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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLE: SHIFTING FROM WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT  
TO WOMEN-LED DEVELOPMENT**

**Pooja Kumari**

1. Research Scholar, Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi.

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**Abstract**

India's approach to gender equality has developed significantly, focusing on "women's development" has given attention to the paradigm of "leading development of women". This change highlights the important role of women as leaders and active participants in running social and economic changes rather than being beneficiaries of development programs only. The development of women emphasized the leadership of women in social, economic and political fields, which aligns with the widespread goals of inclusive development and the sustainable development goals (SDG). Policies like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Stand-up India, and women entrepreneurship and government support are important for this change. Despite these progressions, challenges such as patriarchal norms, economic inequality, gender-based violence, and under-purposeness in leadership, hurdle in progress. Addressing these obstacles is important for unlocking the ability of women led by women. By empowering women as decision-makers, India can promote innovation, strengthen social harmony and achieve sustainable development. This approach is necessary to create justified, flexible societies and achieve long-term national progress

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**Introduction:-**

India's development discourse has long recognised the importance of women's empowerment, putting it at the centre of social and economic progress. Historically, India focused on "women's development", which equips women with education, healthcare, skills and resources to improve its position in society. However, in recent years, there has been a significant change towards "women-led development". This new paradigm emphasizes not only to empower women but also to empower them as major drivers of social progress. Women-led development accepts that women are not only the beneficiaries of development programs, but also active participants and decision-makers to shape the future of the nation (India of Economic Survey, 2023). In the development of women from women's development, inclusion has a deep implication for the social, economic and political scenario of India. This reflects a belief that sustainable progress requires the leadership of women at all levels of society - with homes, communities, workplaces and governance structures. This article examines the major dimensions of this change, the policies and programs supporting it, women face challenges, and the transformative ability to guide women in India.

**Corresponding Author:-**Pooja Kumari  
**Address:-**Research Scholar, Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi.

**Historical Context: From Women Development to Women-Led Development:-**

Women's development has been the focal point of India's policy agenda since independence. The focus was mainly on addressing horrific inequalities in education, healthcare, employment and political participation among men and women. The objective of government programs is to increase the literacy rate among women, improve maternal and child health results, and promote women's participation in the workforce (Desai and Vanman, 2019). Important progress has been made in these areas, in which more girls enroll in schools, better access to healthcare, and some areas (ILO, 2018) have the participation of the growing female labor force. However, traditional women development models often considered women as passive recipients of development intervention rather than agents of change. What could be done for women, it was emphasized what women could do for society (Kabir, 2005). The voices of women were often sidelined in decision-making processes, and their ability to lead the initiative of development was reduced. The change towards the development of women departs from this point of view. It lies in the belief that women leadership is necessary to create a more equitable and durable society. Women-led development focus on making women capable of taking charge of their own life and destiny, located as leaders in all areas of life-economic, social and political. This paradigm change recognizes women's agency, leadership ability, and ability to run positive changes, not only for themselves but also for their families, communities and nation for a whole (women of the United Nations, 2020).

**Policy Framework Supporting Women-Led Development:-**

Many policies and programs have been introduced in recent years to support women leadership development in India. These initiatives aim to create a competent environment for women's leadership and entrepreneurship, to increase their access to resources and opportunities and ensure their participation in decision-making processes.

1. **Beti Bachao Beti Padho (BBBP):** Launched in 2015, this major program aims to improve the child sex ratio, promote the girl child's survival, promote safety and education, and empower young girls to realize their full ability. By focusing on education and awareness, BBBP lays the foundation for women's leadership by ensuring that girls have the necessary knowledge and skills required to lead in future (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2015).
2. **Stand-up India Scheme:** Stand-up India Scheme, introduced in 2016, provides loans to women's entrepreneurs from marginalized communities to promote entrepreneurship and economic leadership. The program recognizes the importance of economic empowerment of women as a major driver of development and wants to support women in becoming job creators instead of job seekers (Finance Ministry, 2016).
3. **Prime Minister Mudra Yojana (PMMY):** This scheme launched in 2015 provides financial assistance to micro-entrepreneurs, many of which are led by women. By providing easy access to credits, PMMY encourages women to start and develop their businesses, leading to their leadership role in the economy (Economic Survey India, 2023).
4. **Mahailla e-Taur:** This digital marketing platform established in 2016 offers women entrepreneurs an online marketplace to show and sell their products. Taking advantage of technology, Mahailla e-Taur empowers women to lead the digital economy and increase their visibility and access to the national and global markets (World Bank, 2020).
5. **Reservation of women in politics:** 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments reserved one-third seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) for women. This has greatly increased the representation of women in local rule and has provided them a platform to lead the ground level (Chattopadhyay and Duffie, 2004).
6. **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM):** NRLM promotes women's self-help groups (SHG) and promotes women's economic empowerment by providing them access to training, resources and financial services. Through collective action, women in SHG are not only improving their economic status, but also claiming leadership in their communities (Ministry of Rural Development, 2017).

