



**SPEECH
OF
MADAM SMT ANUPAMA SINGH,
FIRST LADY OF THE STATE,
ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

**ON THE OCCASION OF
WORKSHOP ON GENDER & DEVELOPMENT
FOR NSS VOLUNTEERS**

**ON
6TH MAY, 2008 AT 1000 HRS.**

**AT
ARUNODAYA SIRD HOSTEL,
ITANAGAR**

Commissioner Education Shri Khoda, Director of Higher & Technical Education Dr. Joram Begi, Swami Subranandaji Maharaj, Dr. V N Sharma, Dr Gopinath from Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, invitees and my dear students, I feel privileged and elated to address this gathering this morning.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the State NSS Cell and the Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development for organizing a series of workshops in different parts of the state on a crucial subject like "Gender and Development".

At one-eighth of the world's population, young people between 10 and 20 years of age are the fastest growing segment of the world population. Most of you sitting here I believe will fall in this category. This age group is also the period in which there is a marked divergence in roles of boys and girls and the cultural and social disadvantages of being a girl start becoming obvious. As a girl moves from childhood to puberty and beyond, her roles as a wife, mother, professional and a citizen begin to take shape with consequences that have lifelong implications.

The opportunities, choice and freedom available to boys usually expand while those available to girls undergo many curtailments. As compared to boys, fewer girls go to school, do more domestic work, can go out of home less often, have fewer friends and mentors and have fewer public spaces and leisure activities available to them. In these respects, as on indicators of health, education and labor force participation, girls are considerably behind their male peers. Marriage practices including child marriage and the rule of residence with the husband's family after marriage, etc., increases the girls' vulnerability and also do not allow them to appreciate their full potential. Studies for a married woman involves the complete support of her family.

However education can provide immense opportunities especially to the weaker section and downtrodden women to organize themselves for achieving their common economic goals. Efforts have been made by the Government in this regard. Yet women in most of the cases cannot avail themselves of these opportunities, because of various factors like illiteracy, poverty and social convention. In Arunachal Pradesh in general and tribal women in particular lag far behind their male counterparts in education. According to 2001 census, the female literacy rate in Arunachal Pradesh is 44.24 percent

as against 65.07 percent for male. Stark gender inequality can be seen in the state in work participation, governance, asset holdings and access to health services. Education is vital for development of society particularly the girl child.

It has been generally observed that employment in the service sector is not gender neutral and is influenced, dominated and virtually controlled by males. Women find the working environment unfriendly and insecure. Questions of fair representation of genders and equality of opportunity have been pushed into the background under the guise of quality, merit and ability. The planning and implementation process must possess a vision that encompasses both the public and private owned sectors, keeping its gaze fixed on ensuring equality of opportunity and being alive to gender sensitivities. There should be vocational training for financial empowerment for boys & girls after 10+2. No need for everyone to be graduates.

Gender disparity at all levels and its adverse impact on women has become a fact of life. This is partly due to biological role and responsibilities of women as mothers, but mostly due to traditional mindsets, which visualize women as being child-bearers and homemakers, and men as breadwinners. However we must remember that in today's world some of our women are not only homemakers but also bread winners. They are expected to perform all the roles efficiently. And in most cases being a working woman does not exempt her from household responsibilities. In Arunachal also we have lots of women working in government and private organizations. There are young girls employed in the hospitality industries working shifts and extra hours. When we talk about gender disparity, it also important to talk about safety of our working women, in their work places. It is also important to ensure equal opportunities at work place and providing them with a friendly and positive work environment. They need to be immensely supported by the family members. I want to urge all of you to work in this direction starting from your own homes.

We have honored women power with recognition of their potential in the sixtieth year of independence by electing Her Excellency Smt Pratibha Devisingh Patil as the thirteenth President of our Republic. Simultaneously 33% Women Reservation Bill may also contribute as a move to recognize the due share of women in the social development activities which is being tabled in the Parliament today. An early recognition and removal of barriers in bringing the full

potential of women power in national development will surely transform India into a developed nation in all spheres at an earliest date.

Since times immemorial women have played a very important role in society. They have played their part in the evaluation of civilization and have worked very hard in various fields and safeguarding the traditions and cultures of their societies.

The importance of the mother cannot be underestimated and is also acknowledged by our ancient scriptures. The people speak of the mothers of famous personalities like Shivaji whose mother's name Jijabai is taken with great reverence. The mother is always mentioned first like 'Gurudev Mata Gurudev Pita' and like we call our nation 'Mother India'. Even in the animal kingdom the mother is the one who brings up the little ones, protects them, feeds them and teaches them.

Women have done our country proud in the field of sports adventure and space like Sunita Williams and Kalpana Chawla – Sania Mirza – P.T. Usha and Anju Bobby George.

We have had great entrepreneurs like Indira Nooyie and some of the worlds powerful women like Indira Gandhi, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi.

To chart future actions, we must marshal our collective wisdom to make breakthroughs in several areas. You all have a greater responsibility in this regard. If education means tolerance, awareness, responsibility, knowledge, I would like to call upon you all to please exercise your abilities in building our nation as a strong and vibrant one. Tomorrow is yours, I would like to conclude my speech by quoting a verse from holy Mahabharata "a student acquires a quarter of his knowledge from his teacher, another quarter from his own intelligence, the third quarter from his co-students, and the last quarter in course of time from experience", I hope this three days **Karyasala** will definitely give you lot of experience and make all of you a responsible and sensitive citizen.

I wish the workshop all success.

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