



ANDHRA MAHILA SABHA
ARTS & SCIENCE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN
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Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh's Institutional Vision



Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh was one of India's greatest institution builders. She believed that social service should not remain limited to individual efforts but should be carried forward through strong and permanent institutions. Her vision was to create organizations that would continue to serve society even after her lifetime. She realized that women, children, the poor, and the differently-abled needed access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Therefore, she dedicated her life to establishing institutions that would address these needs.

Her institutions were founded on the principles of service, equality, and empowerment. They were not merely buildings or organizations but centres of social transformation. Through Andhra Mahila Sabha and other institutions, she created opportunities for thousands of women to receive education, gain employment, improve their health, and become independent. Her work covers a wide range of fields including education, healthcare, vocational training, rehabilitation, social welfare, and public policy research. Even today, these institutions continue to carry forward her vision of an inclusive and progressive society.

Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh

Durgabai Deshmukh (15 July 1909 – 9 May 1981) was one of the most remarkable women of modern India. She was a freedom fighter, lawyer, social reformer, educationist, parliamentarian, and institution builder. Unlike many leaders whose work ended with India's independence, Durgabai spent her entire life serving society. Her greatest legacy lies in the institutions she built, the reforms she introduced, and the opportunities she created for women, children, and marginalized communities.

Early Life: A Childhood That Shaped a Leader

Durgabai was born on **15 July 1909** in **Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh**, into a Telugu-speaking middle-class family. Her parents valued education and patriotism, and these values deeply influenced her.

During her childhood, Indian society imposed severe restrictions on women. Girls were expected to marry early, remain within the household, and had very limited access to education.

Like many girls of her time, Durgabai was married at a very young age. However, she refused to accept a life that denied her education and independence. Instead of continuing in the marriage, she chose to pursue her studies and dedicate herself to public service. This decision required extraordinary courage because it challenged deeply rooted social customs.

She later completed her education, earning degrees in Political Science and Law, proving that determination could overcome social barriers.

Influence of Mahatma Gandhi

When Mahatma Gandhi visited Andhra Pradesh during the Non-Cooperation Movement, young Durgabai attended his meetings. His speeches about truth, self-reliance, women's participation, and national service profoundly influenced her.

At only twelve years of age, she began organizing women and girls in her locality. She encouraged them to:

- Learn Hindi to strengthen national unity.
- Spin khadi using the charkha.
- Boycott foreign goods.
- Participate in social service activities. She even started a Hindi school where she herself taught children and women free of cost.

This demonstrated her belief that education was the first step toward freedom.

A Story That Revealed Her Character

One incident made Durgabai famous throughout the country.

During the **Indian National Congress session at Kakinada in 1923**, she was assigned to check entry tickets at one of the exhibition gates.

Jawaharlal Nehru arrived without the required ticket and attempted to enter.

Although he was already a national leader, Durgabai politely but firmly refused him entry until he obtained a ticket.

Nehru appreciated her honesty and discipline rather than feeling offended.

This story is still remembered because it reflects her integrity, courage, and commitment to rules—qualities that remained with her throughout her life.

Participation in the Freedom Movement

Durgabai became one of the most active women freedom fighters from South India.

She participated in:

- Non-Cooperation Movement
- Salt Satyagraha
- Civil Disobedience Movement
- Campaigns promoting khadi
- Boycott of British goods

She organized women's marches, public meetings, and awareness campaigns across Andhra and Madras Presidency.

The British government arrested her several times.

Between **1930 and 1933**, she spent nearly three years in prison.

Instead of becoming discouraged, imprisonment strengthened her determination to continue fighting for India's freedom.

Education Against All Odds

After her release from prison, Durgabai resumed her studies.

She completed:

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree in Political Science
- Bachelor of Law (LL.B.)

She became an advocate in the Madras High Court.

Her legal education enabled her to fight social injustice using constitutional and legal methods rather than only political activism.

