

Draft Speech for International Conference at Doon University

on

“Bhartiya Woman: A True Perspective”

By

Honourable Governor Lt. Gen. Gurmit Singh, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd.)

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Jai Hind

Vice Chancellor of Doon University Professor Surekha Dangwal ji, Vice Chancellor of SNDT University Mumbai Dr UjjawalaChakradev ji, Deputy Adviser NAAC & Akhil Bhartiya Saha -BoudhikPramukh of Rastra Sevika Samiti Dr Leena Gahane ji, Van. PramukhSanchalika of Rastra Sevika Samiti Mam Shanta Akka ji, SamwardhiniNyas Organizing Secretary Sushree Madhuri Ji Marathe, Gondwana Vidyapeeth Vice Chancellor Dr Prashant Shri Bokare ji, Solapur Vidyapeeth Vice Chancellor Dr Mrinalini Fadnavis ji, Vice Chancellors from other universities, Registrar Doon University Shri M S Mandrawal ji, principals, heads and deans from various colleges and professional institutions, faculty members, eminent personalities, administrative staff members, students, friends from media, ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed a matter of pride for me to attend this very important two-day International Conference on ‘Bhartiya Woman: A True Perspective’ being organized by Doon University, SamvardhineeNyas and SNDT Women’s University, Mumbai.

We often say this नारी तू नारायणी (the woman is a manifestation of the divine). Our Country is the bearer of such an intellectual tradition of the world, whose existence has been cantered on its philosophy. And the basis of this philosophy has been its spiritual consciousness. And this spiritual consciousness has been cantered on the ‘Nari Shakti’ (women’s power). We have happily established the divine power in the form of a woman. In a nation that considers this earth as a mother, the progress of women always gives strength to the empowerment of the nation. Today the priority of the country is on improving the lives of women and their full participation in the development journey of India and that is why we are putting emphasis on lessening the difficulties of our mothers and sisters.

We worship the Goddess in the form of Shakti, for the attainment of knowledge and wisdom, Saraswati is remembered, and for the attainment of wealth and prosperity, Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped. In our scriptures also, not only is the woman worshiped as a goddess, but the place of the woman has been kept supreme.

We also address our country as Mother India, be it Ganga Mata or Gau Mata, we address them as Mother only to give them a special place.

The thing is clear, those who are special, those who are excellent, only they get the name of mother, our forefathers have given special place to women and mother power in the society.

Today, women in villages are giving impetus to the rural economy through small industries by forming self-help groups. There was never any dearth of skills in women. But now the same skill is strengthening her as well as her family. Today, the government is providing financial help to our sisters and daughters through many mediums so that they can move forward, can fulfill their dreams and can do any work according to their wishes.

I want to share with you that I have visited all the 13 districts so far after I assumed office as Governor, and in all those visits, I have also had the privilege of meeting mothers and sisters working in self-help groups. And I want to tell you that the enthusiasm and the liveliness of those sisters infuses a new energy in me. Mark my words, these women will play a leading role in the upliftment of Uttarakhand.

India as a nation has taken significant steps to fill the gender gaps existing in the societies here. The constitution of India provides equality of employment opportunity, voting rights and equal pay for equal work. It lays great emphasis on the dignity of women and constitutes several provisions like maternity reliefs to maintain a gender-sensitive environment at the workplace. Government schemes like 'Beti bachao-Beti padhao', 'Janani Suraksha', intend to ensure the better health care and education facilities. Policies like 'New National Policy for Women' endeavour to follow the 'socially inclusive rights-based approach' for the women empowerment.

India has observed immense changes in its socio-political and economic conditions by the introduction of these measures as well as under the impact of globalization and technological advancements. Census 2001-2011 has recorded a significant rise in the literacy rate of women. The expansion of the service sector has generated fresh work opportunities for women.

Women are dominating the key positions in many fields that were earlier denied to them. Today many women entrepreneurs are leading the marketplace, most of the companies have "lady leaders" as their CEO. The emergence of women to the strategic positions in the social structures has given way to a relatively better understanding and identification of the oppressive practices.

It is the responsibility of all of us to take this journey of empowerment of women's power forward at a fast pace. Education plays an important role in the conditioning of the young minds towards the concept of gender. Schools become one of the initial stages where internalization of the performance of gender roles takes place. Gender sensitized pedagogy is needed for the subversion of these roles. Instilling sensitivity towards the dignity of women, emphasizing the development of ethical stand towards the equality in the boys can provide the society with responsible and sensitive individuals.

It is in this context that I am sure that this international conference will not only provide an answer to these flawed perspectives, but would adequately highlight the true strength of Indian woman in all her multiple hues and her place in Indian cultural and civilizational context. The deliberations will academically articulate and historically locate Indian women through ages and in modern times as active agents in the process of a national transformation that the country has already embarked on. I am sure the conference proceedings would serve as valuable guidelines for devising strategies and policy framework towards further empowering women in India.

I am also pleased to note that the Doon University, which has adopted 'Women Empowerment' as running theme of the year, has been chosen as the venue for this conference. Women of Uttarakhand have time and again demonstrated their unique strength through a range of social, environmental and political movements that have been recognized and appreciated.

I extend my warm greetings to the organisers of this conference and wish them all the success!

Jai Hind!