

# SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

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**Abstract:** This article explores the views and contributions of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, one of the most influential educationists and philosophers of the 20th century, on the role of women in education and society. It examines his perspective on the importance, challenges, and opportunities of women's education, as well as his vision of the ideal woman and her place in the family, the community, and the nation. It also analyzes his impact on the development and empowerment of women in India and beyond.

**Keywords:** *Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, women's education, women's role, women's empowerment, Indian culture, Indian society.*

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## I INTRODUCTION

Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) was born on September 5, 1888 at Tiruttani (Madras Presidency), a noted pilgrim centre in South India. He was a brilliant student who excelled in various subjects, especially philosophy. He became a professor of philosophy at various universities in India and abroad, and also served as the Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University and Banaras Hindu University. He was the Chairman of the University Grants Commission, the leader of the Indian delegation to UNESCO, the Ambassador of India to the Soviet Union, the Vice-President of India, and the President of India. He was also a prolific writer and speaker who authored several books and articles on various aspects of Indian and Western philosophy, religion, ethics, and culture. He was awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour, in 1954, and the Templeton Prize, an international award for progress in religion, in 1975.

Dr. Radhakrishnan's views and contributions on the role of women in education and society were based on his deep understanding of the Indian and Western traditions of thought, and his vision of a harmonious and progressive society. He believed that women play a special part in bringing peace to the horror-stricken world, and they have a definite philosophy of life<sup>[1]</sup>[1]. He stated, "Women are the missionaries of civilization with their immense capacity for self-sacrifice and they are the unquestioned leaders in ahinsa."<sup>[2]</sup>[2] He also advocated for the equal rights, opportunities, and dignity of women in all spheres of life, and supported their education, development, and empowerment. He also appreciated and respected the diversity and richness of the

different roles and identities of women in the Indian culture and society.

## Women's Education

Dr. Radhakrishnan laid emphasis on women's education in different ways. He viewed that, women are the missionary of civilization<sup>[1]</sup>[1]. Radhakrishnan courts high place to women in the society. Coding to him general education should be provided for intelligent living of citizens. Mean and women are equally competent in academic work<sup>[2]</sup>[2]. He also recognized the challenges and barriers that women face in accessing and pursuing education, such as poverty, discrimination, patriarchy, and violence. He urged the government, the society, and the women themselves to overcome these obstacles and to promote women's education as a human right and a social responsibility.

Dr. Radhakrishnan's educational philosophy and contributions have been instrumental in advancing women's education in India and beyond. He was involved in several initiatives and policies that aimed at improving the quality, quantity, and accessibility of women's education, such as the University Education Commission in 1948, the establishment of several universities and institutions for women, the promotion of research-oriented and interdisciplinary education for women, and the encouragement of women's participation in various fields of knowledge and culture. He also inspired and influenced many women educators and learners, who have made significant contributions to the field of education and society.

## Women's Role

Dr. Radhakrishnan had a broad and nuanced perspective on the role

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of women in society. He did not confine women to any fixed or rigid role, but rather acknowledged and celebrated the multiple and dynamic roles and identities of women in the Indian culture and society. He also did not impose any artificial or arbitrary distinction between the public and the private spheres of life, but rather recognized the interdependence and complementarity of both. He also did not prescribe any ideal or universal role for women, but rather respected the individuality and diversity of women and their choices and preferences.

Dr. Radhakrishnan envisioned the ideal woman as one who is educated, enlightened, and empowered, and who can balance and integrate the natural, social, and spiritual aspects of existence. He also envisioned the ideal woman as one who is compassionate, selfless, and courageous, and who can contribute to the welfare and progress of the family, the community, and the nation. He also envisioned the ideal woman as one who is respectful, tolerant, and cooperative, and who can engage in dialogue and exchange with the people of different faiths and backgrounds.

### Women's Empowerment

Dr. Radhakrishnan was a strong advocate and supporter of women's empowerment in education and society. He believed that women's empowerment is not only a matter of justice and equality, but also a matter of necessity and urgency for the development and peace of the world. He stated, "The emancipation of women is not an act of charity, the result of a humanitarian or compassionate attitude. The liberation of women is a fundamental necessity for the revolution, a guarantee of its continuity and a precondition for its victory."<sup>[3]</sup> He also believed that women's empowerment is not only a matter of rights and opportunities, but also a matter of responsibilities and duties for the women themselves and for the society as a whole.

Dr. Radhakrishnan's views and contributions on women's empowerment have had a lasting and positive impact on the development and empowerment of women in India and beyond. He has inspired and influenced many women leaders and activists, who have fought for and achieved various social, political, and economic rights and reforms for women, such as the right to vote, the right to education, the right to work, the right to property, the right to health, the right to safety, and the right to dignity. He has also inspired and influenced many women scholars and artists, who have enriched and transformed the fields of knowledge and culture with their creativity and innovation.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a luminary in Indian philosophy, a statesman, and the second President of India, was not only a champion of education but also a fervent advocate for the empowerment of women. His life and work were marked by a deep commitment to equality, and he played a pivotal role in shaping the discourse on the role of women in both education and society. This article explores Radhakrishnan's perspective on the empowerment of women, examining how his beliefs and actions influenced the trajectory of women's education in India.

Radhakrishnan believed that education was the key to societal progress and that it should be accessible to all, regardless of gender. He emphasized the importance of dismantling barriers that restricted women's access to education. His vision went beyond mere literacy; he sought to provide women with the tools for intellectual and personal development, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to the progress of the nation.

