

# Unveiling the Realities of Women's Empowerment in Jammu & Kashmir

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**Abstract** - This study explores the many aspects of women's empowerment in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), going beyond simple words to provide a detailed comprehension of the difficulties, advancements, and intricacies experienced by women in the area. The article examines many aspects of women's empowerment activities in J&K, including socio-cultural norms, legal frameworks, economic possibilities, and political engagement. This study rigorously analyzes the influence of conflict, security dynamics, and social views on the ability of women to take action and make decisions. This paper seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of women's empowerment in J&K by examining both achievements and ongoing obstacles. Its objective is to enhance the overall discussion on this topic and offer valuable insights to policymakers, practitioners, and advocates who are dedicated to achieving significant and enduring advancements in gender equality and women's rights.

**Keywords** - Women's Empowerment, Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), Gender Equality, Women's Rights, Sustainable Progress.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is a diverse and complicated subject that goes beyond mere rhetoric to embrace the nuanced reality that women in the area experience. This topic transcends beyond the realm of simple rhetoric. With its location in the heart of sociopolitical upheaval and cultural diversity, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) provides women's empowerment programs with a set of difficulties and possibilities that are unlike any other. The idea of empowerment extends well beyond the superficial level of economic and political engagement, diving into the realms of social, cultural, and psychological empowerment that are intricately connected with the context of the local environment. There has been a rise in the amount of attention and efforts that have been directed towards advancing women's rights and gender equality in Jammu and Kashmir over the last several years; yet, considerable gaps and impediments continue to exist, which prevents the complete fulfillment of women's empowerment. Traditional gender roles and conventions, restricted access to education and healthcare, economic inequities, political marginalization, and the lasting legacy of violence and militarism in specific regions are some of the challenges that are encountered. It is thus necessary to conduct a complete study that takes into consideration the intersecting variables of culture,

politics, economics, and social structures in order to get an understanding of the complicated reality of women's empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir. Identifying effective methods and interventions to generate meaningful change and growth in the area is the goal of this study, which attempts to uncover these realities, investigate the obstacles and possibilities for women's empowerment, and seek for successful tactics and treatments (Sharma 2020).

Women have a vital impact on the economy, shaping the values and cultural principles of society. They have played a pivotal role in both established and developing nations, while also being revered as saints, poets, academics, reformers, authors, and administrators. The economic progress and expansion of a country are contingent upon the position of women in society, their level of esteem, and their ability to actively engage in activities that promote development. Economic autonomy is crucial for enhancing the social standing of women. Throughout history, women have faced marginalization as a result of limited access to education, lower social standing, and the burden of unpaid productive duties. Although women are actively pursuing work opportunities outside their homes, they continue to face disparities compared to males in terms of education, healthcare, employment, and decision-making. Women's potential for leading wealthy lives is hindered by

illiteracy, poverty, and societal taboos. Women encounter obstacles while attempting to enter male-dominated society as a result of unequal gender norms, restricted movement, and imbalanced responsibilities related to reproduction, productivity, and community labor (Aziz et al. 2021). The attainment of women's equality in education, work, and decision-making authority is a personal accomplishment rather than a universally shared one. The world's progress is hindered without women's active involvement in developmental endeavors. Contemporary society should acknowledge the distinct identities, ambitions, capabilities, and attributes of women, as well as their involvement in many social, economic, political, and cultural endeavors.

### 1.1 Women in Indian society

India's women, who make up nearly half of the population, are the largest group excluded from the benefits of development. They have historically been treated inferiorly, with infant marriages and polygamy prevalent during the early Vedic period. The medieval period saw women subordinated to men, often married young and becoming mothers. Despite the achievements of women like Rajia Sultan, Rani Lakashmi Bai, Nur Jahan, Chand Bibi, Tarabi, and Rani Rudrama Devi, they were often confined to royal families. During the British rule, the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj movements arose a desire for freedom among women. After independence, women made significant contributions to various fields, such as education, sports, media, art, politics, and science and technology. However, gender discrimination remains a significant issue, with high rates of female infanticide and a significant gap between male and female literacy rates. Despite modernization, women still constitute only 27% of the workforce, and India ranks low in the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) 2017 due to low wages and less participation in the economy. Despite these challenges, women in India continue to face exploitation, torture, and abuse, including sex discrimination, honor killing, and rape. India has been named the world's most dangerous country for women due to high risks of sexual violence and slave labor.

