

## Women Empowerment in India: Rationale

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### Abstract

Women's empowerment has become a significant content of discussion in development and economics. Economic empowerment enables women to control and benefit from their resources, wealth and income. It also supports the ability to manage risk and improve women's health. It is the process of protecting them from all forms of violence. Women's empowerment involves creating a social and political environment in which women can breathe without fear of oppression, exploitation, fear, discrimination, and in addition, female empowerment relates to women's ability to make strategic life choices that were previously inaccessible. Without gender equality and women's empowerment, many world leaders and scholars have argued that it is impossible to have sustainable development. The G20 under India's Presidency prioritises the transition from women's development to women-led development with the aim of creating a world of equality and equity in which every woman lives with dignity and has the ability to grow, transcend, and alter her own and others' lives.

**Keywords:** Human Development, women, education, economy, health, G20

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### I. INTRODUCTION:

**“Yatra Naryastu Pujyante Ramante Tatra Devata” or When Women are Honoured, Divinity Blossoms there.**

Men and women are two fundamental components of our civilization. Swami Vivekananda viewed men and women as two wings of a bird, and he believed that there is no chance for a nation's development unless the status of women is better. Women who contain almost half of the world's population contribute to the economy in a significant manner. An important indicator of human development of a nation is the status of women or how women are treated in the country (Bhat, A and Bhatt, M, 2017). Women work two-thirds of the world's working hours and produce about half of the global food, yet they receive only ten percent of the income of the world and possess less than one percent of the world's property (Morgan, 1996). Gender inequality is a socio-cultural phenomenon which leads to regarding women as the 'weaker' sex. Equality between women and men is both a human right issue and a pre requisite for and indicator of sustainable development of the country (Alvarez and Lopez, 2013). The most crucial factor in socioeconomic progress is the participation of women in decision-making, which must be strengthened.

Women's crucial role in sustainable development has been recognised. Women's empowerment was proposed as a concept during the International Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985, where it was described as the redistribution of social power and control over resources in favour of women. The concept of the Human Development Index (HDI) was first introduced by UNDP in 1990. The HDI was originally developed as a broader measure of a country's socioeconomic progress, but has gained popularity as a measure of average human development outcomes for men and women. Contrary to popular belief that development is gender neutral, statistics show that women around the world, including India, lag behind men in almost all occupations. Hence, the emphasis of human development since 1995 has been to highlight the gender dimension and the persistent inequalities faced by women (UNDP 1995).

The report found that without the empowerment of women, general human development would be impossible. He also stressed that development would be at risk if not pursued. Two of the indicators, the Gender Related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), were established to highlight facts and figures related to women's disadvantage. The GDI measures performance on the same dimensions and variables as the HDI, but also takes into account the inequality in performance between women and men (Anand and Sen, 1995). The greater the gender inequality in human development, the lower the

country's GDI relative to her HDI. The GDI is the HDI adjusted down for gender inequality. GEM, on the other hand, indicates whether women can actively participate in economic and political life. Theoretically, the index can range from zero to infinity, with unit values reflecting absolute equality in performance for men and women respectively. A value greater than 1 means that females perform better than males.

**Objectives of the study:**

- 1.To give a picture of the historical profile of Indian women.
- 2.To identify the the need for women's empowerment.
- 3.To analyze the various dimensions involved in women empowerment.
4. To know the Women's Rights, Legal Protection of Women in Indian Constitution.
5. To be aware of government initiatives and programmes aimed at empowering women.
- 6.To recommend suggestions for making women empowerment more effective.

**Research methodology:**

This survey is a qualitative survey. Researchers collected data from various secondary Sources such as books, magazines, magazines, various government agencies, and websites.

**Meaning of Women Empowerment**

As the literal meaning says, empowerment is the process of enabling or authorising an individual to think, act, perform, and take charge of his or her personal or professional life independently. In other words, providing the freedom to behave normally. While this remark is powerful in its own right, it does not give credit to the fact or lack thereof. It is a transition process in which individuals and groups with little or no authority gain the ability and strength to make significant decisions.