Founding Andhra Mahila Sabha

Perhaps Durgabai's greatest contribution to society was establishing **Andhra Mahila Sabha** in **1937**.

She noticed that women migrating to Madras for education or employment lacked:

- Safe accommodation
- Healthcare
- Educational opportunities
- Employment training
- Legal support

She started Andhra Mahila Sabha with very limited resources.

Initially, it consisted of only a few women meeting together to help each other.

Gradually, it expanded into one of India's largest women's welfare organizations.

Today it includes:

- Schools
- Colleges
- Nursing institutions
- Hospitals
- Rehabilitation centres
- Hostels
- Teacher training institutes
- Vocational education centres
- Research institutions

Thousands of women have built successful careers because of these institutions.

Transforming Women's Lives

Durgabai believed that charity alone could never eliminate poverty.

Instead, she believed in **empowerment through education and skills**.

She introduced programmes that taught women:

- Tailoring
- Nursing
- Teaching
- Office administration
- Handicrafts
- Small business management

These programmes enabled women to earn their own income.

She believed financial independence gave women confidence and dignity.

Contribution to Healthcare

Durgabai realized that poor women often had no access to medical care.

She therefore established:

- Maternity hospitals
- Child healthcare centres
- Nursing schools
- Medical colleges
- Rehabilitation services

Many rural women received healthcare for the first time through institutions she established.

Support for Children

Durgabai considered children the future of the nation.

She established programmes for:

- Child nutrition
- Early childhood education
- Orphan care
- Health services
- Scholarships
- Children's hostels

She believed every child deserved equal opportunities regardless of economic background.

Work for Persons with Disabilities

Long before disability rights became a national issue, Durgabai worked for people with disabilities.

She promoted:

- Special education
- Speech therapy
- Vocational training
- Rehabilitation services
- Employment opportunities

She wanted persons with disabilities to become independent rather than dependent on charity.

Member of the Constituent Assembly

Following independence, Durgabai became a member of the **Constituent Assembly**, which drafted the Constitution of India.

She actively participated in debates concerning:

- Women's equality
- Education
- Social justice
- Welfare programmes
- Fundamental rights

She strongly argued that political freedom alone was insufficient unless social inequality was also removed.

Central Social Welfare Board

In 1953, the Government of India appointed Durgabai as the **first Chairperson of the Central Social Welfare Board**.

This became one of the most important institutions for social development in India.

She encouraged voluntary organizations across the country to work together with the government.

Under her leadership, the Board supported:

- Women's welfare centres
- Family counselling services
- Balwadis (preschools)
- Rural welfare programmes
- Nutrition projects
- Community development initiatives
- Adult literacy campaigns

These programmes reached millions of people across India.

Contribution to Family Courts

During visits abroad, Durgabai studied how family disputes were settled.

She observed that ordinary courts often increased conflict within families.

She therefore proposed specialized **Family Courts** where disputes could be resolved through counselling and reconciliation.

Years later, India established Family Courts based on similar principles.

Planning Commission

As a member of the Planning Commission, Durgabai emphasized that development should not be measured only by factories or industries.

She argued that real national development required investment in:

- Education
- Healthcare
- Women
- Children
- Rural communities
- Social welfare

Many of these ideas later became central to India's development policies.

Marriage to C. D. Deshmukh

In 1953, Durgabai married **Sir Chintaman Dwarkanath (C. D.) Deshmukh**, an eminent civil servant, economist, the first Indian Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, and later Union Finance Minister.

Their marriage was based on shared ideals of public service, intellectual respect, and nation-building rather than social convention.

They often worked together on educational and welfare initiatives.

Durgabai later wrote her memoir, **Chintaman and I**, describing their partnership and their commitment to serving the country.

Her Philosophy of Service

Durgabai believed:

"Real freedom is not merely freedom from foreign rule. Real freedom means education, health, dignity, and equal opportunity for every citizen."

