

AS' SAARTHI IAS

ROLE OF WOMEN AND WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

Women in Ancient India

- **Early Vedic Age:** Women enjoyed **complete freedom** in all aspects of life. They could own property and remarry if widowed. Practices like **polyandry** (marrying multiple men) and **sati** (the practice of widows self-immolating on their husbands' funeral pyres) were **unknown** during this time.
 - **Gargi Vachaknavi:** A famous female philosopher who challenged the sage **Yajnavalkya**.
 - During the **Rig Vedic period**, women had **equal status** with men, studying **Vedic texts** (e.g., **Ghoshā**, who composed hymns in the Rig Veda).
- **Later Vedic Age:** The status of women began to **decline**. Cultural emphasis on purity, pollution, and inter-caste restrictions led to women losing rights such as inheritance and participation in public life.
 - **Example:** Daughters were considered a **curse**, and **child marriage** became common, though women still engaged in public life to some extent.
- **Buddha's Age:** **Buddha** advocated for **equal status for women**, urging his followers to respect women of all ages. However, women did not enjoy the same rights in religious practice as men and could not study Vedic texts.
- **Gupta Age:** The **status of women deteriorated** further during the **Gupta Empire**. **Widow remarriage** became almost impossible, and women were largely excluded from public and intellectual life, though there were exceptions.
 - **Example:** Despite societal decline, some women like **Lilavati** (a mathematician) and **Khana** (an astronomer) gained education.

Women in Medieval India

- **Delhi Sultanate:** Social evils such as **female infanticide**, **lack of education**, and **child marriage** worsened during the era of Muslim rulers.
- **Bhakti and Sufi Movements:** These spiritual movements led to improvements in women's status. Prominent female figures like **Meera Bai** (a 16th-century Bhakti saint devoted to Krishna) voiced strong opposition to the mistreatment of women.
 - **Example:** **Guru Nanak** and **Shankaracharya** advocated against the suppression of women.
- **Mughal India:** Muslim women were not provided with education, but they had certain legal rights. They could **divorce** their husbands, **remarry**, and claim a share in family property.
 - **Example:** **Polygamy** was prevalent among Muslim men, and they were allowed up to four wives or slaves. There was **no practice of sati** among Muslim women.

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- **Purdah:** The practice of **purdah** (veiling and seclusion of women), similar to what modern Muslim women follow, became more widespread during this period.
- **Self-immolation:** In addition to **Sati**, a practice called **Jauhar** emerged. In this custom, wives and daughters of defeated warriors would **self-immolate** to avoid capture and dishonor at the hands of enemies.

Women During British Rule

- **War of 1857:** The first major instance of women rebelling against British rule was **Rani Laxmi Bai** during the **Indian Rebellion of 1857**.
- **Prohibition of Infanticide:** **Infanticide** was made illegal under the Bengal regulations of 1795 and 1804. In 1870, the registration of all births was made compulsory to prevent female infanticide.
- **Abolishing Sati:** The practice of **Sati** (burning widows alive) was abolished in **1829** through the efforts of **Raja Ram Mohan Roy**. The British declared it illegal and punishable as **culpable homicide**.
- **Widow Remarriage:** Thanks to the efforts of **Brahmo Samaj** and **Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar**, the **Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856** was passed, which legally sanctioned widow remarriage. Vidyasagar cited Vedic texts to prove that Hinduism permitted widow remarriage.
- **Women's Education:** Formal education for women began during British rule.
 - **Example: Bethune College**, the oldest women's college in India, was established as a girls' school in **1849** and later became a college in **1879**.
- **Freedom Struggle:** Women played a vital role in India's struggle for independence, participating in **Gandhian movements** and revolutionary efforts.
 - Leaders like **Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit**, **Muthulakshmi Reddy**, and **Aruna Asaf Ali** were prominent participants in non-violent movements.
 - **Pritilata Waddedar** and **Kalpna Datta** took part in the **Chittagong Armoury Raid**, showcasing their bravery and leadership.

Role of Women in India Today

1. Political Role

- **Representation:** Women's representation in the legislature is critical to creating gender-neutral policies and improving outcomes for women.
 - **Data:** India ranks low in terms of female representation in parliament, with only **9.1%** of seats held by women (UN Women report).
- **Gender Equality:** Women play a vital role in promoting **gender equality**, but India lags behind many other countries.

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- **Example:** In the **Gender Gap Index 2022**, India ranked **135th** out of 156 countries.

