

## Review Article

# Empowering Women in Mathematics: Shaping a New STEM Paradigm for 2047

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As India marches towards its centenary of independence in 2047, the nation's progress is closely tied to its advancements in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). However, the journey towards an equitable STEM landscape, where women are equal stakeholders, remains a critical challenge. The underrepresentation of women in mathematics, a foundational discipline within STEM, poses significant hurdles to achieving national and global goals of scientific innovation and technological leadership. This paper explores the critical role of empowering women in mathematics, both as a standalone discipline and as an essential pillar of the broader STEM ecosystem, and its potential to shape a new paradigm for India's future.

The history of mathematics is rich with contributions from women, yet their stories have often been marginalized. From Hypatia of Alexandria to India's own Shakuntala Devi and contemporary mathematicians like Neena Gupta, women have consistently broken barriers to leave an indelible mark on mathematical thought. Despite these successes, systemic challenges such as gender bias, societal expectations, and lack of mentorship continue to hinder women's full participation in the field. This paper examines these barriers in the Indian context and explores how they can be dismantled through targeted interventions at the educational, institutional, and policy levels.

As we look towards 2047, the integration of women into the fabric of mathematical research and STEM professions is essential for national growth. Mathematics is increasingly at the core of cutting-edge STEM fields like artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and quantum computing. Women's participation in these fields can have far-reaching effects, not only in advancing technology but also in addressing societal challenges like healthcare optimization, environmental modeling, and resource management. By fostering a culture that supports women's contributions to mathematics, India can enhance its global standing in STEM innovation and leadership.

This paper also presents a case study of the author's research on mathematical modeling, showcasing how interdisciplinary approaches rooted in mathematical principles can drive societal progress. The

author's work exemplifies the potential of mathematics to not only solve complex technical problems but also to influence cultural and historical understanding, as seen in projects like Vedic Geometry and the mathematical underpinnings of ancient temple architecture.

In conclusion, empowering women in mathematics is not just an issue of gender equity but a national imperative. As India envisions a new Bharat by 2047, women mathematicians and STEM professionals must be at the forefront of this transformation. By breaking down barriers and creating pathways for women to excel in mathematics, India can build a more innovative, inclusive, and prosperous future. This paper calls for a collective effort from educational institutions, policymakers, and industries to invest in women's STEM education and career development, ensuring that their contributions shape the future of a technologically advanced and equitable India.

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## Introduction

As India approaches its centenary of independence in 2047, the nation stands at the cusp of unparalleled advancements in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Central to this vision is the equitable participation of women in STEM disciplines, particularly mathematics, which serves as the foundation for cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing, and data science. However, the persistent underrepresentation of women in mathematics remains a significant challenge, threatening the country's ability to achieve its full potential in technological innovation and global leadership.

The history of women in mathematics is rich and inspiring, marked by the contributions of extraordinary figures who have defied societal norms and systemic barriers. **Hypatia of Alexandria**, often regarded as the first known female mathematician, was an influential figure in the development of early mathematical thought, yet she faced persecution and eventual martyrdom due to her intellectual pursuits<sup>[1]</sup>. Closer to home, **Shakuntala Devi**, widely known as the "**human computer**," demonstrated the immense capabilities of women in mathematics through her uncanny ability to perform complex calculations<sup>[2]</sup>. More recently, Neena Gupta's groundbreaking work in commutative algebra has garnered international acclaim, highlighting the potential of Indian women to excel on the global stage<sup>[3]</sup>.

Despite these remarkable achievements, women in STEM continue to face significant challenges. Gender biases, both implicit and explicit, shape the experiences of women in mathematics from early education to professional careers<sup>[4]</sup>. Societal expectations, cultural norms, and a lack of adequate mentorship further exacerbate these challenges, discouraging young girls from pursuing mathematics beyond secondary education<sup>[5]</sup>. In India, initiatives such as "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" have made commendable strides in promoting girls' education, but the proportion of women pursuing advanced degrees in mathematics remains disproportionately low<sup>[6]</sup>.