She believed social reform required:

- Education instead of ignorance.
- Opportunity instead of charity.
- Empowerment instead of dependence.
- Service instead of personal gain.

These ideas guided every institution she built.

Recognition and Awards

For her lifelong service, Durgabai received several prestigious honours:

- **Padma Vibhushan (1975)** for distinguished service to the nation.
- **UNESCO recognition** for her work in literacy and adult education.
- National awards from several educational and social organizations.

However, she often said that the greatest reward was seeing women become educated, independent, and confident.

Legacy

Durgabai Deshmukh passed away on **9 May 1981**, but her work continues through the institutions she founded. Schools, colleges, hospitals, nursing institutions, rehabilitation centres, and welfare organizations established under her guidance continue to serve millions of people. Her vision of combining education, healthcare, legal awareness, and economic empowerment created a model for social development that remains relevant today.

More than a freedom fighter, she was a **nation builder** who believed that the true strength of India lay in the well-being of its people. By empowering women, improving healthcare, promoting literacy, and strengthening social welfare, she transformed countless lives. Her legacy reminds us that lasting change comes not only through political movements but also through patient institution-building and lifelong service to society.

Major Institutions Established by Dr. Durgabai

Parent Organization

1. Andhra Mahila Sabha (1937) - The parent organization for education, healthcare, and social welfare activities.

Educational Institutions

1. Balika Hindi Pathshala, Chennai (1937)
2. Mahila Vidyalaya, Chennai
3. Andhra Mahila Sabha Arts & Science College for Women, Hyderabad
4. College of Law for Women, Hyderabad
5. Andhra Mahila Sabha School of Informatics (AMSSOI), Hyderabad
6. AMS College of Teacher Education, Hyderabad
7. AMS College of Nursing, Hyderabad
8. AMS College of Physiotherapy, Hyderabad
9. AMS College of Fine Arts and Media Education, Hyderabad

Healthcare Institutions

1. Andhra Mahila Sabha Hospital, Chennai
2. Durgabai Deshmukh Hospital and Research Centre, Hyderabad
3. AMS IPD Orthopaedic Centre, Hyderabad

Vocational and Technical Institutions

1. Durgabai Deshmukh Centre for Vocational Courses
2. Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh Government Women Technical Training Institute, Hyderabad
3. Vocational Training and Rehabilitation Centre for Handicapped

Adult Education and Literacy Centres

1. Literacy House
2. Vayojana Sanghika Vidya Bhavan (Adult and Social Education Centre)

Social Welfare and Residential Institutions

1. Mitra Mandir
2. Working Women's Hostel
3. Ashraya - Home for Senior Citizens
4. Pre-primary and Child Welfare Centres under Andhra Mahila Sabha
5. Community Development and Women's Welfare Centres

Heritage and Resource Centres

1. Gandhi Satabdi Bhavan
2. Vagdevi Bhavan Learning Resource Centre (LRC)
3. Glaxo Bhavan

National Institutions Co-founded by Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh

1. Sri Venkateswara College, University of Delhi
2. Andhra Education Society, New Delhi
3. Council for Social Development (CSD), New Delhi
4. India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi

Major Areas Covered by Her Institutions

- Education and Higher Education
- Professional and Technical Education
- Healthcare and Medical Services
- Adult Literacy and Social Education
- Vocational Training and Skill Development
- Rehabilitation of Differently-Abled Persons
- Women's Welfare and Empowerment
- Child Welfare and Community Development
- Research and Public Policy Studies
- Cultural and Intellectual Exchange

Balika Hindi Pathshala and Mahila Vidyalaya

The first educational institution established by Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh was Balika Hindi Pathshala. She started the school with the belief that girls should have equal opportunities to receive education. During that period, many families did not encourage girls to attend school. Dr. Durgabai challenged this social attitude and created an institution that promoted literacy among girls.