- **Women Empowerment:** Empowerment can only happen if women hold **political office**. The reservation of seats in local governments (Panchayats and Nagar Palikas) allows women to make meaningful contributions.

- **Data:** Through **1/3 reservation** in Panchayati Raj institutions, women's representation has increased to **42.3%**.

- **Breaking Stereotypes:** Gender stereotypes and entrenched societal norms continue to reinforce discrimination. Women have been challenging these through persistence and advocacy.

2. Economic Role

- **Growth:** Women's economic participation is essential for India's growth. If more women gain independence and contribute to the economy, the nation's overall growth will accelerate.

- **Data:** Women currently contribute approximately **17-18%** of India's total GDP.

- **Human Capital:** Gender inequality comes at a significant **economic cost**, globally and in India. The gap in lifetime earnings between men and women results in **economic losses** for nations, which could otherwise benefit from women's full participation.

- **Data:** Globally, countries lose **\$160 trillion** in wealth due to these gender-based disparities.

- **Agriculture:** Women are critical to India's **agricultural workforce** and play a key role in food production.

- **Data:** According to the **2011 Census**, India had **263 million** agricultural workers, with women making up **37%** (around **98 million** women).

- **Better Financial Outcomes:** Women, despite having less access to capital, tend to demonstrate better **financial performance**. Studies have shown that women, especially as entrepreneurs, provide "**low risk and high return**" outcomes.

- **Progress:** Women promote **social and economic progress**, contributing to global economic growth. They are essential to preventing future economic recessions.

- **Labor Participation:** Increased **female labor participation** could boost India's economy.

- **Data:**

1. According to the **World Bank**, India ranks **120th out of 131 countries** in **Female Labor Force Participation Rates (FLFPR)**.

2. The **IMF** estimates that India's GDP could expand by **27%** if more women participated in the workforce.

- **Entrepreneurship:** Women are increasingly taking up **entrepreneurial roles**.

- **Data:** By **2025**, approximately **10 million entrepreneurs** are expected to receive funding, and **50%** of them will be women.

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3. Social Role of Women

- **Better Child Outcomes:** Empowered women contribute to better **educational and nutritional outcomes** for children, especially when women play an active role in their upbringing.
- **Female Foeticide:** With increasing women's empowerment, instances of **female infanticide** and **child marriage** have reduced, indicating greater social freedom for women.
- **Better Understanding:** Women tend to have a better understanding of **social welfare** issues and can contribute significantly to shaping policies, especially in the **social sector**.
- **Gender Parity:** Empowering women helps close gaps in **education and health outcomes** for women, promoting greater parity between genders.
- **Awareness:** Women are crucial in raising awareness on issues like **domestic violence, reproductive health, and childcare**.
- **Reduce Conflict:** Female leadership in local governance (e.g., **women in Panchayats**) leads to less **caste and sectarian violence** than in male-led Panchayats.

Current Data Related to Women

1. Gender Gap:

- **Global Gap:** Women earn **23% less** than men globally (UN).
- **India's Gender Gap:** Women in India earn **32% less** than men (UN).

2. Wage Differentials:

- Women make up **60%** of the lowest wage category.
- Women account for only **15%** of top wage earners.

3. Ranking (Women Participation Rate):

- India ranks **171st out of 180 countries** in women's participation in the workforce (according to the **2021 International Labour Organization (ILO)** report).

4. Sector-wise Breakdown of Women's Employment:

- **62.3%** of women are employed in **agriculture**.
- **20%** are employed in the **secondary sector**.
- **18%** are employed in **services**.

5. Women Labor Force Participation Rate:

- **India: 23.5%** (before the COVID-19 pandemic).
- **World Average: 40%**.

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- According to ILO estimates, women's participation in the workforce has dropped to **23.5%** in India.
- 6. **Pay:** According to the **IMF**, in India, **82% of males** and **92% of females** earn less than Rs. 10,000 per month.
- 7. **Increase in Crime Rates:** There was a **15% increase** in crimes against women between **2020 and 2021**, according to the **NCRB** (National Crime Records Bureau).
- 8. **Rape:**
 - **19.34% increase** in reported rapes from **2020 to 2021** (NCRB data).
 - **Rape** is the **4th most common crime** against women in India. In **2021**, **31,677 cases of rape** were reported, with an average of **86 rapes per day**. Additionally, **49 cases of other crimes** against women were lodged **every hour**.
- 9. **Missing Women: 46 million women** are missing due to **sex selection** (both **pre- and post-natal**).
- 10. **Credit Access: 79% of women-run enterprises** are self-financed.
- 11. **Sectors: 97.5% of women enterprises** are in the **micro sector**.

