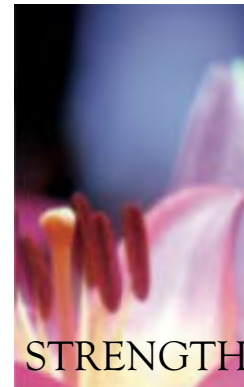




Reflections
2005

Reflections
2005

Women's Conference 2005





IAHV International Women 's Conference Bangalore June 2 - 4, 2005
Art of Living International Centre, Bangalore



*Dedicated to Amma
(Mother of His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar)
and to all Mothers of the world*





Shakti, The Strength Of Woman: Celebrating Success

The International Association for Human Values, an international NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and Ved Vignan Maha Vidya Peeth organized a conference to highlight the achievements of women in bringing about positive social change with a focus on values and ethics.

In Indian mythology Shakti (Strength) is represented as the trinity of Durga, goddess of valour, Laskshmi goddess of wealth and well-being and Saraswati- goddess of knowledge and art. The agenda of the conference was based on this theme, wherein each day focused on the strengths signified by each goddess. It brought together women from all over the world, cutting through cultural, religious and ethnic boundaries.

600 women from 40 countries around the world, 500 rural women from various Indian states, 100 elected Panchayat Leaders and over 1000 school girls came together at the Art of Living International Centre in Bangalore to participate in this conference a true reflection of a One World Family, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.

The tone was set for the conference's unique feature of focusing on action oriented solutions by the gifting of keys to some of the recipients of the 100 homes that were built in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

On this unique platform, women leaders of global prominence, with those at the grassroots that have worked in more anonymous, but equally powerful ways, shared experiences, ideas, and life stories. They inspired others to create a network of women that are today bonded by a common commitment to effect social transformation. This network has encouraged and initiated dialogue and projects on bridging the gap between the rural and urban woman, empowering women and educating children in Iraq, India, Africa, USA, Australia and the Middle East.



Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Founder,
The International Association for Human Values
&
The Art of Living





Extracts from the Inaugural Address by H.H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

The primordial energy is always feminine. That is why it is called Aadhya Shakti . Women bring human beings to the planet...and teach us how to live. At this moment, I should remember my mother, who has been an inspiration to me. Your mother is your first Guru, your first teacher.

This Conference will, I hope, bring you the joy of celebration along with the knowledge of a summit. In celebration, there is no knowledge, and in knowledge, there is no celebration; but this conference should be that unique one, where you combine the joy of celebration and the wisdom of discussion, which will enable you to move ahead in society and make a difference, make a change.

Women teach us our first behaviour, our first step in life. Women can glue the differences and bring people of diverse nature together. These qualities are inherent in a woman. For a woman, it is quite natural to relate from the level of the heart.

If a project is not successful, I think there has been less participation of women. Where women are determined, they can make any project successful. The biggest force is emotions and feelings, motivation and inspiration. Men can inspire to fight; women inspire to unite. In today's war-torn world, we need women to come to the forefront and take more responsibility, without getting stressed. This is very important.

It is necessary that women bring together the finest aspects of society; the feminine, and the ability to create, with the transformational ability to make a difference in society - these two should go hand in hand.

There are more wars in the world today because there is a lack of feminine leadership to unite people, overcome differences and bring home the purpose of life that we are all born with.

We need to inculcate spiritual values in our children. If you can identify in a child where the aggression is beginning, where it is sprouting, you have the skill, and the responsibility, to turn it around.

Now it is your responsibility to bring non-violence, caring and sharing, and a sense of belongingness into society, whether it is at the local, state, national or international level.



Smt. Bhanumathi Narasimhan
Chairperson, Women's Conference





Extracts from the Inaugural Address by Smt. Bhanumati Narasimhan

I am so honoured to be a part of this august gathering. As soon as I walk into this hall, I can feel the energy of enthusiasm and love. There are so many of my sisters here from all over the world to participate in this conference.

Preparing for this conference has been a great team experience for all of us. When we were working together, we came across so many brilliant minds that have contributed to the welfare of society and upliftment of human values.

