

International Women's Day: What is it and why do we need it?



Gender equality is central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN) – and a perennial item on the Secretary-General's annual priority list. SDG5 calls for the world to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" by 2030.

Empowering women can boost economies and help the peace process, believes António Guterres, but it needs to happen faster. "We are promoting women's full and equal participation and leadership in all sectors of society, as a matter of urgency," he told the UN General Assembly, outlining the agency's priorities on 7 February 2024.

It will take another 131 years to reach gender parity, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2023. The continued fight for women's rights is marked each year by International Women's Day

Planning for the Future".

How is the day marked around the world?
International Women's Day is celebrated as a national holiday by countries across the globe, with women often given flowers and gifts – and there are IWD events in major cities worldwide. On 8 March 1914, there was a women's suffrage march in London, calling for women's right to vote, at which high-profile campaigner Sylvia Pankhurst was arrested.

In 2001, the internationalwomensday.com platform was launched to reignite attention for the day, celebrate women's achievements and continue to call for gender parity.

On the centenary in 2011, sitting US President Barack Obama called for March to be known as Women's History Month. He said: "History shows that when women and girls have access to opportunity, societies are more just, economies are more likely to prosper, and governments are more likely to serve the needs of all their people."

What's the World Economic Forum doing about the gender gap?
The World Economic Forum has been measuring gender gaps since 2006 in the annual Global Gender Gap Report. The Global Gender Gap Report tracks progress towards closing gender gaps on a national level. To turn these insights into concrete action and national progress, we have developed the Gender Parity Accelerator model for public private collaboration. These accelerators have been convened in twelve countries across three regions. Accelerators are established in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico and Panama in partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank in Latin America and the Caribbean, Egypt and Jordan in the Middle East and North Africa, and Japan and Kazakhstan in Asia.

All Country Accelerators, along with Knowledge Partner countries demonstrating global leadership in closing gender gaps, are

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part of a wider ecosystem, the Global Learning Network, that facilitates exchange of insights and experiences through the Forum's platform.

Have you read?
In these countries CEOs and ministers are working together in a three-year time frame on policies that help to further close the economic gender gaps in their countries. This includes extended parental leave, subsidized childcare and making recruitment, retention and promotion practices more gender inclusive.

If you are a business in one of the Gender Parity Accelerator countries you can join the local membership base. If you are a business or government in a country where we currently do not have a Gender Parity Accelerator you can reach out to us to explore opportunities for setting one up.

What is the theme of International Women's Day in 2026?
Each year, there are effectively two different themes: one proposed as a campaign theme by the IWD website, which this year is #InspireInclusion, and the UN's official, which this year is "Invest in women: Accelerate progress". UN Women and the UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs jointly publish an annual update on the progress towards SDG5.

In the latest – Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2023 – they reveal there's an "alarming" \$360 billion annual deficit in spending on gender-equality measures. A gender-focused SDG stimulus package to deliver transformational results for women, girls and societies. \$360 billion more needed each year to

close the gender gap. Image: UN Women UN Women has outlined areas that need joint action to ensure women are not left behind: Investing in women: A human rights issue

"Gender equality remains the greatest human rights challenge. Investing in women is a human rights imperative and cornerstone for building inclusive societies. Progress for women benefits us all."

Implementing gender-responsive financing
"Due to conflicts and rising fuel and food prices, recent estimates suggest that 75% of countries will curb public spending by 2025. Austerity negatively impacts women and crowds out public spending on essential public services and social protection." Shifting to a green and caring economy "The current economic system exacerbates poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation, disproportionately affecting women and marginalized groups. Advocates for alternative economic models propose a shift towards a green and caring economy that amplifies women's voices."

Supporting feminist change-makers "Feminist organizations are leading efforts to tackle women's poverty and inequality. However, they are running on empty, receiving a meagre 0.13% of total official development assistance."

What is the state of gender parity globally?
The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2023 found that, although the global parity score has recovered to pre-pandemic levels, "the overall rate of change has slowed down significantly".
The index benchmarks 146 countries across four key dimensions (Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival and Political Empowerment) and tracks progress towards closing gender gaps over time. Of the four gaps tracked, Political Empowerment remains the largest, with only 22.1% closed – a 0.1 percentage point increase on 2022.

On March 8, 2024, celebrate Women's Day by honoring the powerful divine women in Hindu Mythology, including Parvati, Saraswati, Anasuya, Ahalya, Kunti, Draupadi, Sita, Savitri, Mandodari, and Urmila. Their strength and character inspire us all. Parvati is frequently portrayed as both a protective mother and a formidable warrior goddess. A major character in the Hindu epic Ramayana is Sita. She is regarded for her fidelity, innocence, and fortitude.