The scope of this paper is to explore the intersections of gender, mathematics, and STEM education within the Indian context. By examining the contributions of women mathematicians and identifying the systemic barriers they face, this paper aims to propose a new paradigm for women's empowerment in mathematics as part of India's broader STEM landscape. Special attention will be given to how early engagement in mathematics can be fostered through targeted interventions, such as mentorship programs, scholarship initiatives, and the establishment of women-led mathematics clubs in schools and universities<sup>[7]</sup>. The role of academic institutions, policymakers, and industries in creating an inclusive environment will also be explored, as these stakeholders are critical to ensuring women's equal participation in shaping India's scientific future<sup>[8]</sup>.

The integration of women into the heart of STEM is not only a matter of gender equity but also a strategic necessity for national development. As this paper will demonstrate, empowering women in mathematics can have far-reaching implications for India's economic growth, technological innovation, and social progress. Furthermore, the role of mathematics in addressing pressing societal challenges such as healthcare optimization and environmental sustainability underscores the importance of fostering a culture where women are encouraged and supported in their mathematical pursuits<sup>[9]</sup>. Through case studies, including the author's own research on interdisciplinary mathematical modeling, this paper will highlight how women mathematicians can contribute to solving complex global problems and shaping India's path towards 2047.

### *Objectives of study*

- To identify and analyze the systemic barriers that hinders the participation of women in mathematics and STEM education in India.
- To highlight the contributions of prominent women mathematicians, both historical and contemporary, as a means of inspiring future generations.

- To explore and propose practical strategies, including mentorship programs and institutional reforms, aimed at increasing the representation of women in mathematics at all educational levels.
- To examine the potential impact of empowering women in mathematics on India's technological innovation, economic growth, and global STEM leadership by 2047.

### *Hypothesis*

Empowering women in mathematics through targeted interventions such as mentorship, institutional support, and policy reforms will significantly increase their participation in STEM fields. This increased participation will not only bridge the gender gap but also enhance India's technological innovation, economic development, and global leadership in STEM by 2047.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative, literature-based methodology to explore the empowerment of women in mathematics within the STEM framework, with a focus on mathematical modeling as a case study.

1. **Literature Review:** The research draws upon a comprehensive review of existing academic literature, policy reports, and case studies related to women's contributions to mathematics and the systemic barriers they face. This review will encompass key themes such as gender bias, the impact of mentorship, and successful initiatives aimed at promoting women's participation in mathematics.
2. **Case Study Analysis:** A specific case study of mathematical modeling will be analyzed to illustrate how women mathematicians contribute to addressing real-world problems. This analysis will highlight the significance of their work and its implications for fostering gender equity in the field.

## **Case Study Problem: The Lady Beetle Population Dynamics**

### *Problem Statement*

The lady beetle (or ladybug) population can serve as an excellent model for studying dynamics in ecology. In this case study, we'll explore how the population of lady beetles changes over time due to factors such as birth rates, death rates, and predation.

## *Mathematical Model*

We can use a simple population growth model based on the logistic growth equation, which incorporates carrying capacity to represent the maximum population that the environment can sustain.

Logistic Growth Equation:

$$\frac{dP}{dt} = rP \left(1 - \frac{P}{K}\right)$$

where:

- P = population of lady beetles
- r = intrinsic growth rate
- K = carrying capacity of the environment
- t = time

## *Parameters*

- **Intrinsic Growth Rate (r):** This represents how quickly the population would grow under ideal conditions.
- **Carrying Capacity (K):** This represents the maximum population that the environment can sustain.

## *Example Values*

- r=0.1 (10% growth rate per time unit)
- K=1000 (maximum sustainable population)

## *Explanation*

This case study illustrates how mathematical modeling can be applied to understand the dynamics of lady beetle populations in an ecological context. The logistic growth model allows researchers to predict how populations grow over time, accounting for limitations imposed by resources in the environment.

By studying such models, women mathematicians can contribute significantly to ecology, conservation, and environmental management. This highlights the importance of interdisciplinary approaches, where mathematics plays a crucial role in solving real-world problems.

