



Bharat celebrates women power in her famed growth story

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Insight

Bharat Celebrates Women Power
in her Famed Growth Story

Nari Shakti shaping Bharat

It's time to celebrate Nari Shakti (women power) and remarkable strides made by them even as we celebrate International Women's Day. From ancient times to present day, Bharatiya women have been an integral force in shaping Bharat's rich culture and society. Their contributions span every walk of life and their indomitable spirit continues to inspire and propel Bharat's progress.

From farming, sports, technology to space odysseys, there's hardly a field that women in Bharat have not influenced. In today's age of Artificial intelligence and robotics, Bharat's women are set to become "drone didi's" (A sister that can operate drones) in rural Bharat. The steady ascent of women in owning assets and their growing influence in the socio-economic realms of India is a development that rightfully commands global admiration.

Historical Figures and their Legacy

Historically, India has not discriminated between men and women; instead, the Bhartiya way of life has always revered the purity of the human soul. In this spirit, both men and women have undertaken life's duties, guided by their unique divine energies. Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, with her unwavering courage became a symbol of resistance against occupying British in the 1857 war of Independence.

Bhagini Nivedita, an Irish teacher, author and social activist was one of the closest disciples of Swami Vivekananda, the icon of Hindus in entire world. Born as Margaret Elizabeth Noble turned a monk with the name 'Nivedita' worked tirelessly for uplift of girls in education and got associated with Ramakrishna Mission.

In the fight for Bharat's independence, several brave women made laid their lives for securing Bharat's freedom from British occupation and plunder. Sarojini Naidu, a poet and political activist, to name one, played a crucial role while exhibiting the prowess of 'Nari Shakti.'

Political Participation

In independent Bharat, women play a pivotal role in rural as well as urban politics. Journey of Bhartiya women from gram panchayat, district administration councils, States legislatures to Parliament and the honourable President's office, political participation of women is shaping the present and future of the country. Shushma Swaraj, became the first woman to serve as Minister of External Affairs from 2014 to 2019. At present, there are 109 women in Parliament (Lok Sabha-

77¹ & Rajya Sabha-32²) of the Indian Parliament House who contribute to shape Bharat.

Sporting Spirit

Bharat boasts a growing legacy of female athletes who have rewritten the narrative of women in sports. P.V. Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medalist in badminton, became the first Indian woman to win a silver medal at the Rio Olympics in 2016. Mary Kom, a six-time World Boxing Champion, holds the record for most medals in the AIBA Women's World Boxing Championships. In athletics, Hima Das, the "Dhing Express," became the first Indian athlete to win a gold medal in a track event at the World U20 Championships.

These are just a few names among many. Sania Mirza became the first Indian woman to win a Grand Slam title in doubles tennis while Sakshi Malik secured India's first Olympic medal in wrestling at the 2016 Rio Games. Dipa Karmakar, known for her Produnova vault, rose to fame with her historic performance at the 2016 Olympics. Mirabai Chanu clinched a gold medal in weightlifting at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, showcasing the strength and dedication of Indian women athletes. These women, along with countless others, have inspired a generation of young girls to break barriers and pursue their dreams in the world of sports.

Women at Forefront of Social Change

The social landscape of India has been profoundly impacted by tireless efforts of countless women. Savitribai Phule, in the 19th century, became prominent educationist and inspired modern day learning by opening a school for girls and advocating for their education.

Women in Science, Technology, and Innovation

Bharitya women are making a significant mark in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). Kalpana Chawla, the first Indian-born woman in space, tragically lost her life in the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster, but her legacy continues to inspire generations. Tessy Thomas, the "Missile Woman of India," led the development of Agni missile systems, playing a pivotal role in strengthening India's defense capabilities. In the field of medicine, Dr. V. Shanta, known as the "Mother of Cancer Care in India,"

¹ <https://sansad.in/lr/members>

² <https://sansad.in/rs/members>

established the Cancer Institute (WIA) in Chennai, providing crucial healthcare services to countless patients. Women scientists, engineers, and doctors are making significant contributions to various fields, pushing boundaries and driving innovation.

Financial Foresight (Women in Modern Banking)

The landscape of financial inclusion in Bharat is beholding a significant shift, with women playing a progressively powerful role. This rise is evident not only in their own economic empowerment through self-help groups and micro-finance initiatives, but also in their growing influence on family financial decisions. As Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman became the first full time Finance Minister of Bharat and presented the four budgets. Moreover, the nation boasts a remarkable group of female leaders who have broken barriers and risen to prominent positions in the global financial arena. Individuals like Arundhati Bhattacharya, Naina Lal Kidwai, Ranjana Kumar, Zarin Daruwala, and Madhabi Puri Buch³ are not only inspiring figures, but also influential in driving innovation and shaping the future of the Indian financial industry through leading-edge fintech ventures. These trailblazers are paving the way for a more inclusive and dynamic financial landscape in the years to come.