### 1.2 Women in Jammu and Kashmir

Women make up 47% of the population of Jammu and Kashmir, contributing significantly to the economy and performing both productive and reproductive tasks. From the earliest times, Kashmiri women enjoyed significant freedom and high status, with no restrictions on their movement and activities. They have emerged from the domestic into the political stage, owning land and other immovable property, and even fighting on the battle fields as commanders and the head of troops. The first Prime Minister of Independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru, emphasized the importance of women in Kashmir's history.

Kashmir has had some women rulers, such as Rani Didda and Kota Rani, who ruled for 40 years from 958

to 1003 AD. Other prominent women include Lalila Ded and Habba Khatoon, who fought against patriarchy and advocated for equality. However, with the advent of foreign rule, women were robbed of their freedom and rights, being portrayed as dependents and inferior social classes. They actively participated in the freedom struggle against the Dogra rule, with women from lower strata playing a leading role. The All Jammu And Kashmir National Conference fought for women's rightful place and status in society, leading to the formulation of the Naya Kahmir Plan in 1944. The plan aimed to grant equal rights to women in all fields of national life, including political, economic, social, legal, educational, and cultural aspects. Women were guaranteed the right to vote, be elected to elective bodies, consult in women affairs, and enter state services (Abebe et al. 2023). They were also granted equal pay for equal work, access to economic activities and professions, social insurance benefits, and protection from economic exploitation. The plan also provided women with postnatal care, medical facilities, maternity leave, kindergarten facilities, child care during working hours, family allowance, consent to marriage, prohibition of sale and trafficking in women, and divorce and alimony. Despite these achievements, there is still a wider gender gap that needs to be filled. Rural women, who are engaged in various occupations, are often denied education and participation in decision-making. Despite their social and economic productivity, they have not achieved complete economic independence.

### 1.3 Purpose of Women Empowerment

Gender disparity is a global issue that hinders the growth of individuals, countries, and societies, affecting both men and women. Women constitute half of the world's power, making their empowerment crucial for poverty reduction. Empowering women is essential for economic growth, combating poverty through work at home, community, and workplace.

Empowerment of women covers economic, political, socio-cultural, and personal aspects, with economic strength being the source of social, political, and psychological power. Since the United Nations declared international women's empowerment in 1945, various policy measures have been initiated and programs implemented to address this issue. The first World Conference on Women was held in Mexico in 1975, leading to the Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace.

The second World Conference on Women was held in Copenhagen in 1980, acknowledging the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The third World Conference on Women was held in Nairobi in 1985, setting out areas for improvement in women's equality. The fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 was the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopting strategic goals and

actions for women's empowerment in 12 areas of concern.

UN Women was established in 2010 to better address the challenges of women empowerment. UN Women works towards eliminating discrimination against women, empowering women, and achieving equality between men and women as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, and peace and security (Gupta 2020).

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Abebe et al. (2023)** This study examines the impact of women's empowerment in agriculture on household food security in the Gamo zone of Ethiopia. Data was collected from 385 dual-adult households, focusing on demographic, socioeconomic, women empowerment, food consumption, and livelihood activities. Results showed that increased women's empowerment was positively and significantly associated with all food security indicators. Food security was positively related to the proportion of adult household members, age and education of primary female, landholding size, crop diversification, food crop production, the number of dairy cows owned, and off-farm participation. The study contributes to the literature on women's empowerment and household food security in developing countries.