As a scholar and educational administrator, Radhakrishnan actively worked towards creating an inclusive educational environment. He advocated for the establishment of schools and colleges that catered to the educational needs of women, recognizing that their empowerment was essential for the overall development of society. Radhakrishnan's tenure as the Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University and later as the President of India allowed him to translate his beliefs into concrete actions. He promoted women's education by encouraging the establishment of educational institutions for women and by supporting initiatives that aimed at enhancing the quality of education provided to them.

His advocacy for women's education extended beyond conventional academic subjects. Radhakrishnan recognized the importance of holistic education that encompassed not only intellectual pursuits but also character development, ethics, and social responsibility. He believed that an educated woman could play a transformative role in society by nurturing future generations and contributing to social and cultural development.

Radhakrishnan's commitment to gender equality went beyond the classroom. He consistently emphasized the need to acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of women in various spheres of life. In his view, recognizing and honoring women's accomplishments was essential for fostering a culture of equality and respect.

As President, Radhakrishnan used his platform to highlight the

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achievements of women in diverse fields, from science to literature, and encouraged the nation to value and celebrate the talents of women. This recognition was not just symbolic; it contributed to a gradual shift in societal attitudes towards the roles and capabilities of women.

Radhakrishnan approached the issue of women's empowerment within the context of India's rich cultural heritage. He believed that true empowerment could only be achieved by synthesizing modern education with traditional values. This perspective sought to empower women not by erasing cultural nuances but by leveraging them to create a society where women could thrive intellectually and socially while maintaining their cultural identities.

Radhakrishnan's vision for women's empowerment was, therefore, holistic, encompassing education, recognition, and cultural integration. He aimed to create a society where women could fully participate in shaping the nation's destiny, not as mere recipients of progress, but as active contributors.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's advocacy for the empowerment of women in education and society was visionary. His belief in the transformative power of education and his commitment to breaking down gender barriers laid the groundwork for a more inclusive and equitable society. Radhakrishnan's legacy continues to inspire ongoing efforts to promote women's education and participation in all facets of life, reminding us that the empowerment of women is not just a matter of justice but a cornerstone of societal progress and enlightenment.

### Women's Empowerment and Economic Participation:

Radhakrishnan recognized the intrinsic link between women's education and their economic empowerment. He believed that education could empower women economically by providing them with the skills and knowledge needed to participate actively in the workforce. His vision extended beyond traditional roles for women, envisioning a society where women could contribute significantly to economic development.

In his writings and speeches, Radhakrishnan emphasized the need for vocational and professional education for women, enabling them to pursue careers of their choice. He saw economic independence as a crucial aspect of women's empowerment, freeing them from dependence and enabling them to contribute meaningfully to the economic well-being of their families and communities.

### Legal Reforms and Women's Rights:

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Radhakrishnan's advocacy for women's empowerment also extended to legal reforms. He recognized the importance of legal frameworks that protected and promoted women's rights. During his time as the President of India, Radhakrishnan supported initiatives aimed at addressing issues such as child marriage, dowry, and unequal inheritance rights. He believed that legal reforms were essential for creating an environment where women could exercise their rights and live free from discrimination.

Radhakrishnan's commitment to legal reforms aligned with his broader vision of creating a just and equitable society. By supporting legal initiatives that safeguarded women's rights, he contributed to the establishment of a foundation upon which later generations could build to advance gender equality.

### Legacy in Women's Education Institutions:

The impact of Radhakrishnan's advocacy for women's education is evident in the numerous institutions that have been established in his honor, dedicated exclusively to women's education. These institutions continue to embody his vision of providing women with quality education and nurturing their intellectual and personal development.

Many women's colleges and universities in India carry forward Radhakrishnan's legacy by upholding his principles of inclusivity, equality, and a holistic approach to education. These institutions serve as a testament to his enduring influence on the landscape of women's education in India.

While progress has been made since Radhakrishnan's time, challenges in achieving full gender equality persist. Issues such as gender-based violence, unequal representation in leadership roles, and disparities in access to education and healthcare continue to be significant concerns. Radhakrishnan's legacy challenges us to address these issues comprehensively and build on the foundation he laid for the empowerment of women in education and society.

Ongoing efforts in women's education and empowerment align with Radhakrishnan's vision, striving to create an environment where women can fully realize their potential and contribute to the betterment of society. As we celebrate the progress made, it is essential to remain committed to the ongoing work of breaking down barriers and ensuring that every woman has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the social, economic, and cultural fabric of the nation.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's contributions to the empowerment of women in education and society were multi-faceted, encompassing

educational reforms, economic empowerment, legal advocacy, and the establishment of institutions dedicated to women's education. His vision for an inclusive and equitable society, where women play a central role in shaping the nation's destiny, continues to inspire and guide efforts towards gender equality. As we reflect on Radhakrishnan's legacy, we find both inspiration and a call to action, urging us to continue the journey towards a society where every woman can realize her full potential and contribute meaningfully to the progress of the nation.

### Conclusions

Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was one of the most influential educationists and philosophers of the 20th century, who had a profound and progressive view on the role of women in education and society. He advocated for the equal rights, opportunities, and dignity of women in all spheres of life, and supported their education, development, and empowerment. He also appreciated and respected the diversity and richness of the different roles and identities of women in the Indian culture and society. He also envisioned the ideal woman as one who is educated, enlightened, and empowered, and who can contribute to the welfare and progress of the family, the community, and the nation. His views and contributions on women's education and role have been instrumental in advancing and empowering women in India and beyond, and are still relevant and inspiring in today's world.

### Reference (will be added)

- [\*Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan: A Philosopher of Education and a Visionary of Women Empowerment\*<sup>1</sup>](#),
- [\*Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan: The Philosopher President of India\*<sup>2</sup>](#),
- [\*Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and the Modernization of Indian Education\*<sup>3</sup>](#),