The school emphasized not only language learning but also discipline, confidence, and national awareness. It became the foundation of her later educational initiatives.

Mahila Vidyalaya was another important institution established for the education of girls. The foundation stone of the school was laid by Mahatma Gandhi, making it historically significant. The institution aimed at providing value-based education and promoting character development among young women. It encouraged girls to become educated citizens and active participants in society.

Both institutions played a crucial role in improving female literacy and inspiring women to pursue higher education.

Historical Importance: Balika Hindi Pathshala was the first institution founded by Dr. Durgabai.

Interesting Fact: The foundation stone of Mahila Vidyalyaya was laid by Mahatma Gandhi.

Contribution to Society:

- Increased girls' literacy.
- Encouraged women's participation in public life.
- Promoted national integration through language education

Higher Educational Institutions

One of Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh's greatest contributions was the establishment of higher educational institutions for women. She believed that higher education would enable women to become financially independent and socially empowered.

The Andhra Mahila Sabha Arts & Science College for Women was established to provide affordable higher education to women from different economic backgrounds. The institution offers courses in Arts, Commerce, and Science and has educated thousands of students who now work in various professions.

The College of Law for Women was founded to encourage women to enter the legal profession. Dr. Durgabai herself was a lawyer and understood the importance of legal education. The institution provides opportunities for women to become advocates, judges, and legal advisors while also promoting awareness of women's rights.

These institutions opened the doors of higher education to women and helped them build successful careers.

Need for these Institutions: During the 1940s and 1950s, very few women had access to higher education.

Achievements:

- Produced teachers, lawyers, bankers, entrepreneurs, and government officers.
- Encouraged women to pursue professional careers.

"Education is the key to women's independence."

Professional Education Institutions

Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh understood that modern society required professionally trained individuals in various fields. Therefore, she established institutions that provided specialized and professional education.

The Andhra Mahila Sabha School of Informatics was created to meet the growing demand for management and computer education. The institution offers MBA and MCA programmes and equips students with the knowledge and skills required for careers in business and information technology.

The AMS College of Teacher Education was established to prepare qualified teachers who could contribute to the educational development of society. The institution offers teacher training programmes and emphasizes practical teaching methods, educational psychology, and classroom management.

The AMS College of Fine Arts and Media Education was established to encourage creativity and artistic expression among students. The institution provides training in fine arts, media studies, and creative communication.

These institutions demonstrate Dr. Durgabai's vision of providing professional education that meets the changing needs of society.

Dr. Durgabai believed that women should not be confined to traditional roles and must enter modern professions.

Fields Covered:

- Information Technology
- Management
- Teaching
- Fine Arts
- Media Studies

Impact: Created employment opportunities for women in emerging sectors.

Nursing and Physiotherapy Institutions

Healthcare education formed an important part of Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh's institutional vision. She recognized the need for trained healthcare professionals, especially women, who could serve society with dedication and compassion.

The AMS College of Nursing was established to provide professional nursing education and prepare skilled nurses for hospitals and community health centres. The institution emphasizes patient care, ethics, and community service.

The College of Physiotherapy was founded to train professionals in rehabilitation and physical therapy. It provides education in the prevention and treatment of physical disabilities and helps students develop the skills necessary for patient rehabilitation.

Graduates of these institutions have contributed significantly to the healthcare sector and continue to provide essential medical services throughout the country.

Special Focus:Service-oriented healthcare education.

Achievements:

- Trained thousands of nurses and physiotherapists.
- Strengthened healthcare services in hospitals and rehabilitation centres.

Motto:"Care, Compassion and Service."

Healthcare Institutions

Dr. Durgabai believed that healthcare is a basic human right and should be accessible to everyone regardless of their economic status. This belief led to the establishment of important healthcare institutions.

The Andhra Mahila Sabha Hospital in Chennai became an important centre for maternal and child healthcare. The hospital provides medical services in obstetrics, gynaecology, and child welfare and has served thousands of women and children over the years.