The whole purpose of this conference is to create a platform for both rural and urban women to interact and discuss matters concerning the wellbeing of humanity. As women, we do not want to see violence in society; we are more for peace and prosperity. In keeping with this aspect of the feminine nature, we decided to organise and host this conference.



H.H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar says we must identify ourselves as spirit first. When we identify ourselves as women, we could go through times of strength and weakness. Sometimes, women need to do jobs that men do, and men need to do jobs that women do. Spirituality takes us beyond gender identity, and at the same time strengthens our gender identity to make us perform our roles better. Spirituality makes us relaxed and contemplative thereby avoiding hasty decisions and wastage of energy. Hence, we have provided time in the conference agenda for simple yet effective spiritual practices, such as meditation and yoga.

There are so many unique women here who have contributed to society, either as mothers teaching their children, or as CEO's of multinational companies. What we have to do is to learn from one another, especially from the rural women who have come here. They have so many beautiful stories to share with us.

Let us actively take this opportunity to participate fully in this conference and feel at home. I am confident that the discussions and interactions we will have here over these three days will help us to take positive steps to bridge the urban and rural divide, and bring back social justice, economic freedom and spirituality in society. Once again, I welcome you to this wonderful celebration, in a spirit of joy and togetherness. I am sure that by working together, we can make happier homes, a better society and a joyful world. Thank you.

Awards & Honours

The following outstanding women were presented with Vishalakshi Awards, an award established in memory of the mother of H.H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. This award recognised not only those women who have excelled under the gaze of the public eye, but also those women who have worked selflessly 'behind the scenes' to make a difference in this world.

Srimati Mottamma (Former Minister of Karnataka for Women and Child Welfare): For her contribution in the field of politics especially local government.

Sallumara Thimmakka: For planting and nurturing trees, together with her husband, along the 4 km stretch of arid, dusty road between Hulikal and nearby Kudur. These trees now provide a shady respite to all the villagers who regularly have to travel this road.

Ms. Veena Dhari: For discovering herbal medicines that have given relief to individuals living with HIV and AIDS.

Smt. Shobha and Manjulamma Hoskote: For their roles in establishing self-help groups, ensuring that women in their villages were self-sufficient.

Parimala, Manjula and Jayanti: For their committed service to the community, working for the Indian postal department for the past 18 years. These are seemingly ordinary women living extraordinary lives.

Prema Kamath and Hemavati: For their selfless service in the education of children.



Awards & Honours

Malati Holla: For winning 183 golds, 24 silvers and 5 bronze medals in a short span of two decades in various national and international events including the Para Olympics and Asian Games. She was also the recipient of the Arjuna Award in 1996 and the Padma Shri in 2001.

Jija Hari Singh (IPS), Managing Director of Mysore Minerals Ltd. and recipient of the President of India Police Medal for distinguished service and the Indira Priyadarshini Award for National Integration and Arts.

Chitra Roy: For her contribution to music.

Rashmi Gopi: For her tireless efforts in promoting Indian dance forms.

Justice Manjula Chellur: The first ever woman appointed to the High Court of Karnataka since its establishment in 1884.

Shyama Sondhi : For her unwavering commitment in Jammu and Kashmir to create an Art of Living Youth movement and bringing about trauma relief and rehabilitation for youth and prisoners

Pravrajika Vivekaprana: Writer and Senior Nun of the Sri Sarada Math who has spent a majority of her time holding spiritual retreats in India and abroad and authored many books on the upliftment of the human mind.





“As we enter the new millennium we must remember the... women who gave up everything to join the freedom struggle...They were the torch bearers who continue to inspire women even today in the country's drama of change.”

Smt. Meira Kumar
Hon'ble Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment
India

Inaugural Ceremony



“Our quest now is not just to be educated, not just to have good health, which is extremely important for the large number of women who are today not getting that, but we need to get to the top echelons of decision making.”

Smt. Sheila Dikshit
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi
India

Inaugural Ceremony



“I am very blessed that I was invited to this conference and want to thank Guruji for making this international conference possible...We also have empowerment of women and various women ministers in the Sultanate of Oman, and the future looks very bright.”

