

## Chapter – 5: Women Change the World

- Women's work – at home – not recognized as work – BUT – it is a full-time job
- Some works – seen to be more suitable for men
- Women struggle for equality

### Fewer opportunities and rigid expectations

- Lots of children – drew – soldiers as men, nurses as women
- Reason – they believe – even outside homes – women – good at some jobs only
- Example –
  - People believe – women are more patient and gentler – make better nurses
  - People also believe – technical jobs – require technical mind – girls cannot deal with technical things
- So many people – believe in stereotypes – many girls do not get the same support as boys
- Most families – girls finish school – encouraged for marriage – main aim of life

### Breaking stereotypes

- Laxmi Lakra – 27-year-old – tribal family – Jharkhand – breaking stereotypes
- 1<sup>st</sup> women engine driver – Northern Railways
- Her parents – not literate – struggled hard – provide education to their daughter
- Studied in government school – studied hard – got a diploma in electronics – took the railway board exam – passed it on first attempt
- Laxmi says – she likes challenges and whenever someone discourages her from some work, she makes sure that she has to do it
- We live in a society – children face pressures
- Sometimes – in the form of demands from adults
- Boys – expected to get a job – pays good salary
- Boys – also teased by others – for not behaving like other boys
- Example –
  - Xavier – happy for his class X results – scored good in history and languages – BUT – scored average in Science and Maths
  - His parents – not happy with the results
  - Xavier wants to study history in higher classes – BUT – his parents want him to study Computers alongside Maths – pays good

### Learning for change

- Now a days – going to school – normal for children
- BUT – in the past – only a few learnt to read and write – the rest learnt the skill of family trade (business)
- Girls – worse situation – their contribution – seen as supportive
- Example –
  - Family – pottery trade – women collected mud – not seen as potters
- 19<sup>th</sup> century – new ideas – learning and education – emerged
- Schools – more common – more children – started going to school

- Still – lots of opposition – girls’ education
- Many men and women – made efforts for educating girls
- Rashsundari Devi (1800-1890) – born in West Bengal
- At age of 60 – wrote her autobiography in Bangla – *Amar Jiban* – 1<sup>st</sup> known autobiography by an Indian woman
- Rashsundari Devi – housewife – rich landlord’s family
- That period – it was believed – women learnt to read and write – brings bad luck
- She taught herself – in secret – even after her marriage
- She writes –
  - Starts working at dawn – works until midnight
  - She was 14 years old at that time
  - She wanted to read and write – couldn’t get the education
  - She was working in the kitchen – heard her husband saying he has left the book *Chaitanya Bhagabat* at home
  - She took a page out of it – hid it carefully
  - Took a page from her son’s book – he was learning alphabets – hid it as well
  - Then she tried matching the letters on both the pages
  - This way she started her own education and even wrote her autobiography
  - She wrote in details – everyday experiences inside her autobiography

### **Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and her dreams about ‘Ladyland’**

- Born in rich family – owned lots of land
- She knew – Urdu – BUT – stopped from learning Bangla and English
- Those days – it was believed – English – introduces new ideas to girls – these ideas – not appropriate for them
- Learnt Bangla and English – support of elder brother and sister
- Became a writer – wrote story – *Sultana’s Dream* – 1905
- This story –
  - Sultana reaches Ladyland
  - Ladyland – women had the freedom – study, work, invent new things, flying planes and cars, etc
  - Men in the Ladyland – sent into seclusion (isolation or jail)
  - Sultana – travels in Ladyland – along with sister Sarah – wakes up – realizes she was dreaming
- Her education – changed her life – also changed other girls’ lives as well
- 1910 – started a school for girls in Kolkata – even working today

### **Schooling and education today**

- Now a days – both girls and boys – attend school
- BUT – still – a lot of difference – numbers of boys and girls attending school
- India – census every 10 years
- Census – counting of population – collecting detailed information – age, schooling, work, etc
- 1961 census –
  - 40 % men and boys – literate
  - 15 % women and girls – literate
- 2011 census –

- 82 % men and boys – literate
- 65 % women and girls – literate
- Percentage of male group – still much higher than percentage of female group
- Gap in between the 2 groups – still there
- Following table – shows data about students – leave schools

**Average Annual Drop-out Rate in School Education (2014–15)**

(in percentage)

Level	All			SC			ST		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Primary (Classes 1-5)	4.36	3.88	4.13	4.71	4.20	4.46	7.02	6.84	6.93
Upper Primary (Classes 6-8)	3.49	4.60	4.03	5.00	6.03	5.51	8.48	8.71	8.59
Secondary (Classes 9-10)	17.21	16.88	17.06	19.64	19.05	19.36	24.94	24.40	24.68

- Above table – SC (*Dalit*) and ST (*Adivasis*) girls – leave schools in higher numbers
- 2011 census – Muslim girls – leave schools in much higher numbers than SC / ST girls
- Rural areas – there may not be proper schools or proper teachers
- Sometimes – schools not closer to homes – transport facilities not available – parents may not want to send girls to school
- Many families – too poor – cannot teach all children – boys get preferences

### Women's movement

- Women and girls – right to study – now a days
- Other domains – legal reform, violence, health – women's situation – improved
- These changes – results of years of struggle
- This struggle – individually and collectively – women's movement
- Many men – support it as well
- Different strategies – spread awareness, fight discrimination – find justice

### Campaigning

- Campaigns – fight discrimination against women – part of women's movement
- 2006 – new law passed – provide legal protection to women – face physical and mental violence at home
- 1997 – women's movement – pressurized Supreme Court – make guidelines (rules) – protect women against sexual harassment
- 1980s – women's groups – movement against dowry deaths – young brides murdered by in-laws for dowry
- Women protested – against the injustice in these cases
- Finally – dowry laws changed – provided punishment for families – asked for dowry

### Raising awareness and protesting

- Raise public awareness – imp. part of women's movement
- Message – spread through – street plays, songs, public meetings
- Public rallies, demonstrations – powerful way – attract attention towards injustice