Women empowerment means improving women's social and economic status. To ensure that women have equal rights in all spheres and that women have access to employment, education and economic advancement. Their main goal is to empower women in society by giving them real rights. Women's empowerment is also defined as a change in women's living conditions, meaning increasing their ability to live a full human life. It reflects both external traits (especially health, mobility, education and awareness, status within the family, participation in decision-making processes, and level of material security) and internal traits (especially self-esteem and self-confidence).

According to Sayulu et.al (2005) "Women empowerment is any process that provides greater autonomy to women through the sharing of relevant information and provision of control over factors affecting their performance". Women's empowerment is the process of giving women more authority and control over their own life. Empowering women and enhancing their political, social, economic, and health conditions is crucial in and of itself. Furthermore, it is crucial for achieving sustainable development. Women's empowerment, if explained beyond the two self-explanatory phrases, refers to the total liberation of women from the socioeconomic chains of dependence and privations. To equalise the value of both genders in our society, women's empowerment must advance quickly. Every woman must be informed of her own rights in order to truly achieve empowerment.

**Need and Purpose Of Women Empowerment**

Women empowerment is an ongoing and dynamic process that enables women to participate in decision-making in all financial, political and social processes in the public sphere, changing the structures and conditions that hold them back. Most importantly, every girl has the right to choose her own path and fate, and it is our collective responsibility to defend her rights and promote her well-being. Without the empowerment of women, we cannot end gender inequality. Women may get access to better-paying occupations by empowering them to engage fully in the economy, which can help raise them, their families and communities out of poverty. Empowered, educated girls have healthier, better educated children and higher wages – helping to break the cycle of poverty. Women may be empowered by giving them greater control over their life, allowing them to make decisions about their own health, well-being, and future, which can lead to enhanced self-esteem and confidence, as well as better mental and physical health. When women are empowered to engage in the political process, they may have a larger voice in choices that impact their lives and communities, resulting in more inclusive and representative decision-making as well as policies and programmes that better serve the needs of women and girls. Greater involvement of women in political decision making may also be positively related to larger investments in policies related to education, health care, and social welfare services (Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras, 2014)

As per the study, if women's level of participation in the labor market was the same as men's it would add up to \$28 trillion to annual global GDP in 2025 (MGI, 2015). The topic on women's unpaid work is exclusively significant in the Indian context because women's labor force participation rate is very low and has

seen a declining trend over the last decade probably because majority of them are moving into the domain of 'domestic duties' (Fletcher et al.,2017). In a country like India, merely 22 percent of women are engaged in workforce, and out of them, 70 percent are associated with the farm activities that are informal in nature with little or no economic remuneration or social recognition and almost zero access to social protection (Mehrotra et al.,2014).Unpaid care work comprises home tasks such as cooking, cleaning, water and fuel collection, child care, and elder care, which are frequently performed by women. Every day, it is estimated that 16 billion hours are spent on unpaid care labour. The exploitation and oppression of women can only be mitigated through the empowerment of women. They will also have the opportunity to work.With 50% of the population now being women, women empowerment is essential to sustaining the country's economic development.

The power of women's education on national economic growth is undeniable: In nations where at least 10% of females have completed secondary school, an increase of one percentage point in the share of adult women who have completed secondary school may enhance per capita income growth by 0.3 percentage point (Dollar and Gati ,2000). Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once famously said that 'If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate a family. It is an appealing proposition: invest in women and girls, and the advantages will benefit not only them but everyone around them. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true.Women empowerment is essential for women mindsets and values to improve decent homes, great societies, and ultimately decent nations. The world recognizes that the rise of a nation is unthinkable without the empowerment of women.It is a necessity for achievement of the 15 Sustainable Development Goals particularly Goal 5, to achieve gender equality, and Goal 8, to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all; also Goal 1 on ending poverty, Goal 2 on food security, Goal 3 on ensuring health and Goal 10 on reducing inequalities.