Her Highness Susan Al Said
Sultanate of Oman

Inaugural Ceremony



While speaking of the first elections in Iraq in 50 years:
“I believe women always work for peace, and by going first (to the voting booths) they encouraged men to vote.”

Dr. Raja Khuzai
Interim National Council
Governing Iraq (INC)
Iraq

Inaugural Ceremony

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Durga: Women in Public Life

Day 1

Day 1

Durga: Women in Public Life

S P E A K E R S

Speaking about boosting the morale of rural women in India:
“I am sure, if all of us unite together and make resolutions, we will be able to wipe the tears from our downtrodden and unfortunate sisters.”

*Justice Manjula Chellur
High Court of Karnataka
India*

Inaugural Ceremony



“Much of women's disempowerment, poverty and misery, is because they have no control and are out of power. It is time for women to demand, to take back part of the power.”

*Ms. Njoki Ndungu
Hon'ble Member of Parliament
Kenya*

Inaugural Ceremony



“I am woman and no one can push me aside. This is something that I had to learn and I did. And the earlier you learn it and you give it to your small girls, that she is as important as your boy, I think this would make a difference to us.”

*Dr. (Mrs.) Jutta Stefan-Bastl
H.E. The Ambassador for Austria*

Inaugural Ceremony



“The biggest reason for conflict in our society is rampant intolerance. We as mothers can inculcate the spirit of tolerance in our children, and emphasise the common values shared by humanity rather than our differences.”

*Justice (Retd) Nasira Javed Iqbal
Pakistan*

Inaugural Ceremony





“We have outstanding women doing marvellous work in all religions. We must begin to see them, not just in the home, but in the public place.”

*Reverend Motlalepula Chabaku
Hon'ble Member of Parliament
South Africa*

Voices Around the World



“For those women who have experienced freedom, don't take it for granted. There are many other women all over the world whom we need to empower...”

*Ms. Zanele Hlatshwayo
Hon'ble Deputy Mayor
Msunduzi, South Africa*

Voices Around the World



“I would like all women to know that we are the moving force behind everything but we must also give back. We should not forget the people who are struggling, especially the women in rural villages.”

*Mrs. Joyce Oneko
Executive Director, “Mama Na Dada”
Kenya*

Voices Around the World



“Personal spirituality should culminate into social responsibility, only then it becomes meaningful. Let us all unite together today in our endeavour to improve the lot of our women folk.”

*Smt. Akhila Srinivasan
Managing Director
Shriram Investments, India*

New Paradigms in Public Life

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Durga: Women in Public Life

Day 1

Day 1

Durga: Women in Public Life

S P E A K E R S

“We tend to think that the world owes us, and yes, I believe it does. However, how will the outside environment or another person value us if we do not value ourselves first? In other words, it really begins with us.”

*Ms. Paxina Kalulu
Management Consultant
Zimbabwe*

New Paradigms in Public Life



“We need to deal with fear. Women fear too much - we fear our husbands, our bosses, the government...yet there is no need to fear. If you speak the truth, you need not fear anyone.”

*Ms. Patricia De Lille
Hon'ble Member of Parliament
Leader of the Independent Democrats
South Africa*

New Paradigms in Public Life



Sharing her experience of visiting the villages for the first time:
“The first thing which hit me was the difference between what I had seen for the first two decades of my life and what was there for me to work for. It was then that I developed a purpose.”

*Mrs. Rajni Sekhri Sibal
Indian Administrative Service Officer
India*

New Paradigms in Public Life



“It is the essence of femininity to rise up against injustice to question, to unravel, to seek the truth and to rattle the cage.”

