

WOMEN'S RESERVATION

The issues raised by the Opposition about the implementation of 33 percent reservation for women in Parliament and legislatures, and the delimitation have been cleared by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his speech to the Lok Sabha. With bulky nomenclature, the two bills before the parliament can be confusing for common people hence the explanation. After a protracted struggle and effort, the women's reservation bill was passed in 2023 with a caveat that it would be implemented only in 2029, when the General Election is due in the country. This is a revolutionary move for gender parity and in due course this would change the power equation between men and women and also have a major impact on policies, and legislation. Women have a different perspective of life which is closer to life and problem solving. Such reservation in the Panchayat level has changed the status of women and also brought in more equitable development.

Prime Minister allayed fears and panic among the southern states about proposed increase in number of seats in the legislature and Parliament being linked to the population. He clarified that the principle that states that have managed to control their population should not be penalized for this achievement by treating them by linking the delimitation to the population. In fact this principle that population should not be the factor for more political power was decided when the cap was placed on the seats in the Legislature till 2026.

Delimitation on the other hand, is a compulsory exercise that must be carried out in view of the growth of population and to represent the peoples' aspirations. However earlier the reports of Delimitation Commission were recommendatory in nature. The proposed delimitation would be targeted at increasing the seats in Lok Sabha and State legislative Assemblies. Modi made it clear that any political party or leader opposing the Women's reservation would be doing so at the risk of losing support.

From Beneficiary to Lawmaker: A New Era of Women Empowerment

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Women empowerment has emerged as a central pillar of India's development discourse in recent years. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the approach towards women's issues has shifted from mere welfare to a more comprehensive framework of "women-led development." This transformation reflects a deeper recognition that empowering women is not only a matter of social justice but also a key driver of economic growth, governance, and nation-building.

Since 2014, the Government of India has launched multiple schemes and reforms aimed at improving the status of women across sectors such as education, health, financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, and political participation. These initiatives collectively seek to address long-standing structural inequalities and create an enabling environment for women to thrive.

One of the most significant contributions of the Modi regime is the conceptual shift from "women's development" to "women-led development." This approach recognizes women not merely as beneficiaries but as active agents of change in society.

Government policies have increasingly focused on enhancing women's dignity, autonomy, and participation in decision-making processes. This paradigm shift has influenced both policy design and implementation, ensuring that women are placed at the centre of India's growth story.

A key aspect of women empowerment is addressing deep-rooted societal biases. The launch of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao in 2015 marked a significant step in this direction. The scheme aims to combat declining child sex ratios and promote the education and survival of the girl child.

Through awareness campaigns and community participation, this initiative has contributed to changing attitudes towards daughters in many parts of the country. It has emphasized the importance of gender equality and encouraged families to invest in girls' education and well-being.

Additionally, social campaigns such as "Selfie with Daughter" and grassroots movements have reinforced the value of the girl child, gradually reshaping societal perceptions.



Economic independence is a cornerstone of empowerment. The Modi government has taken significant steps to integrate women into the formal financial system. Schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana have enabled millions of women to open bank accounts, thereby promoting financial literacy and independence.

The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana has further strengthened women's economic participation by providing collateral-free loans to small entrepreneurs. Notably, a large proportion of beneficiaries under this scheme are women, highlighting its impact on fostering entrepreneurship.

Similarly, the Stand-Up India initiative has encouraged women, especially from marginalized communities, to establish businesses by providing access to institutional credit.

These efforts have not only enhanced women's financial autonomy but also contributed to job creation and economic growth at the grassroots level.

The empowerment of women is closely linked to their health and living conditions. Recognizing this, the government has implemented several schemes aimed at improving women's quality of life.

The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana is a landmark initiative that provides free LPG connections to women from below-poverty-line households. This scheme has significantly reduced the health hazards associated with traditional cooking fuels and improved women's overall well-being.

In addition, initiatives such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan have facilitated the construc-

tion of toilets, thereby enhancing women's safety, dignity, and hygiene. Access to clean water, housing, and sanitation has further strengthened the foundation of women's empowerment by addressing basic needs.

Education plays a crucial role in empowering women. Various government programs have focused on increasing female literacy rates and reducing dropout rates among girls.

Scholarship schemes, skill development programs, and digital literacy initiatives have expanded opportunities for women and girls. By promoting education and vocational training, the government aims to equip women with the skills necessary to participate effectively in the modern economy.

These efforts are particularly important in rural areas, where access to education has historically been limited. Improved educational outcomes have contributed to greater awareness, confidence, and decision-making capacity among women.