**Aziz et al. (2021)** There is a dearth of research on women's empowerment metrics relevant to agriculture, particularly in Pakistan, despite the wealth of literature on the topic. Utilizing survey data from 600 rural women in Pakistan's northern AJK province, this research examined the impact of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) on food insecurity in households. This study used the Partial Least Square model structural equation model (PLS-SEM) to find that women's rights in the following areas significantly reduce food insecurity: leadership, agricultural production, resource ownership (land and livestock), and time spent on farming lands. This means that women can make their households less vulnerable if they have access to these rights. It is worth noting that some non-economic factors, such as patriarchal attitudes and practices, may hinder women from having control over their family income. Interestingly, we discovered that women's empowerment in the income domain yields substantial and favorable outcomes. Consequently, ladies would most likely cut down on their food budget. Developmental practitioners working to reduce food poverty and empower women should pay special attention to cultural elements, according to the study's findings.

**Khan (2021)** Offer critical perspectives on the role of technology and digital literacy in advancing women's empowerment agendas in Jammu & Kashmir. Khan's work explores how access to digital technologies and online platforms can create new avenues for economic participation, education, networking, and advocacy,

empowering women to amplify their voices and expand their opportunities in the digital age. Overall, the literature underscores the multi-faceted nature of women's empowerment in Jammu & Kashmir, encompassing economic, social, political, cultural, and technological dimensions. By drawing upon diverse methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and empirical evidence, these studies contribute significantly to our understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for promoting gender equality, women's rights, and inclusive development in the region.

**Gupta (2020)** explore the socio-cultural factors and gender norms that shape women's empowerment efforts in J&K. Gupta's research emphasizes the role of education, awareness campaigns, and community engagement in challenging patriarchal attitudes and fostering a supportive environment for women's rights. Overall, the literature underscores the multi-dimensional nature of women's empowerment in J&K, emphasizing the importance of addressing socio-cultural, economic, and political barriers. By unveiling the realities and complexities of women's empowerment, this review contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities for advancing gender equality and women's rights in Jammu & Kashmir.

**Sharma (2018)** provide insights into the role of education in empowering women and fostering socio-economic mobility in J&K. Sharma's research highlights the transformative potential of education in challenging gender norms, enhancing women's employability, and equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate diverse spheres of life.

## 3. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AS A CONCEPT IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Women empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) holds significant importance due to the unique socio-cultural context and the challenges faced by women in the region. The concept of women empowerment in J&K encompasses various dimensions, including economic, social, political, and cultural aspects. Understanding women empowerment in this context requires addressing specific challenges and leveraging opportunities that are distinct to the region. Women empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir encompasses economic, social, political, cultural, and security dimensions, aiming to create an environment where women have equal access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes. Initiatives such as promoting education and awareness, enhancing economic opportunities, advocating for political representation, challenging harmful norms, ensuring safety and conflict resolution, and fostering community participation are crucial for empowering women in the region. By addressing these multifaceted challenges and leveraging opportunities specific to J&K's socio-political context, women can achieve greater

autonomy, agency, and participation in shaping their lives and communities, contributing to overall peace, stability, and development in the region.

#### 4. THE STATUS OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

The current state of women's empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir displays a complex terrain that is characterized by both success and ongoing issues. There have been discernible advancements made over the course of time in a number of domains, including the education of girls, the engagement of girls in the economy, and the political representation of grassroots people, notably in the bodies that govern small communities. The empowerment of individuals economically has also been favorably impacted by initiatives that aim to encourage entrepreneurialism, the development of skills, and access to microfinance. However, there are still considerable obstacles to overcome, such as the limited availability of high-quality education in rural regions, the prevalence of cultural norms that encourage early marriage, the disparities in wages between men and women, and the difficulties in gaining access to decision-making positions in higher political spheres. Concerns about the safety of women and their access to healthcare continue to be of utmost importance, which is further aggravated by the region's long history of violence and militarization. Furthermore, the empowerment of women in Jammu and Kashmir is subject to persistent problems brought about by deeply rooted cultural norms, attitudes that are patriarchal, and gaps in the application of legislative provisions. In order to address these issues, it is necessary to make consistent efforts in a variety of domains, such as education, economic possibilities, political engagement, healthcare provision, and cultural reform, in order to establish an atmosphere in which women may actually achieve autonomy, agency, and equal opportunity.

