# Reading Comprehension

**Directions (1 - 9):** Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions given after reading it. Certain words/phrases have been printed in bold to help you locate them while answering some of the questions.

Over the past few decades, women's empowerment in India has evolved from being a social aspiration to an essential national objective. It signifies more than gender equality; it represents the enhancement of women's capabilities, choices, and voices in every sphere of life - economic, political, educational, and social. The growth of women's empowerment in India has been **driven** by a combination of policy initiatives, education, employment opportunities, legal reforms, and societal awareness. Government schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Mahila Shakti Kendra, and Stand-Up India have focused on improving the education and entrepreneurship landscape for women. The spread of literacy, especially in rural areas, has encouraged women to participate more confidently in decision-making processes within households and communities. Furthermore, the digital revolution and rapid urbanization have exposed women to new economic opportunities, with online platforms enabling them to start small businesses or pursue flexible careers. Legislative measures like the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, and Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act have provided a legal backbone to women's rights, ensuring safety and dignity in both private and public spaces. In politics too, the reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions has led to significant representation of women in grassroots governance, thereby encouraging **inclusive** development. Despite this remarkable progress, numerous challenges continue to hinder the complete realization of women's empowerment in India. **Deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes, gender-based discrimination, and socio-cultural norms often ........ women's freedom of choice and movement.** In rural and underdeveloped regions, many girls still drop out of school due to early marriage, lack of safety, or financial constraints. Wage disparity and underrepresentation in leadership positions persist across sectors, while the burden of unpaid domestic labour remains disproportionately high for women. Moreover, issues like violence against women, workplace harassment, and lack of access to healthcare and financial independence continue to reinforce gender inequality. Limited awareness about rights and the slow implementation of gendersensitive laws further aggravate the problem. The intersectionality of caste, religion, and class also complicates the empowerment process, as women from marginalized backgrounds often face

double or triple discrimination. To ensure sustained progress, a multi-dimensional approach is essential. First, education must be prioritized - not just at the school level, but also in the form of skill-based and digital training programs that prepare women for modern economic roles. Employment policies should encourage equal pay, **flexible** work environments, and maternity benefits that balance professional and personal life. Second, stronger law enforcement and speedy justice delivery are crucial in addressing crimes and discrimination against women. Public awareness campaigns and community-based programs must challenge traditional stereotypes and promote gender sensitivity among both men and women. Third, financial inclusion through self-help groups, microfinance initiatives, and women-led startups can provide economic security and autonomy. Moreover, political empowerment should be strengthened through greater representation of women in Parliament and policymaking positions, ensuring that laws reflect the real needs of women. Lastly, collective societal change - driven by families, media, schools, and local communities - remains at the heart of true empowerment. When women are given equal access to opportunities and the confidence to lead, the nation benefits through increased productivity, improved social well-being, and stronger democratic values. Thus, the path toward complete women's empowerment in India, though challenging, is both achievable and **indispensable** for sustainable development.

**1.** Which of the following factors have significantly contributed to the growth of women's empowerment in India?
I. Expansion of education and digital literacy
II. Increased political participation through reservations
III. Restriction of women's access to entrepreneurship
A) All of the above        B) II and III only
C) I and III only          D) I and II only
E) None of the above

**2.** Choose the word that best matches the meaning of **"driven"** in the passage.
A) motivated              B) propelled
C) stagnant               D) hindered
E) indifferent

**3.** What word represents the opposite of **"flexible"** as used in the passage?
A) adaptable              B) pliable
C) rigid                  D) elastic
E) versatile

**4.** Select the word that appropriately fills the blank in the sentence:
A) encourage             B) expand

C) enhance                 D) liberate
E) restrict
**5.** Which of the following are mentioned as major barriers to women's empowerment in India?
I. Patriarchal social norms and gender stereotypes
II. Unequal pay and limited access to property rights
III. Expansion of self-help groups and microfinance schemes
A) I and II only           B) II and III only
C) I and III only          D) All of the above
E) None of the above
**6.** Which of the following measures has been implemented by the Indian government to strengthen women's empowerment?
I. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana
II. Eklavya Model Residential Schools
III. Stand-Up India Scheme
A) I and II only           B) II and III only
C) I and III only          D) All of the above
E) None of the above
**7.** Choose the word most synonymous with **"inclusive"** as used in the passage.
A) exclusive              B) narrow
C) selective              D) segregated
E) comprehensive
**8.** What word represents the opposite meaning of **"indispensable"** as used in the passage?
A) essential              B) unnecessary
C) vital                  D) crucial
E) mandatory
**9.** Which of the following steps are suggested in the passage to further strengthen women's empowerment in India?
I. Promoting equal representation in leadership positions
II. Ensuring safety and legal protection for women
III. Limiting access to higher education to preserve traditional roles
A) All of the above
B) II and III only
C) I and III only
D) I and II only
E) None of the above

# KEY

1-D, 2-B, 3-C, 4-E, 5-A, 6-C, 7-E, 8-B, 9-D