### **Dimensions of women empowerment**

Women empowerment is a multidimensional concept that encompasses different aspects such as access to education, freedom to make vital decisions, labor market access, wages, and political participation, among others. Women's empowerment entails providing women with the power to enhance their access to basic human rights, increase their social, economic, and political equity, as well as improve their nutrition, health, and education. The overall concept of women's empowerment has various dimensions, including economic participation, opportunity, political empowerment, educational achievement, and health and well-being.

#### **1.Economic involvement**

It refers to the quantitative analysis of women in the work force.. It is concerned not just with the actual number of women in the labour force, but also with equal pay for equal work. Economic empowerment promotes women's access to financial services, jobs, real estate, other productive assets, skill development opportunities, and market knowledge.It is critical to reduce the disproportionate levels of poverty among women, as well as to increase household income and country economic development.

#### **2.Economic Opportunities**

It is focused with the quality of women's economic participation, rather than their simple existence as employees. Despite women obtain occupations with relative ease, their employment is concentrated in low-wage or unskilled jobs with little possibility for advancement. This is due to unfavourable and obstructive attitudes and legal/social institutions. Women are economically punished for childbearing and childcare obligations by aggressively deterring males from sharing family responsibilities. As a result, women are forced to choose between a successful profession and a family. Yet, with the right assistance, she may fulfil her goals 'both at home and in her job.'

In developing nations such as India, however, more than 90% of women labour in the informal sector and in rural regions. These women participate in economic activities like as handicrafts, sewing or rolling cigarettes, or weaving baskets and textiles, and operate as vendors in cities with no contracts or benefits. These are the ladies who require and deserve poverty alleviation programmes the most.

#### **3. Political empowerment:**

It refers to women's fair participation in decisionmaking structures, both formal and informal, as well as their voice in policy development influencing their society. Without significant input from women, worldwide, national, regional, and local priorities cannot be set. Women's life experiences provide them a different perspective on the requirements of their communities.

Establishing mechanisms for women's equal representation and participation in politics and public life at all levels in each community and society, giving women the tools to express their needs and concerns, and ensuring that women participate fully and equally in all decision-making processes.

#### **4. Education empowerment**

Education is the most important condition for empowering women in all aspects of society. Women who get equivalent quality and content education will always have access to well-paying formal sector employment, will be able to progress within them, and will be able to participate in important sector decision making.

One of the most effective ways to equip women with the information, abilities, and confidence they need to fully engage in the development process is via education. Women's empowerment, prosperity, progress, and welfare all heavily depend on education. The general growth of India is greatly impacted by the education of women. The independence and empowerment of women may be greatly aided through education. Because it gives women the ability to respond to difficulties, challenge their established roles, and transform their lives, education is regarded as a significant step towards female empowerment.

#### **5. Health and Well-being:**

This dimension pertains to women's access to adequate nourishment, healthcare, and reproductive facilities, as well as concerns of fundamental safety and person integrity. According to the World Health Organization, 585000 women die each year as a result of pregnancy and childbirth-related factors. Women's vulnerability to violence is likely the most visible element of a person's degraded physical, security and integrity. The exact degree of violence against women is difficult to assess since most incidents of domestic abuse and sexual assault go unreported. This is due to the complexities of social and cultural difficulties, as well as stigma and fear of revelation. Another crucial aspect is the safety and health of women. Providing for women's health and safety is the first step in empowering them. Women's health issues are crucial to the welfare of a nation and have a significant role in determining how empowered women are in that nation.

According to a substantial amount of local literature, an overload of work, along with poor nutrition and early marriage, causes long-term health difficulties for women in India. The risk of additional diseases, including mental disorders, is elevated as a result of poor diet and deteriorating general health. Women in the unorganised sector are more vulnerable to occupational and nutritional health issues.