Politics

1. **Voting:** Around **50%** of voters are women.
2. **Representation: 14%** of seats in the **Lok Sabha** are held by women (compared to **4.4%** in **1952**).
3. **World Average:** The global average for women's representation in parliaments is **23%**.
4. **Ranking:** India ranks **153rd** out of **190 countries** in terms of the percentage of women in the **lower house of Parliament** (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019).

Economic Discrimination

1. **Unpaid Work:** Women perform **66%** of the **unpaid work** in India.
2. **Women Composition at Board Level:** Only **11%** of board members are women.
3. **Financial Access:** Only **33%** of women have access to **financial resources**.

Constitutional Provisions for Women

1. Fundamental Rights

- **Article 14:** Guarantees **equality before the law** for women.
- **Article 15:** Prohibits **discrimination** based on **religion, race, caste, sex**, or place of birth.
 - Allows for **special provisions** for women and children.

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- **Article 16:** Ensures **equal opportunity** for all citizens, including women, in matters of employment or appointments under the state.

2. Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)

- **Article 39:** The State is responsible for ensuring that men and women have **equal access to means of livelihood**. Ensures **equal pay for equal work** for both men and women.
- **Article 39A:** Ensures **equal opportunity** for securing justice and provides **free legal aid** through suitable legislation or schemes to eliminate economic or other disabilities.
- **Article 42:** Requires the State to ensure **just and humane conditions of work** and provide **maternity relief**.
- **Article 46:** Promotes the **educational and economic interests** of the weaker sections of society, especially women, and protects them from social injustice and exploitation.
- **Article 47:** The State is tasked with raising the **level of nutrition** and improving the **standard of living** of its people.

3. Fundamental Duties

- **Article 51A (e):** Encourages citizens to promote **harmony and brotherhood** while renouncing practices that are **derogatory to women**.

4. Political Rights

- **Article 326:** Voting rights are guaranteed for all adult citizens, ensuring **universal adult franchise** and prohibiting gender discrimination in voting.
- **Article 243 D:** One-third of seats in **Panchayats** (local government) and **municipal bodies** are reserved for women, including the positions of chairpersons.

Legal Safeguards to Secure Women's Rights

- **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976:** Grants women the right to **equal pay** for equal work.
- **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013:** Protects women from **sexual harassment** in the workplace.
- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** Safeguards women from **domestic violence**.
- **Anonymity for Sexual Assault Victims:** Ensures the **right to anonymity** for victims of sexual assault.
- **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987:** Provides women the **right to free legal aid**.
- **Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973:** Grants women the **right not to be arrested at night**.
- **Right to Register Complaints:** Women can file complaints online or via postal mail, ensuring accessibility for reporting crimes.
- **Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986:** Prevents the **indecent representation** of women in media and advertisements.

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Special Initiatives and Schemes

- **National Commission for Women (NCW):** Established in **January 1992**, this statutory body monitors all issues related to women's constitutional and legal rights. It reviews legislation and suggests amendments when necessary.
- **Reservation for Women in Local Self-Government:** The **73rd Constitutional Amendment** (1992) reserves **one-third of seats** in local bodies (both rural and urban) for women, empowering them in local governance.
- **National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000):** Aimed at ensuring the **survival, protection, and development** of the girl child, with the ultimate goal of improving the future for girls in India.

Government Initiatives for Women's Empowerment

1. **National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001:** This policy, prepared by the **Department of Women & Child Development**, aims to promote the **advancement, development, and empowerment** of women.
2. **ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme):** Focuses on improving the **nutritional and health status** of children (aged 0–6 years) and enhancing the **capabilities of mothers** to care for them through proper nutrition and health education.
3. **Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG):** Provides **health and nutrition assistance** for adolescent girls (including dropouts) and offers skills training for **self-development**.
4. **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme:** Aims to prevent **gender-biased sex-selective elimination** and promote **education and empowerment** of the girl child.
5. **Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS):** Focuses on creating a **protective environment** for children in difficult circumstances by coordinating various child protection schemes under one framework.
6. **UJJAWALA:** A comprehensive scheme for the **prevention of trafficking** and for the **rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration** of victims of **trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation**.
7. **Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP):** Provides skills and training to women aged 16 and above to help them become self-employed or entrepreneurs. Grants are provided to **NGOs** under this scheme.
8. **Janani Suraksha Yojana:** Focuses on reducing maternal mortality by providing **prenatal and postnatal care**.
9. **SWADHAR Greh:** A scheme for **women in difficult circumstances** that provides them with shelter, food, and health care.
10. **One-Stop Centre Scheme:** Offers **integrated support** to women affected by violence, providing assistance in both private and public spaces.