*Ms. Ruth Ostrow
Journalist & Author
Australia*

Empowered Women in Media: Breaking News

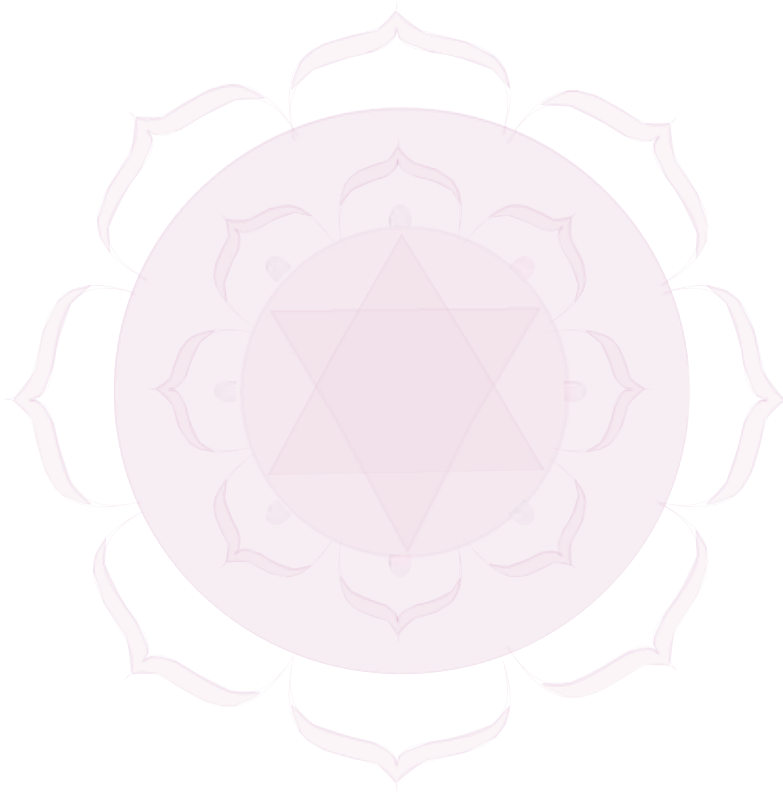




“One thing we can do right here, right now - is that whenever we see something which in some way trivialises women, we will stand up for it in whatever little way we can.”

Ms. Malavika Sangghvi
Editor of Sunday Review
India

Empowered Women in Media: Breaking News



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Durga: Women in Public Life

Day 2

Lakshmi: Women in Wealth & Wellness

S P E A K E R S

“I challenge every delegate here to go back home and create opportunities that will benefit and support other women.”

*Ms. Makhosi Maria Ntuli
Hon'ble Member of Parliament
Founding Member, Women and Development Organisation
South Africa*

Empowered Women in Sustainable Development



“The sooner we involve women in this process of preservation, I think the better our chances of bequeathing a planet where there is peace, prosperity and dignity for all.”

*Ms. Ayesha Khan
Environmental Activist & Journalist
Pakistan*

Empowered Women in Sustainable Development



Speaking on microfinance:
“Women have shown a 98% repayment rate for the loans they have taken and they have started transforming their own lives and then the lives of their community. ”

*Ms. Shibani Sachdeva
Executive Director of United Way,
Mumbai, India*

Empowered Women in Sustainable Development



“With all these inspirational presentations, we are on a high note. When we go back to our realities, we may meet a lot of challenges just remember, small beginnings make big endings!”

*Ms. Elizabeth Shongwe
Director of Kelloggs Foundation
Swaziland*

Empowered Women in Sustainable Development





“The most important factor in the prevention of HIV and AIDS is awareness. We have to be aware, tell others and be able to access information and services.”

Dr. Lata Jagannathan
*Founder/MD/Managing Trustee, Bangalore Medical Services Trust
India*

Positive Women: Living Positively



Presented the various initiatives of the South African government to combat the spread of HIV, along with the concurrent problem of discrimination against individuals living with HIV or AIDS.

Ms. Thami Skenjana
*National Directorate, Government AIDS Action Plan
South Africa*

Positive Women: Living Positively



“The violence that we live with in the Middle East is destroying all of us and our children. I decided I had to do something to help change our situation...and I knew the answer had to be women.”

Ms. Elana Rozenman
*Director
Women's Interfaith Encounter, Israel*

Give Peace a Chance



“The system is deep-rooted...(but) it has to change; and the change can happen with everybody. I firmly believe that we women, the backbone, have the answer.”

