

SNDT Women's University



Bharat Ratna Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve
(18•4•1858 - 9•11•1962)

SNDT Women's University established in 1916 heralded the beginning of formal higher education for women in India and South-East Asia. The institution was the fruition of the founder, Maharshi Dr. Dhondo Keshav Karve's vision for the empowerment of women. The realization was possible with the financial support of the philanthropist Sir Vithaldas Thackersey. The headquarters of the University is at the Churchgate campus in Mumbai and the other two campuses are located at Juhu, Mumbai and Maharshi Karve Road, Pune.

Founder of the University

Bharat Ratna Maharshi Dhonde Keshav Karve (April 18, 1858 - Nov 9, 1962) was a Humanist, an evangel of emancipation both for Hindu widows and for womanhood at large. A pioneering figure moved by the magnificent instinct that upheld the progress of womanhood as the purest and surest test of the progress of civilization, the establishment of Shreemati Nathibai Damodhar Thackersey Indian Women's University was the culmination of an odyssey, which began with the establishment of Hindu Widow's Home Association in 1896 and the Mahila Vidyalaya in 1907. The Women's University was sculpted along the lines of the Women's University in Tokyo. The founding father advocated women's education as instrumental in women's empowerment by enabling them to be economically independent and to be able to think for themselves..

विद्यापीठ गीत

'संस्कृता स्त्री पराशक्ति' स्वर हमारा है।
विश्व है परिवार, भारत घर हमारा है॥
हम नहीं हैं दीन, कहता कौन हम अबला
है सबल संस्कृति हमारी, हम सभी सबला
ज्योति से जगमग हुआ, अंतर हमारा है॥
स्वप्न टाकरसी हुआ साकार है इसमें
महर्षि कर्वे तपस्या - सार है इसमें
हम दिशाएँ और यह दिनकर हमारा है॥
'संस्कृता स्त्री पराशक्ति' स्वर हमारा है।
विश्व है परिवार, भारत घर हमारा है॥

Vision

Today we visualise the SNDT Women's University as a world class university that continually responds to the changing social realities through the development and application of knowledge. The purpose of such engagement will be to create an inclusive society that promotes and protects the dignity, equality, social justice and human rights for all, with special emphasis on empowerment of women.

Mission

SNDT Women's University is committed to the cause of women's empowerment through access to education, particularly higher education, through relevant courses in the formal and non-formal streams. Further the university is committed to provide a wide range of professional and vocational courses for women to meet the changing socio-economic needs, with human values and purposeful social responsibility and to achieve excellence with "Quality in every Activity"

Motto

An Enlightened Woman is a source of Infinite Strength

Goals

The goals of the SNDT Women's University emerging from the Vision and Mission are to:

- Provide access to higher education for women through formal and non- formal streams including adult and continuing education.
- Provide a wide range of professional and vocational courses for women to meet the socio-economic demands.
- Develop scholarship and research in emerging areas of study, particularly with focus on women's perspectives.
- Inculcate among women positive self- concept, awareness of women's issues and rights with a rational outlook towards society.
- Enhance purposeful education with 'human values' and social responsibility by participating in outreach programmes.
- Achieve excellence in the academic disciplines, research and extension activities through emphasis on 'quality in every activity'.

Core Values

At the SNDTWU we value

1. Education that is truly human and genuinely liberative, committed to human rights and justice
2. Education committed to nation building through economic development.
3. Education that will open worlds of culture and artistic excellence
4. Education that bridges theoretical and empirical knowledge
5. Education that focuses on development of body, mind and spirit.

Presidential Address
By
Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve
at
29th Indian National Social Congress
on
December 30, 1915

Excerpts from Presidential Address on
'Need for establishing Women's University'

Maharshi Karve was invited to deliver Presidential Address at the Indian National Social Congress on December 30, 1915 held in Mumbai. Here he first presented his thoughts on the need for Higher Education – A University for women.

Coming now to practical questions that are constantly knocking at our social doors for solution, I must say at the outset that to my mind the greatest need of Indian Society at the present day is education. I do not know if you will all agree with me in placing education at the fore-front of social questions. It may, perhaps it does, have a political aspect. But looking at it socially, want of education is the one canker that has been eating up the vitals of India. If there is injustice and wrong in society, it is because society is mostly buried deep in ignorance. Evil is the offspring of darkness and there can be no darkness blacker than that of ignorance. No wonder if Indian social world appeared to an outsider to be a scene of discord and division. What else can it be when that light which reduces all chaos to order is denied to it? Ninety per cent of the population live and move and have their being without any opportunity of drinking at the living fountain of knowledge. The inner eye with them is never opened. Life to them is no more, no higher, than a struggle of hungry creatures where might has a right to crush all weakness out of existence. The first thing that we ought to look to therefore is universal education. No readjustment of the social polity is possible unless every man, woman and child in the land is able at least to read, write and reckon. On the political platform the cause of universal elementary education was first emphatically espoused by my friend, the late Hon'ble Mr. G.K. Gokhale, and I hope, the late patriot's efforts backed by the unanimous voice of the country will not fail ultimately to bear fruit. But we cannot afford to wait till the Government of the land are pleased to take up the question. We ought to bestir ourselves to supplement the endeavours of government wherever we can.

We are, however more closely concerned here with the education of women and I am afraid, little that may perceptibly count has yet been done in the matter. As early as in 1854 the importance of this branch of education was recognized by the Government, for in that year the memorable despatch on education came, paragraph 83 of which contains the following oft-quoted sentences:

“The importance of female education in India cannot be overrated; and we have observed with pleasure the evidence which is now afforded of an increased desire on the part of many of the natives of India to give a good education to their daughters. By this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men.”

