



Everyday is Women's Day

2013 International Women's Day - *The Gender Agenda: Gaining Momentum*

The UN theme for International Women's Day 2013

"A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women,"

In a country like India, fondly referred to as 'motherland', by the billion populace, everyday that we breathe is Women's Day. The traditional Indian family revolves around the solemn pillar of motherhood as the entire chores and toils of the day followed by the night weave the fine pattern of family bonding with community and society. The classical Indian woman is not merely the cynosure of those around her but to the doting father she is the apple of the eye, to the loving brother she is the source of family fusion and to the rest she is mother, aunt and grandma rolled into one. She is at once the soul with a unique aura of light and shade. No wonder everyday in our country it is Women's Day.

But why this sudden social Mexican wave phenomenon hitting our country lifting womanhood to the centre stage of our media propelled society? Is it not surprising that the most vocal women activists and campaigns have originated from the west, which claims to have completed almost a century of women's liberation? Despite the bold and heroic women combatants in both the world wars, why is it that they are still an insignificant minority in the most developed nations? Though they have conquered Everest, swum across the dangerous British Channels, trudged both the poles, commanded the International Space Station (ISS) and run the 42 km marathon in the space station, why do they still need to produce proof of equality with their male brethren? Why is there still talk of women empowerment, when her *sceptre shows the force of temporal power the attribute to awe and majesty, Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings?*

These and many questions, which arise in one's mind, probably can be explained by the long history of confinement of women to home and domestic chores. This was probably more prominently experienced, when the west moved from an agrarian to industrial society and women happily continued to take care of the farm and the hearth. Gradually, this led to male domination, as most of the early machinery and industrial culture involved high intensity and long duration physical work input. In addition, the work culture and ethos was extremely harsh, as portrayed in the works of Dickens and the classical school. The women necessarily moved to reach out to areas of fine arts and culture. Thus, compartmentalising work and entertainment for males and females dominance respectively. However when the ghastly world wars descended on Europe, women rose to the challenge of the times, manning



everything from hospitals to anti-aircraft guns. And then the IT revolution and communication world exploded, offering unbelievable opportunities to women not only to share, but also to dominate the work space. Believe me, this was not at the cost of the fine arts and culture space but a net addition to the mind and work space of womanhood.

In the last six decades, we have slowly moved from an agrarian to a learning society with IT and a sophisticated work space offering equal opportunities to all. As this revolution through evolution of the new woman gathers momentum, we need to gradually move laterally and vertically in our complex societal structure, to reach out to women, far beyond the reach of technology, so as to join and occupy this vast new turf of opportunities, offered equally to those who have the merit & the dominant will to succeed.

After all, when you move from a position on the lowest rung of the ladder and take the first high step, you need all the courage and encouragement that you can muster. Events like the women's day precisely help in building self confidence and courage of those who haven't yet experienced true liberation. As millions of women participate in activities designed to build their self confidence, there is an attempt to deliver the message of mind over matter. As the society struggles with innumerable micro hurdles and feeble attempts to destabilise the female workforce, women have to hold their self belief and courage in the face of such challenges. We must remember that fear and negativity have no place or space, in destabilising women empowerment. As the society moves to install and strengthen regulatory civil society structures, you need to spread positivity – the soul of Indian womanhood.

In the context of the modern knowledge society and the workplaces now re-designated as centres of learning, the Indian woman has a lot to contribute. If we take a look at the overall work environment and the complex social milieu, we find that we are living on the edge. Whether in the metropolitan areas or other urban/semi urban habitats, we are all on a short fuse – a powder keg ready to explode at the slightest provocation. It is not merely a matter of a law and order situation getting out of control or administrative failure but the adverse cost spiral and combating micro cultures seething with discontent, which lead to frequent flare ups. The current political and societal leadership keeps helplessly watching the situation, while the media blows it beyond proportion.

Here there is certainly a case for offering a soothing balm to the society – a role which can appropriately suit the rich heritage of Indian women. It has been observed time and again that whenever women professionals have entered in work places dominated by males, this has led to a significant impact on group behaviour.



Such mixed work teams have outperformed the rest and also brought an order to the chaos at the work place. As more and more work professional institutions, especially learning institutions in the knowledge society, consciously induct women workers, the output and service quality will undoubtedly improve. As we are all aware, a woman in the family naturally offers care, comfort and compassion to the rest of the family members and as she expands her network to the society, institutions and the country, she would be the champion for building an 'inclusive society', which we all seek, moving beyond the shackles of caste, creed and religion.

Therefore, I believe the Indian women should now not wait for another Joan of Ark, to seek salvation, but take courage and excel in all fields of human endeavour. This is a tall order but there is no way out other than hard work, courage and dedication, which will help them achieve their due roles in the modern society. Therefore, don't look back, but dear women, "bash on regardless" as the slogan of the victorious Indian Army in the '65 war beacons you to total empowerment.

I wish one and all Happy Women's Day!

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