NIRMALA SITHARAMAN

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**A SUCCESS STORY**

**Nirmala Sitharaman** (born 18 August 1959)[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-:14-1) is an Indian economist, politician and a senior leader of the [Bharatiya Janata Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bharatiya_Janata_Party" \o "Bharatiya Janata Party) (BJP) serving as the [Minister of Finance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_of_Finance_(India)) and [Minister of Corporate Affairs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Corporate_Affairs) of the [Government of India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_India) since 2019. She is a [member](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Member_of_Parliament_(India)) of the [Rajya Sabha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajya_Sabha" \o "Rajya Sabha), the upper house of the [Indian Parliament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_India), representing [Karnataka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karnataka) since 2016 and previously represented [Andhra Pradesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andhra_Pradesh) from 2014 to 2016. Sitharaman previously served as the 28th [Defence Minister](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_of_Defence_(India)) from 2017 to 2019, thereby becoming India's second female defence minister and the second female finance minister after [Indira Gandhi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indira_Gandhi), and the first full-time female minister to hold each of those portfolios. She served as junior minister in the [Modi ministry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Modi_ministry) between 2014 and 2017, holding successive positions, first for her dual appointment as the Minister of State in the [Ministry of Finance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Finance_(India)) and the Minister of State in the [Ministry of Corporate Affairs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Corporate_Affairs) from May to November 2014, and then as the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the [Ministry of Commerce and Industry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Commerce_and_Industry_(India)) from May 2014 to September 2017, before being elevated to senior posts within the [Union Cabinet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_Council_of_Ministers). [[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-2)

Sitharaman featured in the [Forbes 2022 list of World's 100 most powerful women](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forbes_list_of_The_World%27s_100_Most_Powerful_Women) and was ranked 36.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-3) In 2023, she was ranked 32nd in the Forbes 2023 list of World's 100 most powerful women.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-4) [Fortune](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortune_(magazine)) named her the most powerful woman in India.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-5)[[6](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-CaptainBiz-6)

## Early life and education

Nirmala Sitharaman was born in a [Tamil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamils) [Iyengar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iyengar" \o "Iyengar) family[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-7) in [Madurai, Tamil Nadu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madurai), to Savitri and Narayanan Sitharaman. She had her schooling from Sacred Heart Convent Anglo-Indian School,[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-8) [Villupuram](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viluppuram" \o "Viluppuram) till primary level, and thereafter at Vidyodaya School in [Chennai](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chennai). She then studied at St. Philomena’s School, and at Holy Cross School in [Tiruchirappalli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiruchirappalli).[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-bst-9) She obtained a [Bachelor of Arts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bachelor_of_Arts) degree in Economics from [Seethalakshmi Ramaswami College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seethalakshmi_Ramaswami_College" \o "Seethalakshmi Ramaswami College), [Tiruchirapalli](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiruchirapalli" \o "Tiruchirapalli) in 1980, [Master of Arts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_of_Arts) degree in Economics and [M.Phil.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_of_Philosophy) from [Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jawaharlal_Nehru_University,_Delhi) in 1984.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-10)[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-11)[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-12) She then enrolled for a [Ph.D.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_of_Philosophy) program in Economics with a focus on Indo-Europe trade; but later left this program and moved to [London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London) (when her husband secured a scholarship in [London School of Economics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_School_of_Economics)) because of which she was unable to complete her degree.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-bs-sep2017-13)



## Political career

Nirmala Sitharaman served as a member of the [National Commission for Women](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Commission_for_Women) from 2003 to 2005.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-14)

Nirmala Sitharaman joined [BJP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BJP) in 2008. She was a national spokesperson of the party till 2014. In 2014, she was inducted into [Narendra Modi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Modi_ministry)'s cabinet as a [junior minister](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_(government)) and was elected in June of that year as a Rajya Sabha Member from Andhra Pradesh.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-15)[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-:0-16)[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-17)

In May 2016, she was one of the 12 candidates nominated by the BJP to contest the [Rajya Sabha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rajya_Sabha" \o "Rajya Sabha) elections due on 11 June. She successfully contested her seat from [Karnataka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karnataka).[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-18)

She has served as the [Defence Minister of India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_of_Defence_(India)) and headed the [Balakot Air Strike](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_Balakot_airstrike" \o "2019 Balakot airstrike) carried out by the Indian Air Force in 2019. She is currently serving as the [Minister of Finance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_of_Finance_(India)) and [Corporate affairs of India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Corporate_Affairs) and has presented five annual budgets of India (as of 2023).

## Union Cabinet Minister

### UNION DEFENCE MINISTER

Sitharaman as the Union Minister of Defence in New Delhi, 7 September 2017Sitharaman pictured during her tenure as Union Minister of Defence, January 2018

On 3 September 2017, she was appointed as [Minister of Defence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Defence_(India)), being only the second woman after [Indira Gandhi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indira_Gandhi) to hold the post, but the first full-time female defence minister.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-ns-19)[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-20)

Under her tenure, the army conducted the [Balakot airstrike](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_Balakot_airstrike" \o "2019 Balakot airstrike) in retaliation to the [2019 Pulwama attack](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_Pulwama_attack). The Indian army claimed that the operation had killed at least 170 [JEM terrorists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaish-e-Mohammed).[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-21)[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-22)

### Union Finance Minister

Sitharaman as Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs in New Delhi, 31 May 2019