Dr. Sudha Kumar
*Chief Physician, Bangalore Homeopathic Medical Centre
India*

In Reverence to the Missing Woman - Celebrating the Girl Child

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Lakshmi: Women in Health & Wellness

Day 2

Day 2

Lakshmi: Women in Wealth & Wellness

S P E A K E R S

“Ya devi sarva bhooteshu matr roopena samsthita
Namastassaye namastassaye namastassaye namo namaha.
This means the divine is present in every being as mother.
This is our culture.”

Dr. Rama Kashyap
Advisor, Gender and Community, UNFPA
India

In Reverence to the Missing Woman - Celebrating the Girl Child



“It's time to forge a new vision for the compassionate corporation, and this can come from our conversations together, our intentions and actions and our faith in the future. For this, we need to reach out to the teachings of the spiritual masters.”

Dr. Patricia Morrigan
School of Management, Edith Cowan University
Australia

Creating Compassionate Companies



“We as women need to be pioneers in new fields, but it is not easy and it takes its toll. I believe my spiritual life has always helped me in this area.”

Ms. Deborah Blackwell
Executive Vice President & GM, SOAPnet, The Walt Disney Company
USA

Creating Compassionate Companies



“Women tend to change the business culture. They bring in values which were not (previously) accepted...as business values by the business world.”

Prof. Sema Sakarya
Chairperson & Associate Professor
Business Department of International Trade
Bogazici University, Turkey

Creating Compassionate Companies

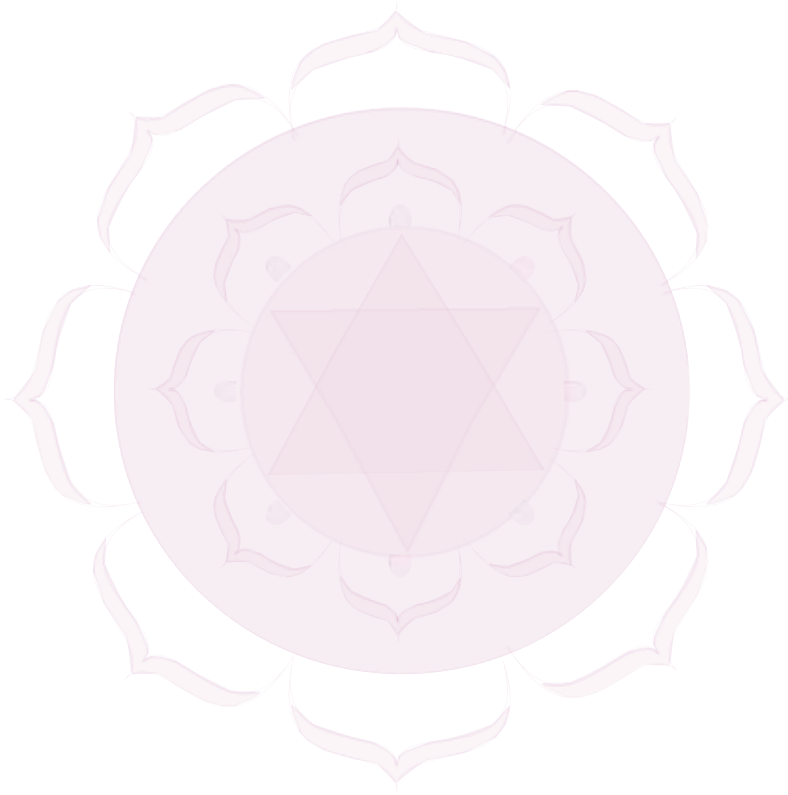




“This conference is about coming together as women to share – because each of us has walked a different path, in a different country, a different culture, a different family. We have to come together as sisters to share our answers with each other.”

Ms. Jana Stanfield
Singer-Songwriter
USA

Performance



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Sakshmi: Women in Health & Wellness

Day 3

Saraswati: Women in Knowledge

S P E A K E R S

“What we need today, more than ever before, would be an affirmation of each of our individual inner selves... If we can extend ourselves to each other... and express ourselves in any way, that will move mankind towards love, compassion and eternal bliss.”