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Issues and Challenges

1. Economic Challenges

- **Poor Access to Capital:** Women own only **2% of total assets** in India, limiting their financial independence.
- **Poor Access to Skills:** Coupled with poor learning outcomes, women face **higher unemployment rates** than men. Among engineers, women's unemployment is **5 times** that of men.
- **Discrimination in Job Opportunities:** **Male candidates** are often considered more capable than their female counterparts, leading to **gender discrimination** in hiring.
- **Unequal Pay:** Women are paid **34% less** than men for the same work.
- **Technology Bias:** Many machines and tools are designed with **male operators** in mind, making them less accessible for women.
- **Stigmatization of Jobs:** Some jobs, labeled as "**pink-collared**", are stereotyped as **women-only jobs**, such as air hostess positions.
- **Discrimination in Leadership:** Women are underrepresented in leadership roles; only **11% of company board members** in India are women.

2. Social Challenges

- **Education:** Literacy rates among women are **59%**, compared to **80%** for men. Gender segregation in education is also common, with **STEM subjects** underrepresented by women.
- **Health and Nutrition:** India's **maternal mortality rate** is **130** per 100,000 live births. There is a preference for sons and significant issues like "**missing women**" due to female foeticide.
- **Religious and Cultural Barriers:** Examples include the **Sabarimala case**, where women were historically barred from entering the temple, and **female genital mutilation** practiced in some communities like the **Bohra Muslim** sect.

Challenges Facing Women

1. Feminization of Poverty This refers to the growing **inequality** in living standards between men and women, leading to **widening poverty** for women, especially noticeable towards the end of the 20th century.

2. Safety and Security

- **Domestic Violence:** **30%** of women in India have experienced domestic violence since the age of 15. Around **4%** of ever-pregnant women have faced **spousal violence** during pregnancy.
- **Harassment at Workplaces:** Sexual harassment at work is prevalent but **underreported**. For example, in **2019, 505 cases** related to the "**insult to the modesty of women**" were reported, though the real numbers are likely higher.

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- **Rape Cases:** In 2021, an average of **86 rape cases per day** were reported across India (NCRB data).
- **Eve Teasing:** **Eve teasing** (harassment in public spaces) is on the rise, affecting women's sense of security and hampering their economic opportunities.
- **Poor Mobility of Women:** Insecurity and fear of violence limit women's **mobility**, further restricting their economic and educational opportunities.
- **Rising Crimes Against Women:** Crimes against women increased by **15%** from **2020 to 2021**, according to **NCRB** data.

3. Psychological Challenges

- **Patriarchal Society:** This leads to low self-worth for women and restricts their ability to see themselves as equals in society.
- **Stereotypes:** Phrases like **"Be a man"** or **"Why are you crying like a woman?"** reinforce harmful gender stereotypes that portray women as weak.

4. Political Challenges

- **Poor Representation:** Women hold **14%** of the seats in the **Lok Sabha** (lower house of Parliament), showing an underrepresentation in politics.
- **Poor Demand Redressal:** **33% reservation for women** in the Lok Sabha, as outlined in the Women's Reservation Bill, is still pending approval.

Way Forward

1. Economic Solutions

- **Formalization of Women's Jobs:** Women's employment needs to shift from the informal sector to the **formal sector**, where jobs are regulated and secure.
- **Child Care:** Access to **high-quality child care** can help women become economically independent while positively impacting children's education.
- **Investing in Women-Based Sectors:** Investments in sectors like **MSMEs** (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises), **non-profits**, and **education** will create more jobs for women.
- **Narrowing the Wage Gap:** The **wage gap** between men and women must be narrowed for more equitable outcomes.
- **Education-Employment Trade-Off:** Providing **accessible education** to women can prevent them from dropping out to marry or take low-paying jobs.