#### **Women Empowerment in India**

In India, the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution and finds its place in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Obligations and Policy Principles. The Constitution not only recognizes women's equality, but also empowers states to take affirmative action on their behalf. Historically, the status of Indian women has been influenced by the past. There is evidence that women were given the most prestigious positions in society during Vedic times (Seth, 2001). The cultural tradition of India begins with the Vedas. It is generally believed to date to the Vedic period from 2000 BC. BC extended to 500 BC. According to the Vedas, man (aatmanah) is only half or completed (ardha) as long as (yaavat) he does not get (Vindate) a wife (jaayaa). Women have a greater position than males, according to Vedic beliefs and ancient Aryan writings. Vedic women had financial freedom. They had the right to an education, never married, and could devote their lives to the pursuit of knowledge and self-realization. Married women performed all work and sacrifices equally with their husbands. They were trained in different areas of knowledge such as astrology, geography, veterinary medicine and even martial arts. There were cases when women participated in wars and battles. They were highly regarded inside and outside the home. Gradually, due to some sociopolitical changes, especially in the Middle Ages, the illustrious status of women declined. The Middle Ages (the period from 500 AD to her 1500 AD) was very disappointing for Indian women, as their status continued to deteriorate during this period. Medieval India is said to be the "dark ages" rather than the age of women. Child marriage, widow burning or sati, purda and polygamy further aggravated the status of women. It has been pointed out that the condition of women in medieval India was very poor compared to ancient times. The movement for equal rights for women in India began to gain momentum during the colonial era. Prominent social reformers and national leaders such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Annie Besant, Sorojini Naidu, and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar selflessly sought to make women aware of their status, sati prata, child marriage and child abuse. It succeeded in eliminating various social diseases such as marriage. polygamy. They also encouraged remarriage of widows and the education of women. Over time, Indian society has changed from traditional to modern. As a result, women became more free and conscious of different ways of life. Equipped with the ability to completely break down the traditional barriers imposed by society, they are now challenging patriarchy, albeit to a limited extent. Since independence, the Indian government has made various efforts to empower women. During various planning periods, the promotion of women was prioritized. Since the Fifth Five Year Plan, there has been a marked shift from a welfare-based approach to women's empowerment to a development approach. The National Women's Commission was established by her 1990 Act of Parliament to protect the rights of women.

**Table 1. India's position in global Gender Gap**

Year	Global Index	Economic Participation and opportunity	Educational attainment	Health and survival	Political Empowerment
2022	135(0.629)	143(0.350)	107(0.951)	146(0.937)	48(0.267)
2020	112(0.668)	149(0.354)	112(0.952)	150(0.944)	18(0.411)
2018	108(0.665)	142(0.385)	114(0.953)	147(0.940)	19(0.382)
2016	87(0.683)	136(0.408)	113(0.950)	142(0.942)	9(0.433)
2014	114(0.6455)	134(0.4096)	126(0.8503)	141(0.9366)	15(0.3855)
2012	105(0.6442)	123(0.4588)	121(0.8525)	134(0.9312)	17(0.3343)
2010	112(0.6155)	128(0.4025)	120(0.8369)	132(0.8912)	23(0.2913)
2006	98(0.601)	110(0.397)	102(0.819)	103(0.952)	20(0.227)

Sources: world Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap,2006,2010,2012,2014,2016,2018,2020,2022

The Global Gender Gap Index benchmarks the current state and evolution of gender parity across the four main components (subindexes) : Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. From its introduction in 2006, it has been the longest-running index, tracking progress towards reducing these disparities over time. In 2022, the Global Gender Gap Index assesses 146 nations, offering a foundation for solid cross-country comparison. Of these, a subset of 102 nations have been represented in every publication of the index since 2006, thus offering a large constant sample for time series analysis. The World Gender Gap Index assigns a number from 0 to 100, and the value can be read as the distance travelled towards parity (i.e., the percentage of the gender gap that has been closed). The cross-country comparisons are intended to help identify the best successful approaches for narrowing gender gaps.