Mrs. Kirtana Kumar
Writer/Director/Actor/Producer
India

Women in the Arts - Sacred Feminine



“I believe that image and form have the power to expand consciousness to generate social transformation.”

Ms. Sally Linder
Contemporary American Visual Artist
& Painter
USA

Women in the Arts - Sacred Feminine



“All of us here must make sure we are involved in nation building in some way. Choose whatever your heart really gravitates towards, and work (for that) so all of us can live happily, harmoniously and with peace in ourselves.”

Dr. Veena Lutchman
Lecturer, University of Durban-Westville
South Africa

Women in the Arts - Sacred Feminine



“The role of the artist, of women and of indigenous communities, is less defined and pushed down in society. I believe it is the role of the artist to bring these up to awareness.”

Ms. Janelle Cugley
Visual & Multimedia Artist
Australia

Women in the Arts - Sacred Feminine





“When you work in a spirit of service and sacrifice, and you feel this oneness towards all creatures, you will be blessed with the most serendipitous experiences.”

Smt. Jaya Row
Founder, Vedanta Vision
India

Women in Spirituality – The Goddess Within



“How nice it would be if daily we could hold the Mother Earth in our hands, and give it the powerful vibrations of peace and happiness. Very soon, this world would become a better world.”

Rajyogini Bramha Kumari Asha
Director, Om Shanti Retreat Centre
New Delhi, India

Women in Spirituality – The Goddess Within



Speaking of how prayer, meditation and the reading of spiritual thoughts are integrated into the daily activity of the Sisters:
“You always have to feed the spirit if you are going to do service.”

Sister Bernadette
Sisters of Divine Providence
San Antonio, USA

Women in Spirituality – The Goddess Within



Having given an account of the famous Hindu myth when the ocean was churned to obtain the nectar:
“I can see that the Goddess is alive (here) and you are churning the ocean in every possible way!”

Pravrajika Vivekaprana
Senior Nun, Sri Sarada Math
India

Women in Spirituality – The Goddess Within

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Saraswati: Women in Knowledge

Day 3

Day 3

Saraswati: Women in Knowledge

S P E A K E R S

Speaking about the impact Buddhism has had on her life:
“Buddhism has given me, a very ordinary woman, the ability to conceive a role for myself as a world citizen.”

Ms. Bharati Ramachandran
Practicing Nichiren Buddhist
India

Women in Spirituality – The Goddess Within



“We have to feel the presence of ourselves as the Divine gift to this world...It is possible to bring the transformation again in our life, in all the women's lives, just by getting to the spiritual aspect of ourselves.”

Smt. Vasanti Narayan
Faculty, Art of Living
India

Women in the Arts - Sacred Feminine



“We all have, in every breath, a moment of choice. How I exercise my moment of choice enters into my thought, creates my thought, and every cell in my body eavesdrops on every thought.”

Dr. Gulrukh Bala
Founder, Heartlight Ascension
India

Women in the Arts - Sacred Feminine



“We must go within ourselves and ask: How did I perform my duties for the day? How well did I serve whomever I was supposed to serve? Could I do it in a better, happier, more compassionate, giving and qualitatively enhancing way?”

Ms. Kiran Bedi
Indian Police Service

Shakti – Strength of a Woman





“If each of us brings wisdom (Saraswati) into our lives, and each of us takes one person...and teaches her – not education alone but the values of life... then we have all done our duty.”

Smt. Sathya Saran
Former Editor, Femina
India

Shakti – Strength of a Woman



When we face our largest obstacle, we expose the most vulnerable side of ourselves...The strength of a woman can stop a bulldozer in its path, it can stop an army.”

Ms. Jennifer Ferguson
Singer-Songwriter
South Africa

Shakti – Strength of a Woman



“I feel that knowledge is a wealth. Without knowledge, our life is worthless. Even if we want to be leaders, we cannot be good leaders without knowledge.”