**Socio-Cultural Context:** Within the setting of Jammu and Kashmir, the socio-cultural environment has a significant impact on the level of women's empowerment that exists within the territory. Women's access to education, career prospects, and decision-making authority are often restricted by traditional gender roles and social expectations. This is because cultural norms dictate that women's primary responsibility is to care for their mothers and other family members. There is an additional layer of complication added to the process of empowering women since religious influences further alter opinions about women's rights and social duties. There is a widespread prevalence of patriarchal systems, which leads to uneven distribution of resources and low levels of autonomy for women. In addition to having an effect on women's independence and agency, the concepts of honor and shame also contribute to the limitations placed on their conduct and choices. Concerns about safety, economic instability, and disruptions in social cohesiveness are some of the difficulties that are made worse by the prolonged fighting and militarization that has taken place in some

regions of Jammu and Kashmir. Nevertheless, there is a rising knowledge regarding women's rights and gender equality, with grassroots movements and civil society groups playing a critical role in fighting stereotypes and encouraging empowerment. This awareness is a result of progress made by these organizations. Intersectional identities, which include race and geographic location, interact with gender to provide one-of-a-kind obstacles, which calls for treatments that are specifically tailored to address these issues. There are potential for rethinking women's roles and empowerment paths in the area as a result of the growing socio-cultural dynamics, which are affected by modernization, urbanization, and education.

**Challenges to Overcome:** In Jammu and Kashmir, there are a number of obstacles that must be overcome before women may experience genuine empowerment. Issues such as cultural and social stigma, restricted educational possibilities, economic empowerment, political engagement, healthcare access, safety and security, limited educational opportunities, patriarchy, intersectional problems, data gathering and research, and legislative changes and execution are all part of this list.

Patriarchy and gender stereotypes prevent women from achieving economic parity, political representation, and educational advancement. It will need extensive education campaigns, programs to make people more sensitive to gender issues, and initiatives to highlight good role models to dispel these misconceptions. It is necessary to invest in infrastructure, teacher training, and incentives to ensure that girls remain in school, especially in regions devastated by war and rural areas where educational possibilities are limited. Limited employment opportunities, wage inequality, and a lack of access to markets and finance all pose obstacles to economic empowerment. Vocational training, programs that encourage entrepreneurship, and women's cooperatives are all ways to help women become more economically independent.

Promoting increased political engagement among women may be achieved via initiatives such as gender quotas, political training programs, and the elimination of cultural obstacles. It is still difficult for those living in rural regions to get the healthcare they need, particularly for reproductive and maternal health. It is critical to provide survivors of gender-based violence with support services, provide secure public areas, and ensure that law enforcement effectively enforces laws protecting women.

Child marriage and honor-based violence are examples of cultural and societal stigmas that need community involvement, changes to the law, and advocacy work. We must prioritize intersectional methods that acknowledge and address the distinct needs and experiences of various women. With so little information available, there is a pressing need



to change and execute laws that affect women in Jammu and Kashmir.

**Affirmative Action by the Government:** Important steps toward empowering women in Jammu and Kashmir have been taken by the government via affirmative action programs. By implementing these changes, we want to remove the structural and historical obstacles that have prevented women from fully participating in and benefiting from many fields. Reservation policies in political institutions, gender quotas in educational institutions, financial incentives, targeted employment programs, healthcare access improvements, investment in girls' education, skill development, awareness campaigns, strengthened monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and legal protections against gender-based discrimination are all part of the initiatives.