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2022 puts India 135th out of 146 nations (WEF). India comes last among its neighbours, after Bangladesh (71), Nepal (96), Sri Lanka (110), the Maldives (117), and Bhutan (126). In South Asia, only Iran (143), Pakistan (145), and Afghanistan (146) outperform India. India has marginally improved its standing from the previous year, when it was rated 140 out of 156. This year, India had a score of 0.629, an increase of 0.003 from last year's score of 0.625.

While it's an improvement, a significant drop from 105th out of 135 in 2012. In 2006, when the Gender Gap Report was first published, India was his 98<sup>th</sup> among 115 countries. When it come to the sub-indices, India is the world's lowest performance in the "health and survival" sub-index, where it is placed 146 and performed the worst, worldwide. India ranks 143rd in terms of economic involvement and opportunity, 107th in terms of educational attainment, and 48th in terms of political empowerment.

Development that does not include gender justice is fruitless because it marginalizes a significant portion of the population. India's population is about 1.4 billion. Half of this population is women. So if women also contribute to the labor force, India's growth rate will double. In recent years, we have observed a sharp decline among proportion of female in the work force. According to a recent survey, 21% of Indian women are employed or looking for work. This means that 79% of Indian women (15+) are not looking for a job. Employed women are often paid less than men in the same position. Also, the quality of work and working conditions can be very poor, increasing the risks for them.

Gender equality can also be seen as an important component of economic development. Including women and gender minorities in decision-making and policy-making is critical as it provides a more inclusive foundation for growth. To achieve this goal, the government has introduced various programs, established various policies, established various institutions, and enacted various legal regulations. The Government of India has made it a top priority to close the gender gap in India, reduce gender inequality, improve women's health, enhance women's socio-economic status and promote their participation in various sectors.

## Constitutional Articles, Government Plans and Programmes for Women Empowerment

### Constitutional Articles for Women Empowerment

The Constitution Commission headed by Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar gave due attention to the empowerment of women while drafting the Constitution of India. Below are some articles specifically dedicated to women:

#### 1. Economic Empowerment

- i) **Equal opportunities for all** people related to job or recruitment to public domain (**Article 16**)
- ii. Government directs its policy so that **male and female have an equal right to a decent living**. [**Article 39(a)**]; and the **same salary for the same work** for both men and women [**Article 39 (d)**]
- iii. The state guarantees **fair and humane working conditions and maternity benefits** (**Article 42**)

## **2. Political Empowerment**

- i) The **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act** passed by the Parliament of India in 1992 ensures that **at least one-third** (including seats reserved for women belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) is filled by direct election to be **reserve for women** in each Panchayat and distribute those seats by rotation to the various constituencies of the Panchayat [**section 243D (3)**]
- ii. At least one-third of the total number of Presidents of Panchayats at each level must be reserved for women (**Article 243 D(4)**)
- iii. At least one-third (including seats reserved for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women) of all seats to be filled by direct elections in each municipality are reserved for women, and these seats are distributed by rotation among the various constituencies of the municipality. (**Article 243T**).

## **3) Social Empowerment**

### **i. Equality of women before the law (Article 14)**

- ii. Citizens **should not be discriminated** against because of **sex**, religion, race, caste, etc. (**Article 15**)
- iii. The state issues **special regulations** for women and children [Article 15 (3)].
- iv. Promote justice based on equal opportunities and provide **free legal aid through appropriate legislation** or system or in any other way to ensure access to justice for all regardless of economic inequality or other disabilities [**Article 39(A)**]
- v. Promotes with special care **the educational and economic interests** of the weaker part of the population and protects them against social injustice and all kinds of exploitation (**Article 46**)

### **vi. Abandon practices that violate the human dignity of women [Article 51 (A) (e)]**

## **Government Plans and Programmes for Women Empowerment**

The Government of India has made it a top priority to close the gender gap in India by eliminating disparities between men and women, improving women's health, raising their socioeconomic position, and expanding their involvement in many professions. The following are some notable measures undertaken by the Govt. of India to reduce the gap among genders in all aspects of social, economic, and political sphere:

