

CHECK MISLEADING CONTENT

In the digital age, social media has become one of the most powerful tools for communication and information sharing. Platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram and WhatsApp allow information to travel instantly across the world. While this connectivity has many benefits, it has also created a serious challenge—the rapid spread of misleading and false content.

Misleading information on social media is not just a minor inconvenience; it has the potential to cause significant social, political and economic harm. Rumours, manipulated images, edited videos and half-truths often circulate widely before the facts are verified. In many cases, such content creates confusion among the public, damages reputations and fuels unnecessary fear or anger.

One of the major reasons behind the spread of misleading content is the speed at which information travels online. Social media algorithms often prioritize engagement rather than accuracy, meaning sensational or emotionally charged posts are more likely to be shared and amplified. As a result, misinformation can reach thousands or even millions of people within minutes.

Another concern is the lack of verification before sharing information. Many users forward messages or posts without checking their authenticity. This is particularly common on messaging platforms, where forwarded messages can easily be mistaken for credible news. The problem becomes even more serious when misleading information relates to sensitive issues such as public safety, communal harmony, health or national security.

Governments, technology companies and civil society must work together to address this challenge. Social media platforms should strengthen fact-checking mechanisms and take faster action against accounts that repeatedly spread false information. At the same time, authorities need to promote clear guidelines and digital awareness campaigns to help people identify and report misleading content.

Social media is a powerful tool that can connect societies, spread knowledge and strengthen democracy. But if misleading content continues to circulate unchecked, it can undermine trust and social harmony. A balanced approach involving responsible users, accountable platforms and proactive institutions is essential to ensure that social media remains a force for truth rather than confusion.

Maharani Tara Devi: Grace and Dignity in Jammu's Royal Legacy

■ SWATI SUMAN

International Women's Day is often associated with celebrating contemporary achievements of women in public life. However, it is also a meaningful occasion to revisit the contributions of women whose presence shaped society in quieter ways. In the historical landscape of Jammu, the name of Maharani Tara Devi holds a special significance. Her life reflects dignity, responsibility and the understated strength that characterised many women of the royal era.

Maharani Tara Devi was the consort of Maharaja Hari Singh, the last ruling monarch of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Dogra period represented a structured social order where tradition, hierarchy and cultural continuity played an important role in shaping public life. Within this framework, royal women carried responsibilities that were not always recorded in official political histories but remained influential in shaping the moral and cultural environment of society.

The position of a Maharani in the royal household was associated with grace and responsibility. Royal women often acted as custodians of cultural traditions and social values. They supported charitable initiatives, encouraged religious and cultural activities and played an important role in maintaining the social ethos of the royal court. Maharani Tara Devi embodied these qualities with quiet composure.

The early decades of the twentieth century were a period of transition across the Indian subcontinent. Political movements, changing administrative structures and growing public participation were gradually reshaping society. Jammu and Kashmir was also



experiencing these changes. During such a time, figures within the royal household symbolised continuity and stability. Maharani Tara Devi represented the dignity of that era and reflected the expectations placed upon women in positions of royal responsibility.

History often highlights rulers, political decisions and institutional developments, while the presence of women in royal families remains less discussed. Yet their role in preserving cultural traditions and social values was significant. The influence of royal women was exercised through example rather than public authority. Their conduct, involvement in community activities and support for social causes helped shape the values associated with leadership and responsibility.

Women's Day provides an opportunity to

recognise that empowerment has taken different forms in different historical contexts. In present times, empowerment is frequently linked with visible participation in governance, professions and public institutions. In earlier periods, however, women expressed strength through resilience within established social structures. Their contributions were often subtle but deeply rooted in the cultural life of society.

Maharani Tara Devi represents this dimension of history. Her life symbolises the grace and discipline that defined royal households in Jammu during the Dogra period. She belonged to a generation of women who balanced tradition with responsibility and ensured that cultural heritage continued to remain an integral part of social life.

Today, the role of women in Jammu and

Kashmir has expanded significantly. Women are active participants in education, administration, entrepreneurship and various fields of public service. Their growing presence in leadership positions reflects changing social aspirations and greater access to opportunities. While these achievements represent progress in the modern era, they are also connected to a longer historical journey in which women have always contributed to the strength of society.