2. Social and Security Solutions

- **Gross Enrollment Ratio:** Increasing enrollment rates at all educational levels for women will lead to better overall outcomes for them.
- **Crimes:** Improved **policing and monitoring** will help curb crimes against women.

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- **Awareness:** There must be **decentralized awareness campaigns** to educate women at the grassroots level about their rights and opportunities.
- **Healthcare:** **Maternity benefits** and focused **health measures** will improve the quality of life for women, benefiting both themselves and their families.

3. Governance Solutions for Women

- **Distress Centers:** Establish centers for addressing complaints related to **discrimination** and **domestic abuse**.
- **POSH Act:** Full implementation of the **Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act** in all establishments employing women to ensure a safe working environment.
- **Maternity Benefits:** The **Maternity Benefit Act** must be enforced at all levels to protect women during and after pregnancy.
- **Political Participation:** **Voter education** should be provided to all households to increase women's political involvement.
- **Women Legislators:** Reserved seats and quotas in every party can help ensure **political representation** for women in government bodies.
- **Pati-Panchayat Nexus:** Remove women from patriarchal control even as they hold **political offices**, ensuring their independence in governance.

4. Psychological Challenges

- **Sexual Assault:** Women are highly vulnerable to **sexual assault**. Prevention and post-trauma rehabilitation are critical to helping them recover and rebuild their lives.
- **Mental Health:** Many women, particularly in vulnerable sections, face **mental health issues**. Intensive care and counseling are needed to support their psychological well-being.

Role of Women's Organizations

Women's Organizations in British India

- **The Ladies Society in Calcutta (1882):** Started by **Swarnakumari Devi** (sister of Rabindranath Tagore) to **educate and support widows** in learning livelihood skills. She also edited India's first women's journal, **Bharati**.
- **Brahmo Samaj:** Promoted the **education of women** at home and started a women's magazine, **Bambodhini Patrika**. It also encouraged **inter-caste marriages**, defying orthodox Hindu practices.
- **Arya Samaj:** **Mahila Mandals** organized by Arya Samaj played an important role in promoting **women's upliftment**, particularly in education and social reforms.
- **Prarthana Samaj:** Prominent leaders like **M.G. Ranade**, **R.G. Bhandarkar**, and **N.G. Chandravarkar** were part of this reform movement that focused on improving the lives of women and lower castes. They worked for **caste system reforms**, **abolition of child marriage**, and the **remarriage of widows**.

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- **National Social Conference:** Founded by **M.G. Ranade** and **Raghunath Rao** in **1887**, it advocated for **inter-caste marriages**, opposed **polygamy**, and launched a **Pledge Movement** to stop child marriage.
- **Satyashodhak Samaj:** Established by **Jyotiba Phule**, this movement spread education among women, especially from marginalized communities.
- **Bharat Stree Mahamandal (1910):** Founded by **Sarala Devi Chaudhurani** (daughter of Swarnakumari Devi) to promote **female education** and liberate women from the **purdah system**. The organization aimed to empower women to engage in public life.
- **Women's India Association (1917):** Founded by **Annie Besant**, **Margaret Cousins**, and **Jeena Raja Dasa** to address women's **socio-economic and political** issues.
- **National Council of Women in India (1925):** Started by women from **Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai** to advocate for **women's rights**.

Women's Organizations in Independent India

- **National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW):** Established in **1954** by leaders from the **Mahila Atma Raksha Samiti**, a women's movement in Bengal. It was the first mass organization for women and worked for **women's empowerment, emancipation, and building a gender-just society**.
- **Self-Employment Women's Association (SEWA):** Founded in **1972**, SEWA was India's first **women's trade union**. It organized women workers to achieve **full employment**, ensuring **work security, income security, food security, and social security**.
- **All India Democratic Women Association (AIDWA):** Founded in **1981**, this pan-India organization is dedicated to **democracy, equality, and the emancipation of women**.
- **Indian Association of Women's Studies (IAWS):** Founded in **1981**, IAWS involves **women academics and activists**. It engages in **research and teaching** on feminist issues and publishes books and journals to raise awareness on women's rights.
- **Jagori:** A **Delhi-based NGO** that offers a **creative space** for women to express themselves and spread feminist ideology. It aims to reach a wider constituency of women.
- **Breakthrough Trust:** Focuses on making **violence and discrimination** against women and girls socially **unacceptable**. Breakthrough uses **multimedia campaigns** to raise awareness and take action, promoting **dignity, justice, and equality** for women.
- **Guria Swayam Sevi Sansthan:** Works to **free women and children from sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, and trafficking**. It also helps restore the rights of these individuals, particularly in **Varanasi and Mau** in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Annapurna Mahila Mandal (AMM):** Focuses on the **welfare of women and girls**, conducting activities such as **education on health, nutrition, and childcare**.