Women's Day 2024: The international Women's Day is going to be celebrated across the globe on March 8, 2024. People will celebrate women-hood with so much pride that they take out the processions and organize various cultural events and many other things. We often talk about the today's women who are working 24*7 for the family and representing their power and courage but we forget about the women who is the source of power, and courage i.e., the women from Hindu Mythology who is the

Most Powerful Women in Hindu Mythology

source of inspiration.

So, on the event of Women's Day, we are going to talk about 10 powerful divine women who showed the power and strength. Let's explore them :-

Most Powerful Women in Hindu Mythology

Goddess Parvati- The Hindu goddess of love, fidelity, and fertility is known as Parvati. She is renowned for her tenacity, compassion, and power and is the consort of Lord Shiva. Parvati is frequently portrayed as both a protective mother and a formidable warrior goddess.

Goddess Saraswati- The Hindu goddess of wisdom, learning, and knowledge is called Saraswati. She is frequently connected to literature, music, and the arts and is seen playing the veena, a musical instrument. Students and intellectuals venerate Saraswati in hopes of obtaining her blessings for success in their



academic and artistic pursuits. **Anusuya**- In Hindu mythology, Anasuya is considered as a pure and pious woman who is admired for her chastity and devotion. She is the wife of the sage

Atri. She is renowned for her cleanliness and goodness, and she had the ability to turn the Hindu trinity Lord Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva into small children.

Ahalya- In Hindu mythology, Ahalya is a highly regarded figure who is renowned for her chastity and devotion. She is the sage Gautama's wife. Once Indra, came disguised as her husband, and Ahalya accepted his advances falling prey to Indra's trickery. Later when Gautama arrived and saw Ahalya and Indra, he cursed Ahalya and she turned into a stone. Later, Lord Rama released her after touching the stone from his feet and she again appeared in a form of a woman.

Kunti- One of the main characters in the Hindu epic Mahabharata is called Kunti. She is revered for her resilience, power, and knowledge. She is the mother of the Pandava brothers. Despite all the difficulties in her life, Kunti

never wavers in her commitment to her sons and to preserving morality.

Draupadi- An important character in the Hindu epic Mahabharata is Draupadi. She is renowned for her bravery, wisdom, and beauty. She is the wife of the Pandava brothers. In the Mahabharata, Draupadi plays a crucial part as she fights for her rights and stands up against injustice.

Goddess Sita- A major character in the Hindu epic Ramayana is Sita. She is regarded for her fidelity, innocence, and fortitude. She is the wife of Lord Rama. Goddess Sita experienced various hardships when she went to exile along with Lord Rama proving her strength and unshakable faith. She also raised her children alone while living in sage Valmiki's Ashram while Lord Rama was ruling the kingdom Ayodhya. She is a perfect example of a strong

woman.

Savitri- Savitri is well known for her steadfast devotion and willpower. She is the loving spouse of Satyavan, who was destined to die in a short span of a year. Despite this terrible destiny, Savitri's love and loyalty to her husband pushed her to face the god of death, Lord Yama, and in the end, her cunning and perseverance allow her to save Satyavan's life. The tale of Savitri serves as a testament to the strength of faith, love, and a woman's unwavering spirit.

Mandodari- Mandodari is a significant figure in the Hindu epic Ramayana, where she is portrayed as Ravana's wife, the demon king of Lanka. Mandodari is shown as knowledgeable, kind, and morally upright even though she is married to a strong character. She demonstrates her moral rectitude and inner fortitude in the face of difficulty when she attempts to advise Ravana against his evil deeds. Mandodari's persona brings to light the nuanced aspects of morality, loyalty, and the possibility of atonement.

International Women's Day 2026 Nari Shakti as the Foundation of Viksit Bharat

International Women's Day is observed on 8 March. The 2026 theme is "Rights. Justice. Action For ALL Women and Girls."

A global "Give to Gain" campaign calls attention to the importance of collaboration and generosity for achieving gender equality

India's development approach has evolved from development for women to women-led development, recognising women as drivers of economic and social progress.



The Constitution guarantees equality and universal adult franchise, ensuring women equal rights and participation in India's democratic process.

Government initiatives across education, health, financial inclusion and safety are strengthening the ecosystem for women's empowerment.

Self-Help Groups, entrepreneurship schemes and skilling programmes are expanding women's economic participation and enterprise creation.

