

Women Empowerment Through Grassroots Level: A Pathway to Viksit Bharat @2047

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Abstract: India's aspiration for a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India) is a driving force behind national discourse as the country prepares to celebrate its 100th anniversary of independence in 2047. The goal of the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision is to create a nation that is independent, inclusive, sustainable, and egalitarian. In order to establish India as a major world power, this multifaceted strategy seeks to guarantee economic growth, technological advancement, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. One of the main forces behind this country's transformation is the grassroots empowerment of women. Active political participation of women in governance, education, agriculture and entrepreneurship acts as a driving force for comprehensive development. When women are guaranteed their equitable access to quality education, healthcare, entrepreneurship, and political participation is paramount for accelerating inclusive nationwide evolution. This paper examines how grassroots-level empowerment of women through magnified participation in governance, education, agriculture and entrepreneurship, can act as an impetus toward attaining the broader national development goals. Empowerment of women at the local level is not merely a tool for achieving gender equality but a critical pathway for shaping a prosperous, equitable, and resilient India by 2047. The paper calls for a renewed focus on policy frameworks, institutional support, and capacity-building programs that elevate women's roles in navigating the nation's development voyage towards Viksit Bharat. Women make up almost half of the world's population, and their empowerment is crucial for any society that aims to be fair, equitable, and flourished.

Keywords: Women's Empowerment, Viksit Bharat, Gender equality, Grassroots level, Panchayati Raj Institution

1. Introduction

Viksit Bharat 2047 is the current ruling government's blueprint for making India fully a developed nation by 2047. The vision of Viksit Bharat is built around four core principles and these are *Youth, Poor, Women and Farmers*. (Deccan Herald, 2025). The Viksit Bharat Vision 2047 intends to make India a fully developed and prosperous nation by 2047, encouraging inclusive economic participation and targeting to become aiming to position the nation as the world's third-largest economy over the coming five years. (Mohapatra & Pohit, 2024). Embedded in the Amrit Kaal (2022-2047) framework, it imagines India becoming an economy led by innovation and knowledge, with solid public finances and a dynamic financial sector. The vision aspires to achieve a \$30 trillion economy with a per capita income of \$18,000-\$20,000, world-class infrastructure, and minimal government interference while promoting digital governance, green growth, innovation, and self-reliance in defence and space. Emphasizing "*Sabka Saath, Sabka Prayas*", its emphases on empowering youth, fostering global competitiveness, and guaranteeing sustainable and inclusive development for all citizens.

A woman's step in guiding the national progress has been a crucial trait under current ruling Government. Under the current ruling government, the attention has shifted from women advancement to women-led-development. As the Prime Minister declares, "*We cannot achieve success if 50 per cent of our population being women are locked at home.*" A major thrust area of the Modi government has been to nurture women entrepreneurs through financial support, skilling and training." (Government of India, 2017). In many countries, women have historically been disregarded and affected to comprehensive discrimination, whether through cultural

norms, legal constraints or limited access to resources. Breaking down these obstacles is integral to achieving a world where all individuals, regardless of gender have the liberty to reach their complete potential (Deccan Herald, 2025).

2. Review of Literature

Bardhan (2006) critically examines decentralization across eight developing nations, including India and Brazil. The study views decentralization as a pillar of participatory democracy aimed at empowering local communities. Bardhan finds its implementation uneven and context-dependent, shaped by political and economic structures. The work emphasizes that decentralization's outcomes vary with institutional capacity and local governance quality.

Manor (1999) explores decentralization as a political strategy for rural empowerment in developing countries. Drawing on cross-country evidence, Manor traces the 1980s decentralization wave and its interaction with state and local institutions. The book outlines both the benefits-greater autonomy, participation, and responsiveness-and the drawbacks of inefficiency and corruption. It questions whether decentralization truly advances rural development and sustainable democracy.

Sinha (2000) investigates gender inequality in political representation. She argues that real democracy requires equal participation of men and women in policymaking. The book uses patriarchy and gender norms as analytical lenses to explain women's marginalization in politics. It also highlights women overlooked contributions to the freedom movement and the need for gender-inclusive political structures.

