

## AIR Spotlight - Empowering Women, Empowering the Nation

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation. In this article, the topic of discussion is women's empowerment and its role in empowering the nation.

### Participants:

Moderator – Lucy Gabriel Chattopadhyay

### Guests:

1. Niharika Vohra, Vice-Chancellor at Delhi Skill and Entrepreneurship University
2. Simran Sodhi, Journalist
3. Rita Ganguly, an exponent of Indian Classical Dance
4. Vaishali Bharadwaj, Professor and HOD of Gastroenterology, PGIMER
5. Rashmi Singh, IAS Officer
6. Shovana Narayan, Indian Kathak dancer & IAAS officer

**Context:** International Women's Day 2022 was celebrated across the globe with a prime focus on gender equality and recognised the iconic stories of achievements of women.

**The theme of International Women's Day 2022: "Gender Equality today for a sustainable tomorrow".**

### Women Empowerment in India: An Overview

- As India steps ahead with the celebration of [Azadi ke Amrit Mahotsav](#), women's empowerment has been treated as a subject of great significance and an integral part of the developmental policies of the government.
- The celebration of [International Women's Day](#) in India reflects the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women over a period spanning between history and the present.
- The strength of women in India is embodied as "Nari Shakti" which adds a cultural flavour to the depiction of women in the country.
- Women dwell at the heart of Indian philosophy and mythology and are worshipped in the form of Durga (the epitome of strength), Kali (the goddess of preservation), Saraswati (Depicts Knowledge, Truth and Light) and Lakshmi (symbolises wealth and fortune).
- The glory of "Nari Shakti" is echoed through the depths of patriotism among the people of this country showcasing love and respect towards their motherland.
- There have been numerous deplorable incidents directed against the dignity of women that still continue in different parts of the country reflecting the patriarchal dominance of the society.
- For a long period of time women have been oppressed and confined within the narrow walls of conventional and discriminatory practices.
- Gradually, some personalities among women became pioneers to break the shackles of suppression and follow their dreams and aspirations. This inspired many to live with freedom.
- The historic fight of the social reformers for the rights of women has reached the shores of the present hour taking new shapes and forms.

- Despite the path full of challenges and discouragement, women have travelled a long distance and set examples in different fields like politics, bureaucracy, literature, space science, entrepreneurship, diplomacy, sports, defence and so on.

Also read: [Social reformer Pandita Ramabai](#)

#### Highlights of the challenges for women:

- Gender bias is the major impediment to the advancement of women in various fields. It limits the scope for women to explore different fields and contribute at their best. Eventually, [Gender Inequality](#) emerges as an obstruction to the aspirations of women.
- The issue of gender bias stems from the family wherein it is often witnessed that the dreams of a girl child are sacrificed to support the male child even though there have been changes in such a mindset.
- It is prevalent that a major proportion of the Indian society decides the suitable career options for girls before knowing their areas of interest and potential. This acts as a stumbling block for many girls to dream bigger with confidence as they are discouraged from the very early stage.
- The dropout rates of women at the higher levels of education are high which prevent the girls from accessing quality education.
- Despite plenty of welfare schemes for women, India lags behind with inadequacy in the participation of women in the workforce which stands as a major challenge.
- The safety of women across the country remains in the midst of criminal activities, sexual harassment, threats and emerging threats like [cybercrime](#), cyber bullying and so on. This creates a sense of inhibition among the parents who refrain from sending their girl child to schools and colleges on the grounds of lack of safety.
- Reforming the mindset of the people in the society through effective campaigns, awareness programmes that call for the joint efforts of the government, NGOs, activists and other stakeholders, is a need of essence.

#### Government Interventions:

1. **Mahila E-Haat** – This is a direct online marketing platform launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development to assist women entrepreneurs, Self Help Groups and Non-Governmental Organisations to promote products made by them. This is a part of the [Digital India](#)
2. **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao** – In order to eradicate female foeticide and raise awareness on welfare services for young Indian girls, the Ministry of Women and Child Development along with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the then Ministry of Human Resources (Ministry of Education) started a social campaign called Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao in the year 2015. **Read about [Sukanya Samridhi Yojana](#) in the linked article**
3. **One Stop Centre Scheme** – This scheme was popular as ‘Sakhi’ and was implemented with the Nirbhaya Fund. It intended to provide shelter, police desk, legal, medical and counselling services to victims of violence under one roof integrated with a 24-hour helpline (181). **Read more about the [One Stop Centre Scheme](#) in the linked article.**
4. **Nari Shakti Puraskars** – The President of India presented the ‘Nari Shakti Puraskar’ on the occasion of International Women’s Day. **Know more about [Nari Shakti Puraskar](#) in the linked article.**
5. **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh** – It is an apex microfinance organisation that provides credit facilities to poor women at concessional terms for livelihood and income-generating activities. It is registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860. The major objective is to establish the socio-economic development of women.

6. **PM Matru Vandana Yojana** – It aims to provide maternity benefits to pregnant women and lactating mothers.
7. Under the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana**, many women are provided with proper affordable housing facilities.
8. **Deen Dayal Upadhyay National Urban Livelihoods Mission** – It focuses on creating opportunities for women in skill development, leading to employment opportunities based on the demand of the market.

**Heading towards a sustainable and equitable future:**

Society, as a whole, needs to mobilise by considering gender as a spectrum of opportunities as opposed to the tendency to look at it as a set of two with contrasting ideals. There exists an omnipotence within Indian society that has always evolved for betterment and is still capable of doing so by eliminating the narrow walls of confinement that promotes gender inequalities. This potential can be transformed into sound action wherein we as a welfare state, will witness holistic development and an inclusive society.