From Collective Voices to Global Recognition
A group of hands with clenched fists AI-generated content may be incorrect. Change rarely arrives with spectacle. More often, it begins as a quiet insistence, a refusal to accept the limits imposed by circumstance. The story of women's rights unfolded much the same way, in factory floors, community gatherings and public squares where voices rose not only in protest, but in hope.

Observed each year on March 8, International Women's Day stands as a reminder of the long journey towards women's rights and equality. From labour movements and suffrage campaigns to global rights conventions, women's collective action has reshaped institutions and advanced social progress. The United Nations' recognition of International Women's Day in 1977 acknowledged a movement that was already transforming societies.

Why is International Women's Day observed on 8th March?
International Women's Day grew out of

Global Give to Gain Campaign
The International Women's Day 2026 is marked by a global campaign theme, "Give to Gain," that highlights the power of collective support in advancing gender equality. It encourages individuals, organisations and communities to contribute time, resources, mentorship and opportunities that help women grow and succeed.

The idea is simple yet powerful – when people invest in supporting women's aspirations and achievements, the benefits extend far beyond individuals, strengthening communities and creating more inclusive and resilient societies.

Nari Shakti at the Centre of India's Development
Across India, change often begins in places that rarely make headlines, in a village meeting where a woman speaks up for the first time, in a small enterprise that grows from a kitchen to a marketplace, or in a classroom where a girl decides her future will be different from her past. Individually, these moments may seem ordinary. Together, they are shaping an extraordinary shift in India's development story.

For decades, the focus was on expanding access to food, education, healthcare and essential services for women. These efforts laid the groundwork for empowerment. Today, the narrative has evolved from development for women to women-led development, recognising women not just as beneficiaries but as drivers of economic and social progress.

Supporting this transition is a growing ecosystem of opportunity – access to credit, self-help groups, digital platforms, education pathways and safety mechanisms – enabling more women to participate, lead and shape India's growth.

On International Women's Day, the focus turns not only to celebrating progress but also to recognising this deeper transformation. Across enterprises, farms, classrooms and governance forums, women are actively shaping India's development journey.

Between the Mic and the Menu: A Conversation with Nikita Chawla

Nikita Chawla is a professional MC and anchor, TEDx speaker and award-winning food critic. A 30 Under 30 honouree, she is frequently seen moderating large panel discussions and speaking on issues of national importance. Known for her articulate voice and commanding presence, Nikita bridges media, lifestyle and public discourse with confidence and candour.

1. Does appearance affect credibility in media?
Yes. Women are judged visually first. I've experienced that. But the moment you begin speaking with clarity and conviction, the focus shifts. Depth always outlasts appearance.

2. Have you been judged for reviewing indulgent food?
Of course. People make comments – sometimes playful, sometimes pointed. I don't pretend I live on salads. I enjoy food. I also work hard and stay active. My body isn't a contradiction to my profession; it's part of my journey. Confidence doesn't require fitting into a stereotype.

3. Do women have to work harder to be taken seriously in discussions?
In many news spaces, yes. It's still male-dominated, and I'm often the only woman on a panel. There can be interruptions, dismissive tones or subtle intimidation. I don't over-rehearse lines – I rely on clarity of thought and genuine belief in what I'm saying. If your confidence is forced, it shows. If it's internal, it holds.

4. Do you intimidate people?
People who've seen me debate or

handle large audiences sometimes say I do. Performance mode can look intense. But when they meet me personally, they're surprised to find someone warm and easygoing. Confidence just looks bigger from a distance.

5. Have you been underestimated?
Almost everywhere. In influencer spaces, I'm seen as the nerdy journalist. In news spaces, when I'm polished, I'm assumed frivolous. Both sides are surprised when they see me hold a room or move through conversations effortlessly. People struggle when you don't fit one box.

6. How do you balance food, health and visibility?
My work involves long hours on stage – that takes stamina. I focus on strength training and staying active because energy is essential for what I do. Wellness for me is about endurance and feeling strong, not chasing a specific image.

7. Has TEDx changed you?
Yes. I shared my bullying experience – something deeply personal. Seeing people cry, parents hugging me, even asking me to bless their child made me realise how powerful honest storytelling can be. That moment changed how I see my voice.

8. Your advice to women?
Build financial independence and emotional resilience. Don't let any man decide whether you can buy that bag, that lipstick, or chase that opportunity. When you earn your own money and stand on your own feet, small everyday choices become powerful statements of freedom.