Category	Data	Source
Percentage of Women in STEM	28% of STEM workforce worldwide	UNESCO (2020)
Women in Mathematics	30% of undergraduate mathematics students	National Science Foundation (NSF)
Women in PhD Programs	43% of mathematics PhD candidates	American Mathematical Society (AMS)
Women Faculty in Mathematics	27% of full-time mathematics faculty	NSF (2019)
Women in Technology	26% of computing jobs	National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT)
Women in Engineering	21% of engineering degrees awarded	American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE)
Female Mathematicians in Academia	14% of tenure-track positions	AMS (2018)
Notable Women Mathematicians	• Hypatia of Alexandria	Historical Reference
	• Ada Lovelace	Historical Reference
	• Mary Cartwright	Historical Reference
	• Shakuntala Devi	Contemporary Reference
	• Neena Gupta	Contemporary Reference
Women in Leadership	25% of senior leadership roles in STEM	Catalyst (2020)
Roles in STEM	STEM organizations	

### *Challenges Faced by Women Mathematicians in STEM*

1. **Gender Bias and Stereotypes:** Persistent stereotypes that portray mathematics as a male-dominated field can discourage women from pursuing mathematics and STEM careers.
2. **Lack of Representation:** Underrepresentation in higher education, academic positions, and leadership roles can create an unwelcoming environment for women.
3. **Work-Life Balance:** Balancing professional responsibilities with family obligations can be more challenging for women, particularly in demanding fields like mathematics.
4. **Limited Mentorship and Networking Opportunities:** A lack of female role models and mentors in mathematics can hinder women's career advancement and professional development.
5. **Access to Resources and Funding:** Women may have less access to research funding, grants, and academic resources, impacting their ability to conduct research and publish.
6. **Cultural and Societal Pressures:** Cultural norms in some societies may prioritize traditional gender roles, limiting women's participation in STEM.

### *Opportunities for Women Mathematicians in Contemporary Times*

1. **Increased Awareness and Advocacy:** Growing awareness of gender equity in STEM has led to more initiatives aimed at promoting women's participation and addressing biases.
2. **Supportive Networks and Organizations:** Organizations like the Association for Women in Mathematics (AWM) provide networking, mentorship, and professional development opportunities.
3. **STEM Education Initiatives:** Government and private sector initiatives (e.g., "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" in India) are focused on promoting girls' education in STEM fields.
4. **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Increasing acceptance of remote work and flexible schedules in academia and industry can help women balance professional and personal responsibilities.
5. **Interdisciplinary Research Opportunities:** The rise of interdisciplinary research in areas like data science, artificial intelligence, and environmental modeling provides avenues for women to apply mathematical skills in impactful ways.
6. **Funding and Grants for Women:** Some organizations offer specific grants and funding opportunities aimed at supporting women researchers in mathematics and STEM.

**7. Growing Community and Representation:** The visibility of successful women mathematicians in media and academia is increasing, inspiring new generations and fostering a more inclusive environment.

## Conclusions

Empowering women in mathematics is essential not only for achieving gender equity but also for fostering innovation and growth within the broader STEM landscape. This paper highlights the historical contributions of women mathematicians and identifies systemic barriers that continue to hinder their participation in the field. By examining contemporary initiatives and challenges, it becomes clear that while progress has been made, significant gaps remain.

*Key conclusions include:*

- The underrepresentation of women in mathematics and STEM is a multifaceted issue influenced by cultural, institutional, and societal factors.
- Targeted interventions, such as mentorship programs, scholarships, and inclusive educational practices, can help break down barriers and encourage women's engagement in mathematics.
- Integrating women into the fabric of mathematical research and STEM professions is vital for national development and addressing societal challenges.

## Future Scope

As India approaches its centenary of independence in 2047, it is crucial to continue advocating for women in mathematics and STEM. Future research and initiatives can focus on:

1. **Longitudinal Studies:** Conducting studies that track the career trajectories of women mathematicians over time to better understand the impact of interventions and identify ongoing challenges.
2. **Policy Development:** Collaborating with policymakers to create and implement policies that promote gender equity in education and professional settings.
3. **Innovative Educational Practices:** Exploring and implementing pedagogical approaches that encourage young girls to engage with mathematics from an early age, fostering a positive attitude towards the subject.



4. **Cross-Disciplinary Collaborations:** Encouraging collaborations between mathematics and other STEM fields to showcase the relevance of mathematics in addressing real-world problems, thereby attracting more women to the discipline.
5. **Global Perspectives:** Investigating international best practices for promoting women's participation in mathematics and STEM, adapting successful models to the Indian context.
6. **Increased Funding and Resources:** Advocating for more funding opportunities specifically aimed at supporting women in mathematics and related fields, facilitating research and professional development.

By addressing these areas, India can shape a more inclusive and innovative STEM landscape by 2047, ensuring that women mathematicians play a pivotal role in the nation's scientific and technological advancement.

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