The Durgabai Deshmukh Hospital and Research Centre in Hyderabad was established in 1962 as a small fifteen-bed hospital. Through continuous expansion and development, it has grown into a major multi-specialty hospital providing affordable healthcare services. The hospital offers treatment in general medicine, surgery, orthopaedics, physiotherapy, and various other specialties.

These institutions reflect Dr. Durgabai's commitment to ensuring that quality healthcare reaches every section of society.

Interesting Fact: The Durgabai Deshmukh Hospital and Research Centre began with only fifteen beds and later became a major multi-specialty hospital.

Special Services:

- Maternal care
- Child welfare
- Physiotherapy
- Diagnostic services

Contribution: Affordable healthcare for economically weaker sections.

Vocational and Technical Training Institutions

Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh strongly believed that education should lead to economic independence. She understood that many women, particularly widows and women from economically weaker families, required practical skills that would enable them to earn a livelihood. With this vision, she established several vocational and technical training institutions under the Andhra Mahila Sabha network.

The **Durgabai Deshmukh Centre for Vocational Courses** was created to provide skill-based education to women and girls who could not pursue higher education or who wished to learn employable skills. The centre offered courses in tailoring, embroidery, fashion designing, typing, shorthand, computer applications, handicrafts, and office management. These programmes helped thousands of women become self-employed and financially independent.

Another important institution is the **Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh Government Women Technical Training Institute** at Vengal Rao Nagar, Hyderabad. The institute was established to provide technical and industrial education to women at a time when technical fields were largely dominated by men. It offers diploma and vocational programmes in various engineering and industrial trades and prepares women for employment in industries and technical professions.

These institutions reflect Dr. Durgabai's belief that true empowerment comes when women are equipped with both education and practical skills.

Major Contributions

- Skill development and employment generation.
- Promotion of self-employment among women.
- Technical and industrial training for girls.
- Economic empowerment of disadvantaged women.
- Creation of career opportunities in emerging fields.

Courses Offered:

- Tailoring
- Fashion Designing
- Computer Applications
- Typing and Shorthand

Social Welfare and Residential Institutions

Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh recognized that many women and elderly individuals required not only education and employment but also social security and emotional support. To address these needs, she established several social welfare institutions.

Mitra Mandir was created as a welfare centre providing support and shelter to women and children in need. The institution offers a safe environment and helps individuals rebuild their lives with dignity and confidence.

The **Working Women's Hostel** was established to provide secure and affordable accommodation to women pursuing higher education or employment away from their homes. During a time when safe accommodation for working women was limited, the hostel played an important role in encouraging women to seek education and professional opportunities.

Ashraya, the home for senior citizens, was founded to provide care and companionship to elderly people who required support. The institution ensures that senior citizens receive proper medical attention, emotional care, and opportunities for social interaction.

These welfare institutions reveal the compassionate side of Dr. Durgabai's vision and her commitment to protecting vulnerable sections of society.

Objectives

- Shelter and protection.
- Safe accommodation for women.
- Care for senior citizens.
- Emotional and social support.
- Community welfare and rehabilitation.

Vision: To provide care, dignity, and security to vulnerable sections of society.

Beneficiaries:

- Working women
- Senior citizens
- Women in distress
- Children in need of support

"A society is judged by how it cares for its weakest members."

Literacy and Adult Education Centres

Dr. Durgabai's contribution extended beyond Andhra Mahila Sabha and reached the national level. She played an important role in establishing institutions that contributed to higher education, social research, cultural exchange, and national integration.

The **Sri Venkateswara College**, established in New Delhi in 1961, became one of the premier colleges of the University of Delhi. It has produced distinguished scholars, administrators, and professionals.

The **Andhra Education Society**, founded in 1948, aimed to provide quality education to South Indian families residing in Delhi while preserving their cultural and linguistic heritage.