Women in the Arts and Culture

Bharat's vibrant cultural landscape is enriched by the immense talent and creativity of its women artists, musicians, writers, and filmmakers. Melody Queen Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar known as "Nightingale of India", and "Voice of the Millennium", was an Indian playback singer, is known for her voice not only in India but globally. Rukmini Devi Arundale, a pioneer of Indian classical dance, revived the Bharatanatyam tradition and established the Kalakshetra institute in Chennai. These women, along with countless others, have used their artistic expressions to shape the culture and heritage of Bharat, challenge societal norms which were against the women of the society, and inspire generations.

The Backbone of Rural India

In rural India, women play a critical role in agriculture, animal husbandry, and the management of natural resources. Women constitute nearly half (48%) of the

³ <https://www.nelito.com/blog/10-powerful-indian-women-who-changed-the-financial-industry-in-2023.html>

agricultural workforce according to the 2011 census. They plant, weed, harvest crops, and manage livestock, contributing significantly to food production and rural livelihoods. Amidst growing urban migration by men, the agriculture of India is largely dependent on the women.

The foundation of Kutumba in India

Women are foundations of Indian society as they are built of courage, motherhood, and care which is why Indian culture has a rich heritage and family values even in these modern times. Just like a mother nurture her child, women in India take the responsibility of the well-being of entire family further strengthening the foundations of the family values and rich culture of India.

Breaking Ground in Business and Entrepreneurship

Bhartiya women are increasingly making their mark in the world of business and entrepreneurship. Sheela Gautam,⁴ a multi-faceted personality, an avid entrepreneur, also renowned social worker & philanthropist has become an inspiration for aspiring women entrepreneurs. Indra Nooyi, the former CEO of PepsiCo, broke through barriers and rose to the top of a multinational corporation. Women-led businesses in India contribute around 18% to the national GDP, demonstrating their growing economic influence. Scientists like Ritu Karidhal, Nandini Harinath & Vanita Muthayya are setting examples for the next generation of young women and students. Even in the military forces we have Lt. General Kavita Sahai who is the pillar of courage and stand as a testament to their limitless potential. Self-help groups and cooperative movements have empowered rural women, providing them with financial independence, market access, and entrepreneurial skills.

The war against time and unfounded beliefs

The women of Bharat have played a pivotal role in shaping and cultivating the country as a Viksit Bharat where the Majority population of the country embraces all religions. The rich Cultural heritage of Bharat has foundational principles of dharma (duty), ahimsa (non-violence), and tolerance promote a cohesive and equitable society. These values encourage responsible citizenship and peaceful coexistence, critical for a thriving nation. Hindu thought offers diverse perspectives on spirituality, ethics, and the pursuit of knowledge and women are

⁴ <https://theorg.com/org/sheela-foam-ltd/org-chart/sheela-gautam>

the symbol of Shakti, the divine feminine energy that guides the people to hold to the ancient roots. This intellectual depth fosters self-reflection, critical thinking, and innovation, essential qualities for India's future leaders and citizens. The emphasis on self-reliance, hard work, and ethical conduct in many Hindu scriptures resonates with the spirit of entrepreneurship, potentially fueling economic growth and social progress.

Challenges and the Road Ahead

While celebrating the achievements of Indian women, we must acknowledge the ongoing challenges they face. The female workforce participation rate in India is currently around 24%, significantly lower than the global average. Gender pays gap, lack of access to quality education and healthcare, and societal discrimination continue to be major hurdles.

Concluding this article with the words of Sri Aurobindo once provided a definition for shakti as "the fundamental female principle in Nature that underlies all action." This shakti is a strength that pushes and functions within everything, the universal Energy, the Conscious-Power. This original cosmic energy, which embodies the dynamic forces believed to flow throughout the entire universe, is essentially the divine feminine creative power, commonly known as 'The Great Divine Mother' in Hindu religio-spiritual traditions.

In Indian culture, women have traditionally been regarded as the embodiment of shakti, the force and energy. However, this does not imply that shakti is exclusive to women. It is the creative power, the energy that exists within all of us, but its nature is feminine because only females possess the potential to conceive new life within themselves. The exhibition emphasizes that all forms of creation – be it material, intellectual, aesthetic, or spiritual – are made possible solely due to shakti, the cosmic energy.

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