Permit me now, ladies and gentlemen, to place before you approximately my idea of secondary and higher education for women. It is based fundamentally upon the recognition of two principles. (1) That the most natural and therefore efficient medium of instruction is the learner's mother tongue. (2) And secondly, that women as a class have different functions to fulfill in the social economy from those of men.

These two principles will commend themselves to all dispassionate thinkers and have been accepted by educational experts. Whenever the day for the wholesale adoption of vernaculars as media of instruction through-out the whole educational course for boys comes, we ought not to wait for it in the case of girls. There are no political or economic reasons present and the sooner we begin to impart all education primary, secondary higher to girls through the vernaculars, the better, it will be for the race. The second principle too is of vital importance. I do not mean that the way should be rigorously barred against those, whose ambition would be to beat men on their own ground and complete with them for prizes and honours in the existing Universities. Those who would be in a position by intellectual, physical and financial equipment to do so, would certainly be glorious ornaments to their kind and also to the whole community in the present conditions. But we must recognize that both national and social economy required that women should occupy a station of their own distinct from that of men. That they are as integral a part of the social organism as men, is beyond question, but that the office they have to fill is different, though equal perhaps greater in importance is equally true. If men and women therefore, are to be fitted by education to bear their own respective shares in the preservation, development and evolution towards perfection of the whole community, they must be brought up on two different lines. The differentiation in the educational courses must correspond in time and nature approximately to the differentiation in their conscious individuality. This does not imply, let me assure you that the two lines of education should be absolutely independent of each other and mutually exclusive. For after all, whether men or women, they are member of mankind and as such they are at bottom one. In social functions, in life's responsibility and in spheres of work they may differ; but in spirit, in humanity they are one. As far, therefore, as the development and unfolding of their common human nature is concerned, their education must take a common form and shape. They both have to work together hand in hand side by side towards the attainment of the ultimate purpose of the race in the order of creation and have therefore certain common endowments. To call them into play, to foster the instincts, impulses, emotions and faculties, their education too must be common. All the latter differentiation must have under it, about it and within it the common life and soul. In fact, the courses must be like two branches on one and the same stem and must be fed and sustained by the same vital sap. Neither men's nor women's education, therefore, can be sound if it absolutely dissociated from the other. The two must be correlated and co-ordinated must be wedded so as to be two in order to be one.

In framing these secondary and higher courses of studies, we may be guided by the Japan Women's University. A prudent and practical Japanese thinker and worker, Mr. Naruse, conceived the idea of this University and with immense patience and perseverance made it a success to the great advantage of the Japanese nation. So far as our women are concerned our circumstances are very similar to those of Japan and we can profitably turn for guidance to institutions conducted by those people rather than to schools and colleges for women in the West. Mr. Naruse saw in what condition Japanese women were and he pitched his hopes accordingly. He writes:-

“Our aim in establishing the Women's University is neither to copy the higher institutions for women in America and Europe, nor to rival the men's university courses in this country. What we aim at is so to frame our schedules of study as to suit the mental and physical conditions of women at present and to gradually raise the standard in accordance with general progress.”

To suit Indian conditions, we shall perhaps have to make a still humbler beginning that the Japanese did. We should devise a course of secondary education for women so adjusted that by the time a girl attains the age of fifteen or sixteen, she should be enabled to complete it. Parents are sure to postpone marriage of their daughter for a year or two if an educational distinction is near at hand for her. This age also is likely to be minimum age of marriage of girls in advanced Indian communities in the very near future.

In devising our courses on these lines, we ought not to make an abrupt departure. The new high school courses for girls ought to be, for the present, accommodated to the courses now in force. They should be complete in themselves for those who, at the close of their high school education will, enter upon their worldly tasks. They should be of a preparatory nature for those who will choose to go to in for higher grades in a vernacular college, while they should also be so framed that girls with the necessary intelligence and ambition may find it easily possible to go in for the matriculation of the present Universities after a couple of years' further preparation.

It will certainly mean an educational experiment, and we may reasonably expect Government to take the lead here as they have done in agriculture. I am aware the finances of Government at the present day are the most strained owing to the abnormal conditions created by the war in Europe, and instead of undertaking new financial responsibilities they would be anxious to use the scissors wherever they could. In these circumstances all that may be legitimately expected of them is the setting apart of a part of their ordinary allotment to the education of women, for making a small beginning in that direction. It will even be a great thing if they set it down as one of the most urgent schemes of the day, to be taken up before everything else when normal times return. Let us hope and pray they soon will. That our empire is bound in the end to come victoriously out of the present struggle, every one of us cannot but be confident. For our cause is righteous. It is only for the early termination of the war that we have to pray.

But even if Government be favourably disposed in the matter their wheels often are too slow to move. It is already late. To wait any longer will be almost suicidal. I would appeal therefore to Indian States, to public bodies, to private Institutions and to men interested in the social amelioration of the country, to take up the matter without further delay, and start experiments which are bound to succeed if only they are pursued with a firm grip. They will yet save the situation if they lose no time in empty discussions. Let them set to work practically. When they have some work already done to show, I feel sure, Government will not be tardy in extending their helping hand to them. The matter is of such grave urgency and far reaching import, that I would urge it on the Conference to take it in hand and to appoint a committee to formulate a scheme with all its details clearly reasoned out and to suggest ways and means to found vernacular high schools and colleges on the lines here advocated. Women's education has sufficiently advanced now for us to take the step.