The **Council for Social Development (CSD)**, established in 1962, became one of India's leading research institutions. It conducts studies on poverty, education, social justice, human rights, and development planning. The research findings of the institution have influenced public policy and government programmes.

The **India International Centre (IIC)** was established as a centre for intellectual and cultural exchange. It provides a platform where scholars, diplomats, artists, and policymakers discuss important national and international issues.

Importance of These Institutions

- Expanded Dr. Durgabai's vision from local service to national development.
- Promoted higher education and academic excellence.
- Encouraged social science research and public policy studies.
- Strengthened cultural and intellectual exchange.
- Contributed to national integration and community development.

Areas Covered

- Higher Education
- Public Policy
- Research and Development
- Cultural Exchange
- National Integration

Interesting Fact: The **Council for Social Development** has become one of India's most respected institutions in the field of social science research and policy studies.

Andhra Mahila Sabha Arts & Science College for Women: History

The **Andhra Mahila Sabha Arts & Science College for Women** was established in **1968** with the objective of providing quality and affordable higher education to women. It is affiliated with **Osmania University** and has earned a reputation as one of the leading women's colleges in Hyderabad.

Dr. Durgabai believed that higher education was essential for women's empowerment. Therefore, the college was founded to provide educational opportunities to women from different social and economic backgrounds and prepare them for leadership roles in society.

Since its establishment, the institution has focused on academic excellence, discipline, character building, and social responsibility. It has educated thousands of women who have become teachers, bankers, entrepreneurs, government employees, accountants, and professionals.

Vision

To empower women through education and create socially responsible citizens.

Mission

- To provide affordable and quality education.
- To promote academic excellence.
- To develop leadership qualities.
- To encourage ethical values and social responsibility.
- To prepare women for professional and social leadership.

Special Features

- One of the leading women's colleges in Hyderabad.
- Affiliated with Osmania University.
- More than five decades of educational service.
- Strong emphasis on women's empowerment and holistic development.

Departments and Facilities

The college provides excellent academic and infrastructural facilities that contribute to the holistic development of students.

Academic Departments

- Department of Commerce
- Department of Computer Applications
- Department of Management Studies
- Department of Languages
- Department of Sciences
- Department of Social Sciences

Academic Facilities

- Well-equipped science laboratories.
- Advanced computer centres.
- Spacious classrooms.
- Seminar and conference halls.
- Library and Learning Resource Centre with books, journals, and digital resources.

Student Support Services

- Hostel facilities for outstation students.
- Placement and Career Guidance Cell.
- Counselling and mentoring services.
- National Service Scheme (NSS) Unit.
- Sports and physical education facilities.
- Scholarships and financial assistance.

Extracurricular Activities

- Cultural programmes and competitions.
- Workshops and seminars.
- Community service programmes.
- Educational tours and industrial visits.
- Leadership and personality development programmes.

Contribution to Student Development

The college believes in the holistic development of students by combining academic excellence with co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh was not merely a social reformer but one of India's greatest institution builders. She firmly believed that education, healthcare, and social welfare were the foundations of a progressive society. With this vision, she established a remarkable network of institutions that empowered women, educated children, provided healthcare to the needy, promoted adult literacy, and created opportunities for economic independence.

The institutions founded by her continue to serve thousands of people and stand as enduring symbols of service, compassion, and nation-building. Through Andhra Mahila Sabha and other organizations, she transformed countless lives and demonstrated that lasting social change can be achieved through strong and dedicated institutions.

Her legacy teaches us that true development is possible only when every individual—especially women and the underprivileged—is given access to education, health, and opportunities for growth. Even today, her institutions continue to inspire generations and remain living monuments to her vision of an inclusive, educated, and empowered society.

"The institutions established by Dr. Durgabai Deshmukh are not merely buildings; they are centres of hope, learning, service, and empowerment that continue to illuminate the path of social progress and nation-building."





