

# Priority and Thrust to Women's Education

## The Background:

Until recent past, this area of Konkan region of Maharashtra State was economically, socially and educationally backward. As around 90% of the area is hilly in nature, agriculture has not developed. No major industries as such are working in this area. People in this area remained contented just with getting primary or at the most secondary education. Getting higher education was a distant dream for the people of this area. Those who wished to avail higher education had to travel faraway places like Mumbai, Ratnagiri, and Pune etc. The condition of women-folk was still worse as far as higher education is concerned. In ability in availing higher education is partly because of general poverty and partly because of unavailability of higher educational facilities. Higher educational facilities were deplorable as women could not get education though they were willing to. To overcome this hurdle, the management of Patpanhale Education Society envisioned and determined to provide higher education facilities by establishing an institution of higher education, particularly to higher education deprived womenfolk of this area. Resultantly, Patpanhale Arts, Commerce and Science College was established in the year 1992 with Arts Faculty and with Commerce Faculty in the year in 1995. Though the institution was established to provide education to both men and women equally, thrust was more on women's education as the female percentage is more.

## Reasons for Giving Thrust to Women's Education:

The management of the Patpanhale Education Society decided to give thrust to women's education as its priority area keeping in mind following factors.

- a) Educated women will have a greater chance of escaping the poverty.
- b) An educated woman can do lot in helping to lead a healthier and happier family life.
- c) Educated women can contribute a lot in raising the standard of living for her children, families and communities.
- d) Educated women can contribute a lot in setting right the problems arising out of socio-economic imbalances.

## Efforts Made:

Keeping in mind the thrust area, Patpanbhale Arts, Commerce and Science College has made certain efforts for giving more emphasis on women's education. These include the following:

- a) During zonal visits, parents and their wards were contacted. The faculty members of the college tried their best to convince the parents and their wards for continuing the further education after 12<sup>th</sup> standard.
- b) During the college hours, the faculty members interact with the lady students to enquire about and do away the problems being faced by them.
- c) The college administration tries its best to prevent the drop-out rate of the students (particularly girl students) by taking certain measures, which include- giving them a opportunity to work in the college library under 'Earn While You Learn Scheme', collecting the fees in convenient installments, extending them financial assistance from students' welfare of the college etc.
- d) The administration of the College takes all possible measures (prohibiting entry to unauthorized persons in to the campus etc.), with an intention to prevent the possible harassment to the female students in the College.

## **The Outcome:**

The efforts of the college yielded expected results. Out of the last ten years, out of the total students studying in the college, girls outnumber the boys or at least equal to number of boys. Moreover, the performance of the girls goes neck-to-neck in the sports and cultural competitions conducted outside elsewhere and earned laurels from everyone.

## **Problems Encountered:**

1. **Poverty:** Poverty comes in the way of achieving this area of thrust. People living in this Konkan region of Maharashtra State belong to economically poor strata of the society. Most of them carry subsistence living. Resultantly, many of the students opt to discontinue education after 12<sup>th</sup> standard and wish to do jobs locally or in faraway Mumbai city. Under such circumstances, the administration of the college strived to contact the students and their wards for encouraging them to continuing their education.
2. **Inadequate Awareness about Higher Education:** The literacy percentage in this region is generally low but is slowly increasing. The parents and their wards were to be convinced about the need for enrolling for higher education. Their mentally reluctance was a big problem.
3. **Hilly Terrain and Transportation Problems:** This region experiences a heavy rainfall for nearly 3 months and adversely affects the mobility of the students while attending the College.

Nearly 90% of the students of the College belong to other villages, which in some cases, situated at a distance of 40 km. Transportation facilities were to be arranged for the convenience of the students by contacting the State Transport (MSRTC) officials.