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Other Movements

- **Chipko Movement:** A landmark environmental movement where women in the **Himalayan region** hugged trees to prevent contractors from felling them. It was a protest against deforestation and highlighted how **forest loss** causes economic hardships for women.
- **Anti-Dowry Movement:** Sustained campaigns were launched through **protests, demonstrations**, and street plays to combat **dowry deaths**. The government passed the **Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act of 1984** following the original **Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961**.
- **Anti-Liquor Movements:** In **1963**, **Vimla and Sunderlal Bahuguna** started a movement in the **Kumaon region** of Uttarakhand to prevent contracts allowing the sale of liquor in a village. They succeeded in getting the government to **cancel the contract**.
- **Anti-Price Rise Movement:** In **1973**, the **United Women's Anti-Price Rise Front** was formed to mobilize women against **inflation** and **price rises** following drought and famine conditions in Maharashtra. It demanded the government fix **minimum prices** for essential commodities and ensure fair distribution.
- **Anti Rape:** Several women's organisations protested to review the rape laws as they were not effective in punishing the culprits. These protests led to the passage of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act in 1983.

Role of Women's Organizations

- **Liberator:** Women's organizations act as **emancipators** for women, helping them overcome **suppression** and **oppression** from conservative and orthodox sections of society.
- **Awareness:** These organizations educate women about their **rights** and legal **remedies** in cases of violations, along with promoting awareness of **social welfare measures** available to them.
- **Protect Rights:** Women **NGOs** serve as guardians of **women's rights** and freedom, ensuring the protection of their legal and social standing in society.
- **Lobbying:** These organizations ensure that **government policies** and programs are **relevant, need-oriented**, and **gender-equitable** by actively lobbying for women's issues.
- **Mobilizer of Mass:** Women's organizations engage at the **grassroots level**, highlighting and articulating the serious problems women face to **governments and media**.
- **Agent of Change:** They are at the **forefront of social transformation**, pushing for liberal thoughts, **modern values**, and **progressive ideas** related to women's empowerment.
- **Uplift the Marginalized:** Special attention is given to **marginalized women**, such as those from **Dalit and Tribal communities**, to ensure their upliftment.
- **Equality:** Women's organizations work towards ensuring that women enjoy **equal status in society**, addressing **gender disparities**.

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- **Financial Empowerment:** They promote **self-employment** and educate women on how to seek **jobs** and engage in **economic activities**.

Issues and Challenges

- **Reactionary:** Many women's organizations focus more on **curative** measures rather than **preventive** ones. There is a lack of proactive lobbying to prevent issues before they arise.
- **Unorganised:** A significant number of women's organizations depend on **unorganized groups** to spread their mandate, with little **coordination** at national or state levels, leading to a lack of uniform focus.
- **Finances:** With **FCRA amendments** (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act), it has become even more difficult for women's organizations to access **foreign funding**, limiting their resources.
- **Corruption:** Corruption and **mismanagement** are becoming prevalent issues in women's NGOs, where some misuse the institution for **money laundering** or **legalizing illegal wealth**.
- **Rural-Urban Divide:** Women's organizations primarily focus on **urban and peripheral areas**, leaving large **rural areas** — where **60%** of India's population lives — underrepresented in their efforts.
- **No Consistency:** Some women's NGOs lack **consistent functioning**. Once a specific issue is resolved, the organization becomes dormant, failing to follow up on further needs or ensuring lasting solutions.
- **Curative:** A heavy emphasis on **curative measures** (responding after issues arise) means that there is less focus on **education and empowerment**, which are essential for **preventive** strategies.
- **Patriarchy:** Women's organizations find it difficult to **penetrate conservative areas** where women are either **afraid** or **unaware** of their rights, limiting their outreach.

Conclusion

Indian society and its economy can only progress if women are **empowered** and allowed to thrive. Women's organizations play a vital role in this, but they must overcome the issues they face, such as **financial difficulties**, **corruption**, **rural-urban divides**, and **patriarchal barriers**. Moving forward, both **political** and **social organizations** must work together to help women achieve equality and economic advancement at the highest levels.