Political participation is another vital dimension of empowerment. The passage of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam marks a historic step towards enhancing women's representation in legislative bodies.

This legislation seeks to provide 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, thereby ensuring greater inclusion of women in governance.

Increased political representation is expected to bring diverse perspectives into policymaking and strengthen democratic processes. It also serves as an inspiration for future generations of women leaders.

Ensuring women's safety is essential for their empowerment. The Modi government has introduced stricter laws and amendments to address crimes against women, including harsher penalties for sexual offences.

Initiatives such as women helplines, one-stop crisis centres, and awareness programs have improved access to justice and support services. These measures aim to create a safer

environment where women can pursue opportunities without fear.

However, challenges remain in terms of implementation and awareness, highlighting the need for continued efforts in this area.

The cumulative impact of these initiatives has been significant. Women today have greater access to financial services, improved health and sanitation facilities, and increased opportunities for education and entrepreneurship.

For instance, the expansion of clean cooking fuel under Ujjwala has reached millions of households, reducing health risks and saving time for women.

Similarly, financial inclusion schemes have brought women into the formal banking system, enabling them to participate more actively in economic activities.

The emphasis on "women-led development" has also encouraged greater participation of women in governance, business, and community leadership.

The journey towards women empowerment is ongoing and requires sustained efforts. Future policies must focus on bridging existing gaps, enhancing skill development, and promoting digital inclusion.

Encouraging women's participation in emerging sectors such as technology, innovation, and leadership roles will be crucial. Strengthening grassroots institutions and ensuring equitable access to resources will further accelerate progress.

Women empowerment under the Narendra Modi regime represents a significant shift in India's development strategy. Through a combination of social, economic, and political initiatives, the government has laid a strong foundation for empowering women.

While challenges persist, the emphasis on "women-led development" has opened new avenues for women to contribute to the nation's progress. Empowered women are not only beneficiaries of development but also key architects of India's future.

The success of these initiatives will ultimately depend on sustained commitment, effective implementation, and collective societal effort. A truly empowered India can only be achieved when every woman is given the opportunity to realize her full potential.

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THE CASE FOR PASSIVE EUTHANASIA

APS Malhotra

In India's evolving dialogue on death with dignity, some lives compel us to pause and reflect—not because of how they ended, but because of how they endured.

One such life is that of Aruna Shanbaug, who was left in a permanent vegetative state after a brutal sexual assault in 1973, at the age of 25. For over four decades, she remained confined to a hospital bed in the very institution where she had once worked. It is such cases—where the probability of recovery is negligible or absent, and where the small, defining experiences that give life its texture are no longer accessible—that compel us to confront difficult questions about the meaning of life itself. In 2011, a journalist-activist approached the Supreme Court in Aruna Ramchandra Shanbaug v. Union of India (2011), seeking permission for passive euthanasia so that Shanbaug might die with dignity. In a carefully reasoned judgment, the Court rejected the plea.

Yet, in doing so, it marked a turning point: while denying euthanasia in this instance, it formally recognised passive eu-



thanasia as permissible under strict safeguards and judicial oversight.

The next major milestone came with Common Cause v. Union of India (2018), where the Court held that the right to die with dignity is an intrinsic part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.

The judgment reaffirmed the legality of passive euthanasia and recognised "living wills" or advance medical directives, enabling individuals to refuse artificial life support in terminal conditions. This cau-

tious recognition has continued to evolve.

More recently, in the case of Harish Rana, a 31-year-old who remained in a vegetative state for thirteen years following a freak accident, the Court permitted passive euthanasia.

The decision reflects a judiciary increasingly willing to confront the difficult reality that prolonged biological existence, in the absence of awareness or the possibility of recovery, calls for compassion, rather than mere continuation. Life, in such circum-

stances, cannot be reduced to its indefinite prolongation. Shanbaug's case also reveals another, parallel evolution in Indian law. At the time of her assault, legal recognition of sexual violence was limited in scope.

It was only after the national outrage following the 2012 Delhi gang rape and murder case that the law expanded to acknowledge a broader spectrum of violations. That shift—from silence to recognition—offers a compelling parallel to the present conversation on euthanasia. Both reflect the law's gradual attempt to respond to forms of suffering that are not always easily articulated yet demand acknowledgment.

Against this backdrop, the debate on euthanasia must move beyond rigid binaries—between the sanctity of life on one hand and the right to die on the other. Such formulations fail to capture the complexity of cases where individuals can no longer express choice and where recovery is no longer a possibility. In these situations, the question is less about choosing death and more about recognising the limits of meaningful preservation—and allowing dignity, even in death, to remain central.