### **Economic Participation**

- The **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao** initiative aims to reverse the decline in the female child sex ratio. As a result, it will promote women's empowerment in order to enhance the position of women in the country.
- The Ministry of Women and Child Development's **Adolescent Girls (AG) Scheme**, implemented under the umbrella of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), primarily aims to break the intergenerational life-cycle of nutritional and gender disadvantage and to provide a supportive environment for self-development.
- Working Women Hostel scheme** ensures the provision of secure and convenient lodging for working women, as well as day care facilities for their children, in urban, semi-urban, and even rural locations where job opportunities for women exist..
- National Creche Scheme** , revised and subsumed as Palna scheme to provide day-care facilities for children (6 months to 6 years) of working mothers and to improve nutrition and health status of children.
  
- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana** has empowered the women in India as over 20 million women have got ownership rights in the country through the scheme.
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)** aims at vocational training and certification of Indian youth including women for a better livelihood and respect in the society.
  
- Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY)** was launched under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (HUPA), Government of India with an aim to uplift the urban poor folks including women by enhancing sustainable livelihood opportunities through skill development.
  
- Sukanya Samridhi Yojana** is a small deposit scheme of the Government of India meant exclusively for a girl child and is launched as a part of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Campaign. The scheme is meant to meet the education and marriage expenses of a girl child.- Under this scheme girls have been economically empowered by opening their bank accounts.
- Among the various skill development programmes under Coir Vikas Yojana, the Scheme **Mahila Coir Yojana (MCY)** envisages provision for training only to women artisans..
- **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme** combines two programmes: the Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojna and the Rural Employment Generation Project. This initiative aims to provide self-employment

possibilities in the non-farm sector by assisting jobless youth and traditional craftspeople in establishing micro-enterprise firms.

• Under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana loans are provided up to Rs. 10 Lakh through Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) viz; Banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), Micro Financial Institutions (MFIs), other financial intermediaries, in three categories namely, 'Shishu'(covering loans up to ₹50,000), 'Kishore'(covering loans above ₹50,000 and up to ₹5,00,000) and 'Tarun'(covering loans above ₹5,00,000 and up to ₹10,00,000) which signifies the stage of growth or development and funding needs of the borrowers.

### **Education Empowerment**

One of the primary goals of the **Samagra Shiksha scheme** is to reduce gender and social category gaps in school education at all levels. Several interventions have been targeted under Samagra Shiksha to enable higher involvement of females in education, including the opening of schools in the neighbourhood to allow girls better access to education. Female students up to Class VIII received free uniforms and textbooks. The scheme focuses on building toilets for female pupils as well as teacher sensitization programmes to encourage female participation.

• **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) scheme** was launched to establish upper primary level residential schools for girls mostly from the SC, ST, OBC, and minorities in difficult regions.

• **University Grants Commission (UGC) & All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** are implementing various schemes to encourage girl students in the country including in villages and rural areas for enrolment in higher Education i.e. Central Sector Scheme of Scholarship for College and University Students (CSSS), Post Doctoral Fellowship for Women, Swami Vivekananda Single Girl Child Fellowship For Research In Social Sciences, Indira Gandhi Post-Graduate Scholarships for Single Girl Child, Pragati Scholarship Scheme, Saksham Scholarship Scheme, Development of Women's Studies in Indian Universities and Colleges, and AICTE LILAWATI AWARD on Women Empowerment

### **Health and Nutrition**

**Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0** attempt to address the challenges of malnutrition in children, adolescent girls, pregnant women, and breastfeeding moms by creating a convergent eco-system to create and promote behaviours that foster health, wellbeing, and immunity.

**Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojna** scheme intends to provide partial compensation in the form of cash in return for the loss of wage suffered by women during birth and care of a child.

**Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (RMNCH)** covers the health concerns and interventions across the life course involving women before and during pregnancy; newborns, that is, the first 28 days of life; and children to their fifth birthday.

**Ayushman Bharat-Health & Wellness Centers (AB-HWC)** provide the comprehensive primary health care, including health promotion.

**Janani Shishu Suraksha Yojana** is a government scheme that covers the expenses of pregnant women for normal deliveries and caesarean operations. This also covers the care of sick newborn infants.

**Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN)** has been launched with the commitment to provide Assured, dignified, respectful and quality healthcare, at no cost and zero tolerance for denial of services, for every woman and newborn.

**Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan(PMSMA)** was launched to provide fixed-day, free of cost, assured, comprehensive and quality antenatal care universally to all pregnant women on the 9th day of every month universally to all pregnant women in their 2nd / 3rd trimesters of pregnancy.

**LaQshya" (Labour room Quality improvement Initiative)** program envisages to improve quality of care in labour room and maternity operation theatres in public health facilities.

**Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana** empowers women and protects their health by providing LPG cylinder free of cost.

### **Political empowerment**

**Reservation for women in local bodies:**The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments **required that no less than one-third of the total seats in local bodies should be reserved for women.** It represented a historic opportunity to change the face of rural India. The amendment mandates that resources, responsibility and decision making power be devolved from central Government to rural grassroots people through Panchayati Raj Institutions.

## **II. Conclusion and suggestions**

### **Conclusion**

Women empowerment refers to the strengthening of the spiritual, political, social, educational, gendered, or economic strength of women and women's communities. Women's empowerment in India is highly dependent on many different variables including geographic location (urban/rural), educational status, social

status (caste and class), and age. At the national, state, and local (panchayat) levels, policies for women's empowerment exist in many sectors, including health, education, economic opportunity, and political participation.

Women empowerment must be given top attention in any national planning process. G20, 2023 is focusing on reducing barriers to women-led development and creating an enabling atmosphere and ecosystem for women to reach their greatest potential, altering their lives as well as the lives of others.

### **III. Suggestions**

1. The government should prioritise female education in order to promote women's empowerment. Women's education should be made mandatory, and women should be encouraged to become literate, because women cannot exercise their rights unless they are educated. This is precisely why public awareness initiatives are required to convince parents of the significance of educating females.

2. Women from impoverished backgrounds must be made aware of their rights via awareness campaigns. The government should organise several awareness programmes to encourage women's empowerment.

3. Women have fewer access to social safeguards such as pensions, unemployment benefits, maternity leave, and equal pay. Women earn 60% to 75% of what men earn on average, and reducing the gender wage gap is critical to levelling the playing field. To improve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, establish the right to social security in national legislative frameworks, as well as universal access to social protection, backed by national strategies, policies, action plans, and enough resources. Women should be paid a living salary and treated equally with men in order to raise their social standing.

4. There should be proper awareness for laws, that is, law should not be limited to documents alone, but law should be implemented so that every woman is aware of her rights. Substantial measures should be done to put the changed legislation into effect in order to assist the detention, prevention, and punishment of crimes against women.

5. Unpaid care and domestic work contribute significantly to countries' economy yet are not considered actual employment. Including unpaid care labour in statistics, recognising its economic value, rewarding women for their efforts, and taking unpaid care work into account when making policy choices can help to alleviate the pressure on women and girls. Examine the policies that stifle women's productivity; and provide for role and work schedule flexibility.

6. There should be proper awareness for laws, that is, law should not be limited to documents alone, but law should be implemented so that every woman is aware of her rights. Substantial measures should be done to put the changed legislation into effect in order to assist the detention, prevention, and punishment of crimes against women.

7. Every registered political party should be required by law to offer one-third of the total number of party tickets distributed at each election to women. Systematic awareness is required to improve rural women's abilities to assume their new roles as local legislators. Women panchayat members should be taught based on their local experience, and their participation in developing a framework that will allow them to analyse and comprehend their duties and responsibilities in line with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment should be encouraged.

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