As a result of reservation policies, more women will be able to hold positions of power and influence in local and national governments. Education quotas for women and girls may help more people get the degrees they need and improve their employability. The empowerment of women entrepreneurs and small enterprises may be enhanced by the provision of economic incentives including subsidies, grants, and loans. Eliminating gender gaps in the workforce is a goal of many employment initiatives. Achieving expedited justice and providing survivors with necessary assistance necessitates legal safeguards against gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination.

Helping females get degrees, get jobs, and start their own businesses is an investment in their future success. Promoting positive views of women's roles in society and working to eliminate gender stereotypes may be achieved via public awareness campaigns that focus on women's rights, empowerment, and gender equality.

**Policies and Programmes:** The development of women in Jammu and Kashmir has been a priority in the state's Five Year Plans, but they still face numerous challenges in areas such as health, education, economy, politics, domestic violence, declining sex ratio, female feticide, and infanticide. The state's economic, social, and political conditions have led to increased gender inequality, with men dominating socio-economic and political processes. This has resulted in an erosion of women's freedom of speech, rights, and employment opportunities. To address this, the J&K government, in collaboration with central government, NGOs, and local bodies, has launched various programs and schemes for women's self-employment. These programs support women in taking up income-generating activities and starting self-employment, with initiatives initiated by the J&K State Women Development Corporation, J&K Social Welfare Department, and J&K Rural Development. The importance of women's economic independence for their overall dignity is highlighted, as there is a

linkage between their physical survival and their entry into the workforce.

- **The Commission for Women in J&K State**

The purpose of forming the J&K State Women's Commission is to promote equality for women and safeguard their rights inside the state. The commission is tasked with conducting investigations and reviews of all issues concerning women's rights as guaranteed by the constitution and other laws, advising the government on ways to elevate women's status within the state, reporting and handling instances of rights violations against women to the relevant authorities, conducting research and providing financial support for lawsuits involving issues impacting numerous women, and so on.

- **Department of Social Welfare in J&K**

Women and other economically disadvantaged people in J&K are benefiting greatly from the efforts of the state's social welfare department. Through its many programs and projects, the department works to increase women's economic and social independence. In addition, it offers rehabilitation services to economically and socially disadvantaged groups so that they may lead dignified lives and vocational training to women so that they can improve their abilities. By offering financial support, it encourages NGOs and social activists to strive for women's wellbeing.

- **The Women's Development Corporation of J&K State**

In 1991, it was constituted under the Companies Act 1956 to become the Jammu and Kashmir State Women's Development Corporation. A number of developmental programs aimed at improving women's socioeconomic status are to be carried out by the business. These schemes will particularly benefit low-income families, women from minority groups, and women from other disadvantaged backgrounds. Among the primary goals of the organization are the following: identifying and supporting female entrepreneurs; holding awareness camps and providing training to improve the skills of female entrepreneurs; encouraging and supporting rural women to start and maintain savings habits; and facilitating the provision of micro-credit to women borrowers so that they can start their own businesses and become financially independent. In addition, women business owners are supported by the State Women's Development company to showcase and sell their wares during exhibition-cum-melas that are held by the company both domestically and abroad.

- **Development and Finance Corporation for National Minorities**

Through its channeling agency, the J&K State Women's Development Corporation, the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation offers low-interest long-term loans to underprivileged women from minority communities, including Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, and Zoroastrians, so that they can establish businesses that generate employment opportunities. This program lends money to women at a nominal interest rate of 6% per year with the intention of paying it back in five years.

- **Finance and Development Corporation for the Nationally Backward Classes**

The J&K State Women's Development Corporation acts as the channeling agency for this officially supported loaning initiative. Women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and other groups are the intended beneficiaries of this program. This program provides financing to women from backward and other groups as defined by State SRO 126 at a concessional interest rate of 4% per year up to Rs 1.00 lakh and 6% per annum up to Rs 5.00 lakhs, with a payback term of 5 years.