Make in India needs faster signals: What electricity reveals about manufacturing

Ashish Kumar | Payal Sethi

More than a decade after the launch of Make in India, manufacturing remains central to India's growth strategy. The ambition to raise manufacturing's share of GDP from about 15-16% to 25% has been reiterated across policy documents, industrial corridors, and Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes spanning fourteen sectors. Billions in fiscal support and regulatory effort are tied to this goal. Yet a striking irony remains: India continues to measure manufacturing output far too slowly.

The most comprehensive manufacturing dataset, the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI), is released with a lag of 18-24 months. Manufacturing Gross Value Added (GVA) in the National Accounts Statistics (NAS) becomes available about a year after the reference period and undergoes multiple revisions. State-level manufacturing GVA appears with even longer delays. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP), while monthly, is an index with limited coverage, high volatility, and well-known measure-

ment issues. For an economy aspiring to global manufacturing competitiveness, this constitutes a serious information gap.

At the same time, India already tracks a variable at high frequency, across states and sectors, with minimal reporting error: electricity consumption. The question is no longer whether electricity can proxy manufacturing activity, but whether India is willing to use it systematically.

Why electricity is a meaningful signal

Manufacturing is energy-intensive. Electricity powers machines and assembly lines. Unlike labour or capacity utilisation (difficult to observe directly), electricity use is metered, continuous, and hard to misreport, and is available monthly (often daily) and at fine geographic and sectoral granularity.

This intuition is supported by international evidence. During the Covid-19 pandemic, European studies using high-frequency electricity market data showed that power demand closely tracked economic contraction and recovery when official output data were

delayed.

In China, sector-level electricity consumption mirrored factory shutdowns during lockdowns and rebounded early during reopening, signalling manufacturing recovery ahead of official statistics. Evidence from developing economies suggests a strong long-run relationship: panel studies for West Africa, including Nigeria, find a statistically significant association between electricity consumption and factory-based industrial output.

What India's own data show

Indian data strongly echo these findings. Over the past fifteen years, all-India manufacturing GVA and electricity consumption move almost in lockstep (correlation = 0.99). This relationship holds across policy regimes, business cycles, and even the pandemic disruption.

Moving from correlation to real-time estimation of manufacturing activity would require an explicit econometric framework. Electricity consumption from industrial feeders and high-tension manufacturing connections, already recorded by state electricity distribution companies

(DISCOMs), can be mapped to National Industrial Classification (NIC) industries and aggregated weekly or monthly at the state and sector level.

With appropriate controls for scale, industrial structure, and long-run trends, an econometric model can be developed that can generate early signals of manufacturing activity well before official GVA estimates are released.

Where structure matters

The relationship also holds below the national level. For instance, Gujarat, a high manufacturing-led economy with relatively reliable power supply and dense industrial clusters, represents a textbook case for electricity-based monitoring, with correlations close to 0.96.

The relationship is particularly strong (around 0.9) in other manufacturing-led economies such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh.

Where correlations weaken, the reasons are structural rather than statistical. Delhi's economy is services-dominated; smaller UTs and tourism-dependent regions have lim-

ited industrial bases.

This heterogeneity is informative: electricity works best as a monitoring tool where manufacturing is economically significant.

Sectoral evidence: where electricity works best

Sector-level analysis provides the strongest validation. Food processing is employment-intensive, closely linked to agriculture, and central to inflation management and exports. In this sector, electricity consumption tracks manufacturing output almost perfectly over time, including during the post-pandemic recovery. Under Make in India, the PLI scheme allocates ₹10,900 crore to food processing to modernise capacity and boost output in ready-to-eat foods, processed fruits and vegetables, marine products, and more—precisely the segments where electricity data can provide nimble monitoring. For an agenda that prioritises jobs and value addition, this is a powerful insight.

By contrast, electricity performs poorly in activities such as repair and installation services or certain petroleum-related industries, where output

is price-driven or service-like.

What should change

Using electricity data as a real-time proxy for manufacturing activity will require a coordinated institutional effort. MoSPI should anchor this process by constituting an expert group to design the measurement framework, including data architecture and indicator protocols.

This effort must involve the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) and state DISCOMs, which already collect detailed consumption data but maintain databases not designed for statistical integration. Standardised instructions from the CEA to DISCOMs would enable systematic mapping of granular power data to industrial activity (by NIC code) and comparability across states.

Additional support is needed for states to link electricity connection data with administrative factory records maintained by the Chief Inspector of Factories. Over time, these linkages could strengthen the ASI sampling frame, improving coverage of smaller and underrepresented units, especially MSMEs.