Remembering Maharani Tara Devi on International Women's Day therefore carries symbolic importance. It reminds society that the story of women's contribution does not begin only with contemporary achievements. It has deeper roots in history where women upheld values of dignity, commitment and cultural continuity.

The legacy of Maharani Tara Devi continues to form a part of Jammu's collective memory. Her life represents an era in which responsibility was carried with grace and influence was expressed through character rather than public visibility. In recognising such figures, society acknowledges the many dimensions through which women have shaped the past and continue to inspire the present.

International Women's Day is ultimately a moment to reflect on both progress and heritage. By remembering women like Maharani Tara Devi, Jammu pays tribute not only to its royal history but also to the enduring spirit of womanhood that has contributed quietly yet profoundly to the region's social fabric.

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International Women's Day: A Celebration of Strength, Equality, and Progress

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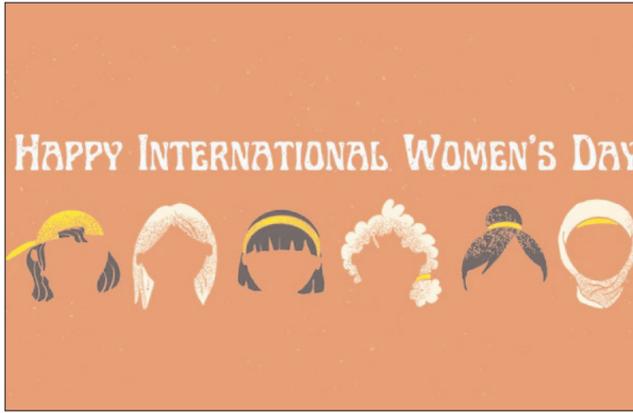
Every year on 8 March, the world celebrates International Women's Day, a day dedicated to recognizing the achievements, resilience, and contributions of women in every field of life. It is not only a day of celebration but also a reminder of the long journey women have taken toward equality, dignity, and empowerment. The day highlights the importance of creating a world where women have equal opportunities to learn, lead, and succeed.

The roots of International Women's Day go back to the early twentieth century when women in many parts of the world began demanding equal rights, better working conditions, and voting rights. The first National Women's Day was celebrated in the United States in 1909. Later, in 1910, German activist Clara Zetkin proposed the idea of an international day dedicated to women during the International Socialist Women's Conference held in Copenhagen. The proposal was accepted, and in 1911 the first International Women's Day was celebrated in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland.

Over time, the movement spread across the world, and the date 8 March became the official day of celebration. In 1975, the United Nations officially recognized and began celebrating International Women's Day globally, giving it a strong international platform. Today, governments, educational institutions, and organizations across the world observe the day through seminars, discussions, and awareness programs that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

International Women's Day is also an occasion to reflect on inspiring examples of women who have changed the course of history through courage, intelligence, and determination. One of the most inspiring examples is Marie Curie, the first woman to win a Nobel Prize and the only person to win Nobel Prizes in two different scientific fields. Her groundbreaking research in radioactivity revolutionized modern science and medicine. Despite facing discrimination in the scientific community, she continued her work with dedication and perseverance. Her life demonstrates that determination and passion for knowledge can overcome even the strongest barriers.

Another remarkable example is Kalpana Chawla, who became the first woman of Indian origin to travel



to space. Her journey from a small town in India to becoming an astronaut at NASA inspired millions of young girls to dream beyond boundaries. Kalpana Chawla's life reminds us that courage and ambition can take a person from ordinary beginnings to extraordinary achievements.

A powerful symbol of compassion and humanitarian service is Mother Teresa, who devoted her life to serving the poor, the sick, and the abandoned. Through the Missionaries of Charity, she helped thousands of people living in poverty and suffering. Her selfless service earned her the Nobel Peace Prize and global

respect. She showed the world that kindness and humanity are among the greatest strengths a person can possess.

In the field of social justice and education, Malala Yousafzai stands as a powerful voice for girls' education. Despite facing violence and threats for advocating girls' right to education, she continued her mission with courage. She became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate and a global advocate for education. Her story demonstrates that even a young voice can create powerful change when it stands for truth and justice.

