearly 80 percent of people who avail loans under the Stand Up India scheme are also women. During the recently concluded G20 summit, India's initiatives for women's empowerment found global accolades. Since 2015, 204 women have been awarded Padma Awards for their respective fields. For the year 2022 alone, 34 Padma Awardees were women. This is apart from the Nari Sakthi Awards constituted by the government for recognition of the role of women in society.

The All India Survey on Higher Education Report (2020)<sup>3</sup> indicates an increase in women's enrollment in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) as a field of study. While women comprise about half of

the world's population, they contribute only 37 % to the global GDP<sup>1</sup>. According to UNESCO, of the 760 million adults worldwide, who still lack basic literacy, a staggering two-thirds are women. With only 22.1 percent participation, the global political gender gap is really high. The passage of the women's reservation bill will significantly reduce this political gender gap at all levels in India. From grassroots to Parliament, there will be very high women's participation. Laws and policies that promote gender equality and address gender discrimination are fundamental to enabling change. This is where our legislative support has given enormous thrust to women's empowerment. As of 2022, more than one in every four women globally (27.1 percent), or 1.07 billion women, lacks access to safely managed drinking water services, down from over a third in 2000 (39.2 percent). Among these, an estimated 205 million drink water from unimproved sources or surface water. Our Jal Jeevan Mission is a world-class example of how the health outcome of women can be empowered through the usage of functional household tapping connections. Thus over the last nine and half years every single policy of the Narendra Modi-led government has been focused on women's empowerment. When it comes to ushering in the full potential of women as 'Shakthiswaroopini' our government has set an example for the world to follow. Thus it can be equivocally concluded that 'Namosmrithi' shall redefine women's empowerment for generations to come.

***(Adarsh Kuniyillam is a Parliamentary and Policy Analyst. Views expressed are his own)***

## Discussion on “How Modinomics worked towards Economic empowerment of the Underprivileged sections of Society” on 13 October 2023



## Joint Event Organised by SPMRF and BHU on Success of India's G20 Presidency on 25 September 2023



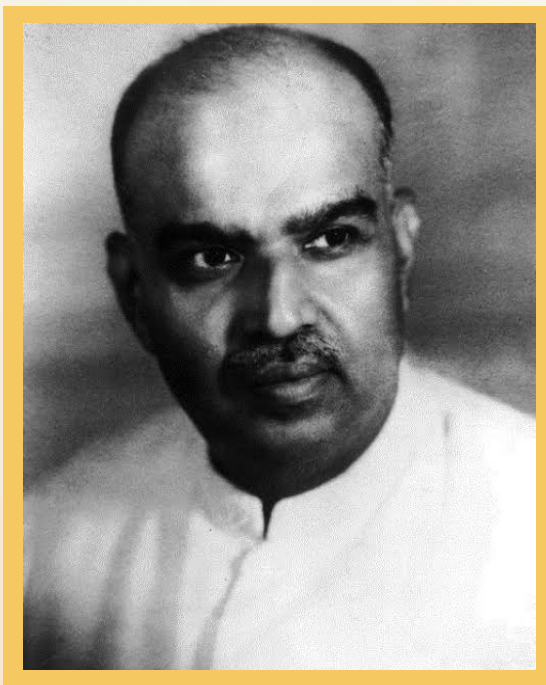


## Discussion on “India’s G20 Presidency: Pathbreaking Success & The Road Ahead” on 20 September 2023



## SPMRF and Kalaimagal College organised a programme on “Future of Work” (Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu) on 15 September 2023





“Freedom consists not only in the absence of restraint but also in the presence of opportunity. Liberty is not a single and simple conception. It has four elements – national, political, personal and economic. The man who is fully free is one who lives in a country which is independent; in a state which is democratic; in a society where laws are equal and restrictions at a minimum; in an economic system in which national interests are protected and the citizen has the scope of secure livelihood, an assured comfort and full opportunity to rise by merit.

**-Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee**  
Patna University Convocation  
27th November 1937

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