On 31 May 2019, Nirmala Sitharaman was appointed as the [finance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_of_Finance_(India)) and [corporate affairs minister](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Corporate_Affairs).[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-23) She is India's first full-time female finance minister.[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-24) She presented her maiden budget in the Indian parliament on 5 July 2019.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-25) Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2020–21 on 1 February 2020.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-26) During the [COVID-19 pandemic in India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_pandemic_in_India) she was made in-charge of the [COVID-19 Economic Response Task Force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_Economic_Response_Task_Force).[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-27)[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-28)

Under her tenure as the finance minister in 2022, India became the [Fifth largest Economy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)) in the world, and the GDP of the country was said to have seen massive growth positively with historical context.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-29)[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-30)

In February 2024, she presented the Union budget for the record 6th time and matched it with [Morarji Desai](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morarji_Desai" \o "Morarji Desai). She also became the first minister to present the budget in the [New Parliament building](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Parliament_House,_New_Delhi) of India.[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-31)

She was given the same cabinet posts after the [Indian general election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Indian_general_election) in June 2024.[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-32)[[33](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-33)

## Non-political career

Nirmala Sitharaman worked as a salesperson at Habitat, a home decor store in London's [Regent Street](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regent_Street).[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-34) She has served as an assistant to Economist in the [Agricultural Engineers Association](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agricultural_Engineers_Association) in the UK. During her stay in the UK, she has also served as a Senior Manager ([R&D](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Research_and_development))[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-Huffington_Post_India-35) for [PWC](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PricewaterhouseCoopers) and briefly at the [BBC World Service](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BBC_World_Service).[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-:0-16)

She has also served as a member of [National Commission for Women](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Commission_for_Women).[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-36) In 2017, she was one of the founding directors of Pranava in [Hyderabad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyderabad,_India).[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-37)[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-address-38)[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-39)

## Awards and honors

The Jawaharlal Nehru University conferred her the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2019.[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-40) Forbes Magazine has ranked her 34th among the [100 most powerful women in the world](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forbes_list_of_The_World%27s_100_Most_Powerful_Women) in 2019.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-41) Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Finance Minister wins the Business Reformer of the year award at The [Economic Times Awards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_Times_Awards) for Corporate Excellence 2021. In 2023, ranked at number 32, Sitharaman has made it to the list of Forbes Magazine's 100 most powerful women in the world for the fifth time in a row. In 2022, the minister was ranked at number 36 in the list, while she was in the 37th spot in 2021 and 41st in 2020 respectively.

## Personal life

Sitharaman met her husband, economist and commentator [Parakala Prabhakar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parakala_Prabhakar" \o "Parakala Prabhakar), who is from [Narsapuram](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narsapuram" \o "Narsapuram), [Andhra Pradesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andhra_Pradesh), while studying at the [Jawaharlal Nehru University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jawaharlal_Nehru_University).[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-42) While Nirmala leaned towards the BJP, her husband is from a [Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_National_Congress) family.[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-43) They married in 1986, and have a daughter who previously worked for [The Hindu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hindu) and the [Mint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mint_(newspaper)).[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-44) Prabhakar served as the communications advisor to the [Government of Andhra Pradesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_Andhra_Pradesh) from 2014 to 2018.[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-45)[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-Huffington_Post_India-35)[[46]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_note-46)

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  2. [**^**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_ref-2) [*"Deccan Chronicle: BJP leader Nirmala Sitharaman gets NJR Rajya Sabha seat"*](https://www.deccanchronicle.com/140604/nation-politics/article/bjp-leader-nirmala-sitharaman-gets-njr-rajya-sabha-seat)*. 4 June 2014.*[*Archived*](https://web.archive.org/web/20170904030305/http:/www.deccanchronicle.com/140604/nation-politics/article/bjp-leader-nirmala-sitharaman-gets-njr-rajya-sabha-seat)*from the original on 4 September 2017. Retrieved 3 September 2017.*
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  4. [**^**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_ref-4) [*"The World's Most Powerful Women 2023"*](https://www.forbes.com/lists/power-women/)*.*[*Forbes*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forbes)*.*
  5. [**^**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_ref-5) [*"India's Most Powerful Business Women in 2021 - Fortune India"*](https://web.archive.org/web/20170908082917/http:/www.fortuneindia.com/mpw)*. www.fortuneindia.com. Archived from*[*the original*](https://www.fortuneindia.com/mpw)*on 8 September 2017. Retrieved 18 February 2022.*
  6. [**^**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_ref-CaptainBiz_6-0) *Moulik Jain (2 February 2024).*[*"India's MSME Sector: A New Dawn With Budget 2024'S Transformative Measures"*](https://www.captainbiz.com/blogs/indias-msme-sector-a-new-dawn-with-budget-2024s-transformative-measures/)*. CaptainBiz.*[*Archived*](https://web.archive.org/web/20240205060627/https:/www.captainbiz.com/blogs/indias-msme-sector-a-new-dawn-with-budget-2024s-transformative-measures/)*from the original on 5 February 2024. Retrieved 2 February 2024.*
  7. [**^**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_Sitharaman#cite_ref-7) [*"A power couple whom AP looks up to"*](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/A-power-couple-whom-AP-looks-up-to/articleshow/38766320.cms)*. Times of India.*[*Archived*](https://web.archive.org/web/20210411001209/http:/timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/A-power-couple-whom-AP-looks-up-to/articleshow/38766320.cms)*from the original on 11 April 2021. Retrieved 21 July 2014.*