India also has remarkable exam-

ples of women who have shaped the nation's progress. Indra Gandhi became the first and only female Prime Minister of India. Her leadership during challenging times proved that women can guide nations with strength and determination. Her role in political leadership inspired generations of women to participate in public life and decision-making.

These examples show that women have excelled in science, space exploration, humanitarian work, education, and political leadership. They remind us that empowering women does not only benefit individuals but also strengthens entire societies.

In recent decades, women have achieved significant progress in education, technology, medicine, business, and governance. More women are becoming scientists, entrepreneurs, teachers, and leaders. However, despite this progress, challenges such as gender inequality, unequal opportunities, and social barriers still exist in many parts of the world. International Women's Day therefore also serves as a reminder that the journey toward equality is not yet complete.

The theme for International Women's Day 2026 emphasizes the idea that when society invests in women, the entire community benefits. When girls receive education, families become stronger and com-

munities become more prosperous. When women participate in leadership and decision-making, societies become more balanced and inclusive. Empowering women is therefore not only a matter of justice but also a path toward sustainable development and social harmony.

Educational institutions play a crucial role in this transformation. Colleges and universities are places where young minds learn the values of equality, respect, and responsibility. By encouraging girls to pursue education, leadership, and innovation, institutions help build a generation that believes in fairness and equal opportunity.

Ultimately, International Women's Day is not just about celebrating achievements; it is about recognizing the potential of every woman and creating an environment where that potential can flourish. When society respects women, supports their ambitions, and values their contributions, the entire world moves forward. As we celebrate International Women's Day, let us remember that empowering women is not merely a social responsibility—it is the foundation of a just, progressive, and prosperous future. When women rise, societies rise with them, and humanity as a whole moves closer to a world of equality, dignity, and hope.

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Empowering Rural Women for Agricultural Development

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Every year 8th of March is celebrated as the International Women's Day across the globe to recognize the extraordinary contribution of women in the development of the society.

This day highlights key issues such as gender equality, reproductive rights and the fight against violence and discrimination faced by women. The theme of this year International Women's Day is "Give To Gain", underscores the principle that meaningful progress on gender equality requires deliberate contributions from governments, institutions and individuals. When we invest in women's safety, rights and leadership, we strengthen society as a whole.

The idea of an International observance was proposed by the German activist Clara Zetkin at the International Socialist Women's Conference, where the concept of a global Working Women's Day was approved. In 1911, the first International Women's Day was celebrated on March 19 in countries including Germany, Denmark, Austria etc. By 1914, several countries had begun observing this day on March, 8. In 1922, Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin officially declared March 8th as International Women's Day.

India is the home of one of the largest agricultural sectors in the world. This sector provides about 58 per cent of livelihoods in India's and contributes about 18 per cent to the country's GDP. It has been observed that about 84 per cent of the Indian rural women livelihood depends on agriculture. The contribution of women to the society has been contemplated over the years. The year 2026 has been declared as the "UN Year for Women Farmers". Gender equality and rural women's empowerment can drive farm and rural entrepreneurship in green transitions from peasants to more entrepreneurial and resilient farming.

Women-led green entrepreneurship in farming and the rural economy can develop in different economic activities. Gender equality is

one of the objectives for sustainable rural development relevant to policy and governance with wider implications for the rural economy, green entrepreneurship and society. Women have an incredible potential for transforming agriculture. Women farmers contribute enormously to the Indian agriculture. This has been proved by various researches. However, could not get due recognition in the planning and implementation of agricultural related programmes.

Agricultural extension is one such effort taken by the government and non-government agencies that aims at reaching to farmers. The efforts include bringing about a positive change in knowledge, attitude and skills of the farmers by providing training and technical advice and also assisting them in taking decisions in adoption of new research results. Importantly, the clientele of such programmes and efforts is inclusive of both farmers and farm women. Managers of these programmes often consider men as farmers and women as farmer's wife thereby systematically marginalising and underestimating women's productive role in agriculture. The agricultural extension services in India has limited in its operations to a larger extent on male farmers only. Sometimes women farmers are bypassed by male extension workers. It would be correct to state that women farmers in India needs to get their due share in extension services apropos their contribution to the Indian agriculture.