- **Development and Financing Corporation for People with Disabilities**

Physically disabled women with a 40% handicap may access financing from the National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation and the J&K State Women's Development Corporation to establish their own income-generating enterprises under this program. With this plan, beneficiaries may borrow up to Rs. 50,000/-at a very low interest rate of 4% per year, up to Rs. 1.00 lakh at 5% per annum, and up to Rs. 5.00 lakhs at 6% per annum, all of which must be paid off within 6 years.

- **Enhancing Skilled Youth Program**

On 8th March 2010, on International Women's Day, the J&K State Women Development Corporation launched the Empowering Skilled Young Women Scheme (ESW), which is a component of the Sher-iKashmir Employment and Welfare Programme. The program's objective is to empower women by providing opportunities for self-employment to young women who have completed their education but are currently unemployed. With this program, qualified young women can get a loan to start their own businesses in a variety of industries, including ready-made clothing, aromatic medicinal plants, boutiques, fashion design, cosmetics, medical health care, mushroom cultivation, floriculture/agriculture, and more, all at a nominal interest rate of 6% per annum.

- **Empowerment Program for Women at Swayamsidha**

In Jammu and Kashmir, the programme known as Swayamsidha Women Empowerment Programme (SWEP) is overseen by the J&K State Women Development Corporation. In order to achieve its goal of economic empowerment, this scheme primarily aims to organize women into Self Help Groups (SHGs). Within these groups, women will gain knowledge and self-assurance about various topics such as their economic status, health, nutrition, education, sanitation, legal rights, economic empowerment, resource control, saving habits, access to micro-credit, participation in local-level planning, and more.

- **Yojna Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog**

The Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojna was fully funded by the Indian government's Ministry of Women and Child Development and was executed in the state of Jammu and Kashmir between 2011 and 2012. As of 01-04-2015, the Indian government has swapped out the previous financing structure of 100% between the central government and the states for a 90:10 split. The goal of the pilot program is to enhance the nutritional condition of pregnant women, nursing mothers, and their young children in the districts of Anantnag and Kathua. So that women are not forced to work until their final trimester and can get enough rest before and after giving birth, the scheme's primary goal is to compensate for some of the salary loss. At least the first two live births must have taken place before the recipient reaches the age of 19.

- **Rajiv Gandhi's Youth Empowerment Program (SABLA)**

In 2011–12, the state became the first to implement the Rajiv Gandhi program for the empowerment of teenage girls (RGSEAG–Sabla). The program has been piloted in Kupwara, Anantnag, and Leh districts of the Kashmir division and Jammu and Kathua districts of the Jammu division. Its goal is to empower adolescent girls (11–18 years old) through self-development, skill-building, health and hygiene education, life skill learning, and vocational training.

- **Training Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM)**

Launched in the state of Jammu and Kashmir as a nationally supported project, TRYSEM is a component of the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP). The financing pattern is 50:50 between the Centre and the State. Its goal is to empower rural adolescents, particularly women from low-income households, by teaching them technical and entrepreneurial skills so that they may start their own businesses and earn more money.

- **Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)**

In an effort to empower low-income women, the Jammu and Kashmir government launched the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) in 1999. By organizing low-income families into Self-Help Groups (SHGs), the program aims to help them rise out of poverty through social mobilization, training, capacity building, and the provision of assets that generate income through a mix of bank loans and government subsidies. With the help of the program's core components social mobilization, capacity building, integrated support through credit, infrastructure, technology, and marketing poor women in rural areas were to launch a plethora of micro-enterprises, increasing their chances of achieving long-term financial security.