**Challenges to Women-Led Development:-**

While the policy landscape supporting women leading the development of women is strong, many challenges obstruct full involvement in the leadership roles of women.

- **Patriarchal criteria:** deeply stuck patriarchal views limit women's dynamics, autonomy and decision-making power. Women often face resistance when they step into leadership roles, whether in the house, workplace, or political field. To overcome these social and cultural obstacles, continuous efforts are required at many levels including education, advocacy and awareness campaigns (Kabir, 2005).

- **Economic inequality:** Women in India continue to face important economic inequalities, including wage intervals, limited access to credit and locking, and concentration in informal areas. These inequalities obstruct their ability to claim leadership in the economy and participate completely in development processes. To address these inequalities requires targeted intervention to promote women's financial inclusion, reach civilized work and promote upstream dynamics opportunities (World Economic Forum, 2022).
- **Gender-based violence:** Violence against women remains an important issue in India, which has implications of women's ability to lead and participate in society. The fear of violence often curbs the freedom of women's movement and limits their engagement in public life (Women of the United Nations, 2020). Efforts to reduce gender-based violence, improve access to justice and create a safe environment for women are necessary to promote women-leading development. Leadership: Despite progress, women
- **Underpritancein leadership:** Despite progress, women stay low in leadership positions in certain areas. In politics, women hold only one small percentage of seats in the state assemblies and the National Parliament (Census of India, 2021). In the corporate world, women are less represented in senior leadership roles and in the board of directors. Structural obstacles including working and in promotion limits, limit access to women's leadership opportunities (Chattopadhyay and Duff, 2004).
- **Balance care work and professional roles:** Women in India often tolerate the dual burden of unpaid care work and professional responsibilities. This limits their ability to be fully engaged in leadership roles, as they often expect priority to career careers. Addressing the uneven distribution of care work, through policies such as paid family holidays, cheap childcare and flexible work arrangements, it is important to enable women to lead to lead (ILO, 2018). Vinnating capacity of women led by women Changes towards women -led development have immense transformational ability to India. Empowering women as leaders, the country can unlock new opportunities for innovation, economic development and social progress. Women-leading development can create more inclusive, equitable and flexible society, which are with women, communities and future generations (IMF, 2019) beyond women.

#### **The Transformative Potential of Women-Led Development:-**

Changes towards women -led development have immense transformational ability to India. Empowering women as leaders, the country can unlock new opportunities for innovation, economic development and social progress. Women -leading development has the ability to create more inclusive, equitable and flexible society, which are with women, communities and future generations (IMF, 2019) beyond women.

- **Economic development:** Women-led development can lead to economic development by increasing participation in women's workforce, entrepreneurship and leadership roles. Studies show that the involvement of the labour force and closing gender intervals in leadership can significantly promote GDP and Productivity (World Economic Forum, 2022). Women leaders bring diverse approaches and innovative outlooks for problem-solving, which can increase professional performance and economic competition.
- **Social harmony:** Women-led development can strengthen social harmony by promoting inclusive governance and decision-making. Women leaders prefer social welfare, education, healthcare and community development, which can improve overall welfare and reduce inequalities (United Nations Women, 2020). When women are empowered to lead, they often advocate policies and programs that benefit marginalized groups, including women and children, more equitable and only lead to societies.
- **Sustainable Development:** Women-led development aligns with the goals of sustainable development by promoting more inclusive, participation and accountable institutions. Women leaders are often at the forefront of resolving environmental challenges, promoting sustainable livelihood and building flexible communities (Aggarwal, 2010). Their leadership is important to achieving SDG, especially related to gender equality, poverty decrease and climate action.

#### **Conclusion:-**

In India, infection in women's development marks a significant change in the country's approach to achieving gender equality and inclusive development. By recognizing women as leaders and agents of change, India lays the foundation for a more equitable and prosperous future. While challenges remain, policies and programs supporting women lead development are helping women to create a competent environment to lead in all areas of life. As India continues on this route, there is a lot of possibility of transformational change, which benefits women and the entire

nation. Women-led development is not just a goal, but an essential strategy for the creation of a more, durable and inclusive society.

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