Venkatesu (2016) evaluates India's local governance post the 73rd and 74th Amendments. The book reflects on Gandhi and Ambedkar's visions of local democracy and assesses decentralization's impact on governance. It notes improvements through reservations for women and marginalized castes at the grassroots level. However, it identifies challenges in tribal areas under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules, where governance gaps persist.

Thakur (2010) studies the empowerment of rural women in Bihar through PRIs after the 73rd Amendment. Based on fieldwork, it reveals how women's participation improved education, health, and sanitation outcomes. Despite these advances, patriarchal control and limited autonomy continue to constrain their leadership. Thakur advocates for skill development and institutional support to ensure genuine empowerment at the grassroots.

Agnihotri and Singh (2014) assess women's representation and participation in local self-governance. They trace the evolution of PRIs and highlight the transformative potential of the 73rd Amendment's reservation policy. The study exposes barriers like proxy leadership, illiteracy, and patriarchal dominance affecting women's roles. It concludes by emphasizing capacity building and political training for effective female governance.

Damodar (2021) examines gender differences in household decision-making using National Family Health Survey data. The findings show men dominate spending and financial choices, reflecting entrenched gender inequality. However, women in states like Nagaland, Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, and Kerala exhibit higher decision-making autonomy. The study underscores the link between women's economic participation and empowerment levels.

Khanna (2009) investigates the gap between women's constitutional rights and actual political engagement. It identifies psychological, socio-economic, and institutional barriers restricting participation. Gender stereotypes and domestic roles limit women's political visibility and influence. Khanna calls for structural reforms and social awareness to enhance women's political consciousness and leadership.

Tiwari (2008) discusses persistent gender barriers in local governance despite reservation policies. Problems like the dominance of 'Pradhan Pati', administrative bias, and lack of respect hinder women leaders. Yet, the 73rd Amendment has enabled greater participation and local decision-making for women. Tiwari stresses training, networking, and attitudinal change as vital for empowering women in PRIs.

3. Research Methodology

This research paper adopts a qualitative and analytical approach to investigate the upliftment of women at the local level. To conduct this study, information was gathered and primarily relies on secondary sources, including government reports, key policy documents, Research papers, and official statistics on women's participation in governance, education, health, entrepreneurship, and social development programs. The analysis incorporates global frameworks such as the

Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to examine the extent of growth achieved in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment both locally and nationally.

Gender Equality

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015 aimed at advancement of human development results were largely concentrated on gender equality and women's empowerment. Building on its predecessor, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 are strongly committed to promoting gender equality and empowering all women and girls. As Ghosh (2018) demonstrates Gender equality is not only a basic human right, but its attainment has enormous socio-economic and environmental ramifications. Equal access to learning, health, work and decision-making contributes to fairer and more resilient communities. India While India has developed economically in the past 25 years, wide gender disparities across education, health, employment, and political participation persist as a result of differences in access to resources and information as well as divergent security situations between men and women. Developed by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) quantifies these gender disparities across four dimensions-economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment-highlighting the need for integrated growth to result in substantive gender parity (Ghosh, 2018).

Women Empowerment in India: An Overview

Indian women have suffered all kinds of discrimination at social, political, religious and economical front since ages as they are seldom given or allowed to have equal chances and representation in decision making. True sense of democracy is meaningless unless 50 per cent of population-women- take part in political, economic and social affairs. It is as Mandal (2013) posits that the less people are actively involved in making decisions, the less democracy; and the more people are involved in decision making, the more democracy. Hence, the country's growth and democratic stability is not possible unless there is equal engagement of men and women in all areas of progress. Through the 20th century, there were many political empowerment movements among humankind's politically and economically downtrodden masses-ranging from Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela etc. where the concept of equality and justice has been hanging. Empowerment from the out-group perspective entails providing conditions for increasing power available to marginalized competences. Women's empowerment has since become a global concern systematically, attract the attention of scholars and policy-makers. Throughout history, the United Nations has promoted women's empowerment in a series of international instruments such as CEDAW (1979) and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), which progressively replaced "development" with "empowerment". The(y)Woman is called empowered only from the day, term "Empowerment" started getting prominence during 1960s, or only after it got global limelight to be announced by the United Nations as year, when 2001 was declared as the 'International Year for Women's Empowerment' following announcement in regards to its initiation year under the 'Women's Decade', i.e., starting from 1975. The World Bank sees empowerment as "the process of enhancing the capacity

