

When She Rises, the World Rises-Empowered Women, Enriched Societies

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"There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women."

– Kofi Annan

Every year on March 8, the world observes International Women’s Day. This day goes beyond celebration; it recognizes the achievements of women and renews our collective commitment to equality and empowerment. It reminds us of the long journey women have taken—from silence to strength and from exclusion to leadership.

Across the world, women are transforming families, communities, and nations through knowledge, courage, and determination. Empowering women is not only a matter of justice but also a foundation for building healthier, more equitable and prosperous societies.

The Journey of Women: From Silence to Strength

Throughout history, women have faced numerous barriers. For centuries, social norms restricted women largely to domestic roles, often denying them education, leadership opportunities, and economic independence. Their voices were unheard, their talents underutilized, and their dreams frequently suppressed.

However, women consistently challenged these barriers. The early twentieth century witnessed the beginning of organized movements demanding women’s rights. In 1909, the first National Women’s Day was observed in the United States, highlighting the struggles of women workers and their demand for equal rights.

Soon after, at the International Socialist Women’s Conference held in Copenhagen in 1910, German activist Clara Zetkin proposed the idea of an international day dedicated to women’s rights.

A historic turning point came in 1917 when thousands of women textile workers in Petrograd, Russia, protested against food shortages, poor working conditions, and the devastating effects of World War I. Their demand for “Bread and Peace” sparked widespread demonstrations that eventually became part of the Russian Revolution. In recognition of this historic action, March 8 was adopted as International Women’s Day.

Since 1975, the United Nations has officially celebrated International Women’s Day, reinforcing the global commitment to gender equality.

Women in the Modern World

Today women play a vital role in nearly every sector of society. They are teachers shaping young minds, scientists exploring new frontiers, farmers sustaining food systems, entrepreneurs creating businesses, and policymakers influencing governance.

Despite this progress, many women still face serious challenges such as limited access to education, nutritional deficiencies, early marriage, economic dependence, and gender discrimination. Addressing these challenges requires sustained commitment and collective action. Research across the world consistently shows that when women are educated and empowered, families become healthier, communities become stronger, and economies grow faster.

Wisdom from the Rigveda

Indian traditions have long recognized the intellectual and spiritual potential of women. The Rigveda refers to women scholars such as Gargi, Maitreyi, and Lopamudra, who participated in philosophical debates and contributed to spiritual knowledge. This tradition reflects an early vision of women as thinkers, leaders, and contributors to intellectual life.

Similarly, Karnataka’s spiritual heritage celebrates the fearless voice of Akkamahadevi. Through her vachanas, she expressed ideas of spiritual freedom, courage, and self-realization. Her life symbolizes the belief that true empowerment begins with awareness of one’s inner strength.

Education: The Key to Transformation

Education remains the most powerful tool for women’s empowerment. When a girl receives quality education, she gains knowledge, confidence, and the ability to make informed decisions about her life.

An educated woman becomes a catalyst for change within her family and community. She improves family health, promotes education among younger generations, and contributes actively to social development.

One of the greatest pioneers of women’s education in India was Savitribai Phule. In 1848, she and her husband Jyotirao Phule established the first school for girls in Pune. Despite facing social hostility and resistance, Savitribai continued her mission with determination, believing that education was the pathway to dignity and social justice. Her message continues to inspire generations,

"Awake, arise, and educate. Smash traditions—liberate."

Women Supporting Women

Empowerment often grows through collaboration and mentorship. When women support one another, opportunities expand and confidence grows.

One inspiring example is Muthulakshmi Reddy, who advocated women’s education, opposed child marriage, and worked to support vulnerable women and children. Her efforts contributed to important social reforms.

Another powerful example is Sudha Murty. Through the Infosys Foundation, she has supported girls’ education by establishing rural libraries, scholarships, and hostels for women students. By encouraging girls in remote villages to pursue education, she has helped many from disadvantaged families complete their studies.

These examples show that when women support women through education and mentorship, empowerment multiplies across generations.

Rural Women: Agents of Change

In recent decades, women have emerged as powerful agents of transformation in rural areas. Across India, women’s self-help groups and community organizations are improving livelihoods, promoting financial inclusion, and strengthening local governance.

Through collective action, many rural women have become entrepreneurs, farmers, and community leaders. Their initiatives often address critical issues such as nutrition, health awareness, environmental sustainability, and education. By sharing knowledge and supporting one another, rural women create networks of resilience that uplift entire communities.

Health and Well-being

Women’s empowerment is incomplete without attention to health and well-being. Access to nutritious food,

safe sanitation, menstrual hygiene awareness, and maternal healthcare are essential for ensuring women’s health.

A healthy woman forms the foundation of a healthy family and society. When women enjoy good health, they are better able to participate in education, employment, and leadership activities. Therefore, improving women’s health is both a social responsibility and a critical component of sustainable development.

“Give to Gain”: A Principle of Empowerment

The theme of International Women’s Day 2026 highlights the idea of “Give to Gain.” This concept emphasizes the importance of sharing knowledge, opportunities, and support.

- Giving knowledge can empower a young student.
- Giving encouragement can build confidence in a struggling individual.
- Giving opportunities can transform potential into leadership.

When society invests in women through education, mentorship, and equal opportunities, the benefits multiply across generations. One empowered woman can inspire a family, uplift a community, and contribute to national progress.

A Vision for the Future

The vision for the future is clear: a world where every girl receives quality education, every woman has equal opportunities, and every society recognizes the immense potential of women. In such a world, women will participate equally in leadership, innovation, and decision-making. Rural and urban women alike will have access to resources, technology, and financial opportunities. International Women’s Day reminds us that progress is possible when courage, compassion, and collective action come together.

Conclusion

Empowering women is not about uplifting one group alone—it is about strengthening the foundations of society itself. When women rise, families become stronger, communities become more resilient, and nations progress with confidence. The message is simple yet profound:

“When women rise, the world rises”
