



Hon'ble Vice-President's Speech at 'Building a New India' being organized by the FICCI Ladies Organization at Hyderabad On 4th November 2017.

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I am happy to share my thoughts on the building of a 'New India' with you all, who are working towards women's empowerment and trying to be change agents. I am glad to know that FICCI Ladies Organization is working on its own and also partnering with the Government of Telangana on various initiatives to empower women, especially those from the marginalized sections.

India today is on the threshold of transforming into a major economic power. For quickening this process of transformation, all Indians will have to work with renewed passion and commitment towards building the New India and the India of the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay and several other freedom fighters.

Friends, we cannot any longer adopt a "chaltha hai" attitude or accept things with a 'destined-to-happen' shrug and remain indifferent to the happenings around us. As the Father of the Nation famously said: "Be the change you wish to see"—to start with let everyone work at his/ her own individual level—be it a housewife, a budding entrepreneur or an employee must actively fight against social evils like gender discrimination, atrocities on women, infanticide, malnourishment, corruption, casteism, communalism and illiteracy. Terrorism is the biggest threat to India's unity and integrity

Somewhat over the years, we Indians have developed a rather strange attitude or belief that every problem has to be solved by the Government and the individual or the society at large need not do anything. "Sab kuch sarkaar karega, hum bekar baithega"-- this premise must change and every citizen must contribute in making India unleash its full potential.

For this to happen and the envisioned New India to take shape, all sections, particularly youth and women, who constitute almost half the country's population will have to be in the forefront.

The New India will be fully literate, free of corruption with shelter to every family, provide power on demand, best healthcare, meet the employment aspirations of the youth, empower women, double farmers' income and convert India into an economic powerhouse with IT, Agriculture and Industrial sectors contributing significantly to its economic growth. Of course, politicians and political parties need to be exemplary in their conduct.

From times immemorial and in our scriptures women have been accorded positions of power and leadership. Our ethos and values always respected women and it is unfortunate that abhorrent tendencies of atrocities are taking place in modern times. It needs no reiteration that the most stringent action has to be taken against perpetrators of atrocities on women. Here I would like to recall what Swami Vivekananda had said: "The best thermometer to the progress of nation is its treatment of women". Our scriptures have said "Yatra Naryastu Pujyante, Ramanta Tatra Devata", meaning where women are respected, Gods will dwell there.

While women achieved tremendous success in different fields from space to sports, political empowerment is the most critical aspect in the overall empowerment of women. I hope that more and more women would be seen in various bodies—from panchayats to Parliament in the years ahead. It is also necessary to remove all hurdles that come in the way of socio-economic empowerment of women.

Needless to say that education forms the foundation for empowering girls and women. As had been most aptly said educating a woman means educating an entire family. Ending gender disparity, ensuring safety, healthcare, imparting job skills, creating more job opportunities and ensuring safe work places are all aimed at empowering women. On the advantages of educating women, a UN report based on data from 219 countries, said that for every one additional year of education for women in reproductive age, child mortality is reduced by a huge 9.50 per cent.

The Government has launched various schemes, including ‘Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao’ which seeks to reverse the trend of decline in Child Sex Ratio.

I am happy to know that FICCI Ladies Organization (FLO), Hyderabad chapter has taken up various programmes to empower and uplift women, particularly from the weaker sections. I compliment FLO for acting as a facilitator to impart training for women to become drivers, tailors and security personnel in schools.

FLO’s Swayam, a consultancy and mentorship cell for women entrepreneurs is also a laudable initiative.

Finally, I would like to conclude by calling upon every citizen to strive for building New India where the aspirations and dreams of every Indian are fulfilled and where nobody is left behind.

Thank You and Jai Hind!

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