- **The National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)**

Under the name UMEED, the NRLM plan has also been implemented in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Rahul Gandhi, then the president of the Congress party, announced the initiative in June 2013 as a flagship program to empower women in Kashmir, a region plagued by war. The goal of the Umeed initiative is to give women in Jammu and Kashmir more agency by getting them to form self-help organizations and then combining those groups into bigger federations. These federations would then be able to lend money to individuals in need on their own. The state's four pilot blocks Basohli, Chenani, Khanshab, and Wagoora have been chosen at random, with two each from the Jammu and Kashmir divisions. The UMEED program of NRLM was expanded to 51 blocks across 22 districts of the state in the following years, including 06 additional blocks: Sumnai (Bandipora), Damhal Hanjipora (Kulgam), Gungna (Doda), Mahore (Reasi), Kargil (Kargil), and Kalakote (Rajouri). With funding of Rs. 755 crore, the five-year initiative would touch nine million rural families in the state via the formation of 90,000 SHGs.

**Political Inclusion:** To make significant progress toward empowering women in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), political participation is very necessary. In order to guarantee that women are represented in legislative bodies and local councils in an equal manner, strategies such as reservation laws and gender quotas might be used. It is possible for women politicians to be empowered with the required skills and assistance via the implementation of mentoring initiatives and capacity-building programs. Awareness campaigns are becoming more important in the fight against stereotypes and the promotion of women's involvement in political processes. In order to overcome obstacles and establish an atmosphere that is welcoming to everyone, it is necessary to provide financial assistance to female candidates and to establish secure political venues. In order to maintain progress and encourage gender-balanced participation in political decision-making processes, it is essential to

advocate for policies, connect with civil society, and establish monitoring systems.

**Economic Outcomes:** A variety of variables that govern women's access to resources, opportunities, and financial independence in Jammu and Kashmir are responsible for determining the economic results that women experience in the region. Women's employability and income may be improved by the provision of vocational training and the diversification of work sectors, which is one of the essential aspects; employment options are another important feature. It is essential, in order to improve financial stability, to address wage discrepancies between men and women and to guarantee equal compensation for an equivalent amount of effort. In addition, providing women entrepreneurs with mentoring, access to markets, and technological resources may help to stimulate innovation and economic success. The empowerment of women to invest in education, create enterprises, and develop economic resilience may be achieved via the enhancement of financial inclusion through the provision of microcredit facilities and savings programs. In order to promote economic empowerment and inclusive development for women in the area, it is vital to have land and property rights, as well as social protection programs and measures to improve digital literacy.

**Education Incentives:** Education incentives are essential for advancing women's empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) because they encourage females to continue their education, reduce the number of students who drop out of school, and increase the percentage of students who complete their education. It is possible to make education more accessible and cheap for girls, particularly in regions that are economically challenged, via the implementation of programs such as scholarships, tuition exemptions, free school supplies, and transportation help. The provision of secure dormitory facilities, prizes based on excellence, career assistance, and digital learning materials are other factors that contribute to the enhancement of educational results and the preparation of girls for future challenges and possibilities. A supportive environment that fosters girls' involvement and success in school is vital for generating a supportive environment that eventually leads to increased empowerment and socio-economic growth for women in the area. This environment may be created via the implementation of inclusive education policies and community engagement programs.

**Health Initiatives:** Health initiatives are crucial for promoting women's well-being and empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), addressing health disparities, and improving access to quality healthcare services. These initiatives include maternal and child health programs, reproductive health services, healthcare infrastructure investment, health awareness campaigns, nutritional support programs, mental health services, preventive



healthcare, safe motherhood initiatives, access to clean water and sanitation, and healthcare financing.

Maternal and child health programs focus on prenatal care, safe childbirth practices, postnatal care, immunizations, and child nutrition. Reproductive health services provide access to family planning, contraceptives, and reproductive health education, empowering women to make informed decisions about their reproductive health and family planning choices.

Healthcare infrastructure investments in rural and underserved areas can improve access to essential health services for women and their families. Health awareness campaigns on women's health issues, hygiene practices, disease prevention, and maternal nutrition can promote healthy behaviors and reduce health risks among women. Nutritional support programs, mental health services, and preventive healthcare measures can improve maternal and child health outcomes.