of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes”, it stresses building up both individual and collective assets in growing proportions, along with enhancement of institutional fairness (Mandal, 2013). The UN has made major headway in pushing for gender equality over time-it brokered landmark agreements at the Beijing Declaration (1995) and Platform for Action, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979). In order to achieve this vision of transformation, UN Women supports the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)-the principal intergovernmental body dedicated exclusively to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women; assists Member States with implementing global standards by providing expertise and financial assistance; and brings together United Nations system coordination and accountability for gender equality at a global level.

Evaluation of government policies and programmes for empowering women

The different policies and programmes initiated by the Government of India has definitely played a role in women development at different fronts, like education, health, economic self-reliance and governance related matters. Programs such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2015) are meant to target underlying issues of sex inequality with various strategies. These cover the following areas: ending sex-selection practices, and promoting survival and education of the girl child and their overall well-being so as to enable them reach their full potential and meaningfully contribute to national advancement (Keerthana & Akshayanivasini, 2024). Mudra Yojana offers loans without any security for women's entrepreneurship and the scheme has been made mandatory in places w low female work participation ratio at 27.2 per cent taking a second trip to promote financial independence (Roy, 2025). Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana PMUY, 2016 Entitled women beneficiaries of poor families who have LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) including those not covered already in the successive lists. The main objectives are protection of health from risks of cooking based on fossil fuel such as kerosene or inefficient traditional, chulhas (Roy, 2025). MSK component of PMMSY has aimed at empowering the rural women to get empowered in skill development and digital literacy, health & nutrition household wellness centres acting as one stop window for availing benefit of the government services by involving other initiative for empowerment of women like BBBP (Ministry of Women and Child Development Government of India, 2017). Other major programs focused on economic and social empowerment are the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), an employment guarantee programme which provides at least 100 days of wage employment to every household, reserves 33% of jobs for women, and mandates that equal pay is provided thereby increasing women's participation in the economy as well as decision-making first at home then community level (Prakash, 2021). The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a grassroots trade union established in 1972, and the Swa-Shakti Project are among those that have worked to make women economically independent through self-help groups (SHGs) (Roy, 2025). The Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women is aimed at training women, especially those in rural areas, in vocational trades

and entrepreneurship so that they are able to gain livelihood opportunities with a view to promoting their employability, economic independence and social empowerment (Roy 2025). In sum, such efforts indicate a multi-pronged approach to women's empowerment that accounts for the social, the economic and the legal imperatives to create an enabling regime for gender equality in India.

Women Reservation on PRIs

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 that was enforced on 24 April, 1993 is a landmark in the path of democracy at grass root level. It provided for women's representation in local bodies as well. Article 40 of the Indian Constitution was clear on the need for a system, and it empowered the state to have village Panchayats, but after over forty years-Sarkaria commission in 1988 provided this institutional arrangement with constitutional authority. It stipulates a three-tier system of administering Panchayats at Village level, Intermediate level and District level, 33% of seats in all Panchayats are reserved for women and also 1/3rd of the total number of offices reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This is geared towards accelerating the involvement of women in the decision-making and redressing their past under representation in governance (Prabhakaran, 2019).