Extension services in India need to be refined, modified and redesigned so as to reach farm women effectively. The purpose of agricultural extension services can be achieved for sustainable rural development only if sincere attempts are made to provide and improve farm women's access to the available extension services thereby leading to their technological empowerment. The extension machinery in India can be classified in four heads namely (a) Extension services offered by the Indian Council of Agricultural

Research (ICAR), (b) Extension services provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation, (c) Extension services provided by the Ministry of Rural Development and (d) Extension services offered by Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). Out of four extension systems, training and visit is the major extension system operating in India under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation for more than 30 years. Although this programme is in operation for so long, it still lacks necessary inbuilt structural arrangements for reaching female farmers. Contact farmers involved in this very programme are mostly male farmers and the numbering of female farmers is low. It was reported that the extension needs of women were often perceived by the extension agents to be in the disciplines of home science, nutrition, childcare, tailoring etc.

The information regarding to new farm technologies was seldom passed on to them. Various rural development programmes were launched in India from community approach in 1950s to special target group approach in 1970s. Non of these programmes addressed to the specific needs of women farmers and remain concentrated on male farmers. In 1980s integrated approach was started that attempt to integrate women in the mainstream of development by structurally making them beneficiaries up to an extent of 40 per cent. A number of services supportive for women's socio-economic empowerment viz., Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Indira Mahila Yojna, Mahila Samridhi Yojna, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) etc. were implemented.

These approaches were not directed towards fulfilment needs for agriculture-related services and concentrated mainly on the issue of employment and social empowerment. In 1993-94, a project aimed at gender-gap reduction among women farmers of the Northern India was launched by the government of India.

The limited coverage of this project shortens its impact. Such programmes need to be appreciated for being the pioneering one in this regard. ICAR is another important system for transfer of farm technologies all over the country. This system has operated through various frontline extension programmes, all of which now have been merged with the Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) since April 1996.

In KVKs, provision for special training programmes for women are made. These programmes restricted mainly in the areas like home economics and ignored women's productive role in agricultural operations. The efforts made so far in this direction appear to be localized and remain largely invisible. Involvement of women in agricultural development process by ICAR has been further strengthened when the concept of Farming Systems approach to research/extension was institutionalized by several ways including assessment and refinement of agricultural technologies through institutionalizing village linkage programme.

Still these efforts are very limited to make a substantial dent on the overall agricultural scenario. From the very beginning Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) have involved women component in their mandate. They too have given more emphasis on issues related to social empowerment of women. They also have given little attention on women's role in agriculture. Therefore, all the major extension systems in India, the participation and benefits accrued to women farmers are minuscule.

There is a need to delineate and discuss the reasons attributable to poor access of farm women to extension services in India. The causative factors found were lack of approach of farm women to extension centres, less communication channel of farm women, less income to purchase farm inputs by farm women, lack of land, inconvenient time and location of meetings, gender biasness by extension staff, lack of gender-appropriate

technology and lack of authority to them. The other factors were low farm women literacy, lack of tendency to innovate and make decisions in farming, less women workers in extension services and lack of structural arrangements for women farmers in extension programmes.

Indian women despite playing an important role in agricultural production, processing and storage, generally lack the right to property and the control of resources usually pass on from men to men keeping women out of the chain of inheritance. This makes them the largest group of landless labourers.

The efforts for improving the women's access to extension services need to be directed towards bringing out some institutional changes in the present machinery of extension in India. Farm women should be provided with greater access to credit facilities and other inputs by simplifying the existing procedures suiting to the educational levels of women folk. Flow of credit, inputs and marketing facilities to farm women can be done through women's cooperatives and mahila mandals. Different extension agencies are focusing on a limited scale to integrate farm women in mainstream of development efforts. The efforts of these agencies need to be managed more efficiently so as to have a synergistic effect to solve the problem of poor women access to extension services. The planners should give due recognition to women farmers in designing the development programmes.

There is also the need to recruit more extension functionaries in all levels of agricultural extension system. Certain institutional adaptations in the present extension system should be made for a positive step in this direction. International Women's Day is a call to action—encouraging individuals, institutions and policymakers to work towards equal rights, justice and opportunities for all women and girls.

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