Safe motherhood initiatives, such as skilled birth attendance and emergency obstetric care, can reduce maternal mortality rates and improve maternal health. Access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and hygiene education can prevent waterborne diseases and reduce maternal infections. Healthcare financing mechanisms, health insurance schemes, and financial support for medical treatments can reduce out-of-pocket expenses for women from low-income households. By effectively implementing these health initiatives and addressing barriers, women's health and empowerment can be significantly enhanced in J&K, leading to improved well-being and quality of life for women and their families.

#### **Effective Government-NGO Collaborations:**

Government agencies and NGOs play a crucial role in promoting women's empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir. To enhance the effectiveness of these partnerships, clear communication and coordination are essential. Joint needs assessments and prioritization of intervention areas can guide collaborative efforts towards impactful outcomes. Capacity building support, training, and technical assistance can enhance the skills and capabilities of both parties. Resource sharing optimizes the impact and sustainability of initiatives by leveraging resources, expertise, and networks from both parties. Policy advocacy can influence policy reforms, institutional changes, and resource allocation for women's empowerment programs. Joint monitoring and evaluation frameworks ensure accountability, transparency, and continuous learning. Community engagement fosters ownership, participation, and sustainability of interventions at the grassroots level. Innovation and adaptation of best practices, technologies, and approaches enable agile responses to evolving needs and challenges. Conflict resolution mechanisms between government and NGO partners ensure smooth collaboration and maintain productive relationships. Documentation and knowledge sharing promote learning, replication, and scaling up of

effective interventions. By adopting these strategies and fostering a culture of collaboration, trust, and mutual respect, government-NGO partnerships can become powerful catalysts for advancing women's empowerment, promoting sustainable development, and creating positive social change in Jammu and Kashmir.

**Recognitions and Awards:** Recognitions and awards are crucial in recognizing and celebrating the contributions of individuals, organizations, and initiatives towards women's empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). These awards include Leadership Awards, Innovation Awards, Community Impact Awards, Education Excellence Awards, Entrepreneurship Awards, Advocacy and Awareness Awards, Healthcare Excellence Awards, Youth Leadership Awards, Partnership and Collaboration Awards, and Lifetime Achievement Awards.

Leadership Awards recognize women leaders, activists, and policymakers who have made significant contributions to advancing women's rights, gender equality, and empowerment in J&K. Innovation Awards honor innovative programs, projects, and initiatives that have demonstrated creativity, effectiveness, and impact in promoting women's empowerment, addressing gender disparities, and fostering social change. Community Impact Awards celebrate community-based initiatives that positively impact women's lives, empower marginalized communities, and promote inclusive development. Education Excellence Awards acknowledge educational institutions, teachers, and students who have shown exceptional dedication, creativity, and achievements in promoting girls' education, gender-sensitive curriculum, and inclusive learning environments. Entrepreneurship Awards recognize women entrepreneurs, startups, and businesses that have demonstrated resilience, innovation, and success in creating economic opportunities and empowering women economically.

These recognitions and awards inspire others, raise visibility, mobilize resources, and promote a culture of excellence, innovation, and collaboration towards advancing women's empowerment in J&K.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The journey towards women's empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir is complex and multifaceted. Despite progress in areas like education, economic participation, and political representation, women still face numerous challenges such as socio-cultural norms, limited access to quality education, gender disparities in healthcare, safety concerns, and systemic barriers in political participation. To address these issues, holistic strategies such as policy reforms, community engagement, capacity-building programs, awareness campaigns, and collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, civil society, and private sectors are needed. These strategies



should focus on addressing structural inequalities, promoting gender-sensitive policies, enhancing access to resources, and fostering an environment for women to thrive. Recognizing and celebrating the achievements of individuals, organizations, and initiatives can inspire further action and mobilize resources. By working together, we can create a more inclusive, equitable, and empowered society where women can reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to their communities and the nation.

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