Global and country wide influence of women empowerment

The issue of women's empowerment is very much intertwined with Sustainable Development Goal 5, which focuses on gender equality and also indirectly encourages several others SDGs as well, such as no poverty (SDG 1), good health and well-being (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4) and decent work and economic growth. Empowering women as actors leads to sturdier communities and enhances global peace and stability (United Nations, n.d.). Sustainable development cannot be realized without securing gender equality through fair distribution of resources. Promotion of women has a significant role in economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability, promoting solidarity across and beyond generations. Worldwide, women still hold the primary role in feeding practices, child care and home management. They are also the impetus of subsistence agriculture, animal husbandry and water and fuel collection in many developing countries (Pathania, 2017). At the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, women were identified as a “major group,” and their engagement was seen as a critical factor in sustainable development. Since, the UN had been working for mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all its programmes. Women's empowerment and full participation, equality between women and men are essential for the achievement of peace and that we must increase our efforts to address it (Pathania, 2017).

Hurdles in the path of women empowerment

Women empowerment in India undergoes a wide range of social, economic, and legal limitations. Age-old social customs and family structures prolong women's subordinate status, such as the persistent preference for sons, reflected in declining sex ratios and biased treatment in education, nutrition, and opportunities (Nayak & Mahanta, 2012). Women often imbibe traditional gender roles, reinforcing their marginalization, while poverty excessively affects girls,

restrictive access to education and resources. Financial independence and control over resources, however, can improve women's self-reliance both at home and in public life. A substantial barrier is the lack of awareness and enforcement of legal and constitutional rights; many women are ignorant of their rights or lack the courage to assert them. Inheritance and marital rights are particularly constrained by patriarchal beliefs, discouraging women from claiming land or property. While laws such as the Child Marriage Restraint Act (1930), Suppression of Immoral Trafficking of Women Act (1987), and Indecent Exposure of Women Act exist, their effectiveness has been uneven. The Child Marriage Restraint Act has largely succeeded, but laws against trafficking and indecent exposure remain poorly enforced, with frequent violations and minimal prosecution. Thus, even though a legal policy structure aimed at promoting empowerment, structural inequalities, social norms, and ineffective enforcement continue to obstruct women's advancement (Nayak & Mahanta, 2012).

Exploring innovative solutions for women's empowerment

However, despite the series of government schemes and the various five-year plans launched for enhancing women's social economic status in India, kind of growth or rise in women empowerment has been uneven and not substantial mainly at a very lowest followed by local level. In order to address these gaps, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has initiated several reforms that would enable women's effective leadership and participation in local governance by reinvigorating Panchayats. Under Article 243D, out of 21 states and 2 Union Territories which have ensured reservation of 50% for women at panchayat level, a path-breaking move toward inclusive governance (Press Information Bureau, 2024). Training, workshops and advisories for Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) as well as Mahila Sabhas-empowerment of local level leadership and political self-confidence. Also, digital governance tools as eGramSwaraj and Audit Online accompanied by integration with the PFMS/GeM is bringing greater transparency and accountability in rural administration leading to over 2.42 lakh audit reports and transactions of ₹1.74 lakh crores (Press Information Bureau, 2024). However, the success of these platforms in the long run depends on an active participation and digital literacy among women representatives, as a catalyst to which is not only levelling up microfinance initiatives & SHGs but strengthening their financial status also requires increased access to affordable credit & subsidizes for entrepreneurship through various schemes, setting up vocational training centres in emerging sectors like renewable energy, healthcare and digital technology could cause a quantum jump in employment opportunities and income security of women. Dedicating more funds towards digital health systems, the training and hiring of female health workers and midwives with the emphasis on promoting awareness of maternal health, menstrual hygiene and family planning is essential for improving rural women's lives. Female engagement in climate-smart agriculture and sustainable livelihood initiatives can also further validate gender with environmental sustainability. Moreover, to end the entrenched patriarchal values through continued social awareness campaigns and education, is also key in creating a

gender-equal society and enabling environment for women (Press Information Bureau, 2024).

4. Conclusion

Women empowerment is the crux in India's vision for Viksit Bharat 2047. In order to accomplish this vision by 2047, one must think more broadly: combine digital inclusion with social justice and economic engagement on the ground-floor of democracy. An independent woman will add to family health, and social solidarity, economic strength & democratic participation of the country. Sustainability of such progress will depend on aligning the policy designs, capacity development and community engagement in order for every woman to emerge as proactive architect of the developmental journey of India.

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