Mrs. Ibtisam Mahameed
Co-founder, Women's Interfaith Encounter
Israel

Shakti – Strength of a Woman



“We have to educate ourselves, we have to believe we have the strength – we are those pillars upon whose shoulders the whole world rests.”

Ms. Devika Bhojwani
Vice President
Women's Cancer Initiative, Tata Memorial Hospital
India

Shakti – Strength of a Woman

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Saraswati: Women in Knowledge

Day 3

Day 3

Saraswati: Women in Knowledge

S P E A K E R S

“Journalists say, 'You don't have any money or power, how will you be successful?' I tell them that I have a burning desire to serve my people, and it is this passion that will see me through.”

Ms. Ghotti Khauri
Academician, Afghan Academy of Sciences
Afghanistan

Shakti – Strength of a Woman



“Women have really changed society in the USA – women against drunk drivers, women against guns...and it is women who really want to make the change as mothers, we do not want children of the next generation to suffer.”

Mrs. Leslie Elkus
USA

Shakti – Strength of a Woman



“Non-violent communication is something new...Violence is built into our language, we need to look at our language more carefully.”

Ms. Pauline De'Fry
Australia

Shakti – Strength of a Woman



“The experience of sisterhood, of the strength in women, of the grace in women, that I have experienced here, is something I will take with me for the rest of my life.”

Ms. Patricia Lambert
Legal Adviser to the Hon'ble Minister of Health
South Africa

Shakti – Strength of a Woman



Rural Women



A unique feature of the Women's Conference 2005 was the participation of more than 500 rural women from villages in India as delegates. This was a rare opportunity for urban and rural women to share their thoughts and ideas with each other.

Special breakaway sessions were designed where the women could interact with each other and understand the real purpose of the conference. They started each day with breathing and relaxation techniques and were given an overview of the day's sessions. The floor was then open for discussion. Individual concerns were addressed and the solutions were expressed through skits and other creative activities.

“Even though many different languages were spoken the message and discussions of the conference were universally understood and these women were empowered to realize the influence they could have on their regions and the country as a whole.”

-Ekta Narula

Faculty: Art of Living

Coordinator for Rural Women, Women's Conference 2005

At the market place, which was an integral part of the conference, stalls showcased the local products of the rural delegates.

The Unsung Heroine

The various states represented at the conference were Karnataka, Meghalaya, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Goa, Andaman Islands and Tamil Nadu.

Ranjita Pawal, a woman from a village in Maharashtra, shared how chemical farming techniques have had a devastating effect on rural land. After implementing organic farming, with the help of Art of Living, her village has witnessed a transformation in soil quality, resulting in higher sugar cane yield and better quality grains.

The Sri Sri Rural Development Programme established in 2001 is a community based programme whose underlying philosophy is to empower women and youth to become self sufficient. On Day 2, at the conference venue, representatives of SSRDP demonstrated the different skills they had learnt which enabled them to successfully generate an income.

Tina Chawn from rural Gujarat, spoke about the effect massive deforestation has had on the climate (resulting in either droughts or too much rain). With the help of Art of Living, her village has worked together to plant more than 100,000 fruit trees. Planting fruit trees has not only addressed the environmental imbalance caused by deforestation, but also provided a livelihood for villagers.

The Unsung Heroine

Here is what some of the rural delegates had to say:

“At first I refused to come to the program. I was shy. But on the very first day some young girls whom I had never met before made sure I was comfortable, took care of me and made me feel special. I began to feel that all these people were my family and I was a part of theirs.”

Shantamma: Udipallya Village, South Bangalore.

“For the first time in my life I met so many women from all over the world. I never knew that there was a world beyond my village.”

Regina Mary: Tataguni Village, South Bangalore.

“The women's conference has made me very strong. I have experienced many changes and feel that I should be self reliant. I feel I am not alone and have many women who will stand by and support me. I thank all those who made it happen.”

Manjula: Bijapur, North Karnataka

100 Panchayat leaders or elected representatives of local government from Malur, Kolar and Doddaballapur districts of Karnataka attended the conference. They were an example of the fact that women can indeed empower themselves, rise above their insecurities and become confident, self

sufficient leaders of their communities.

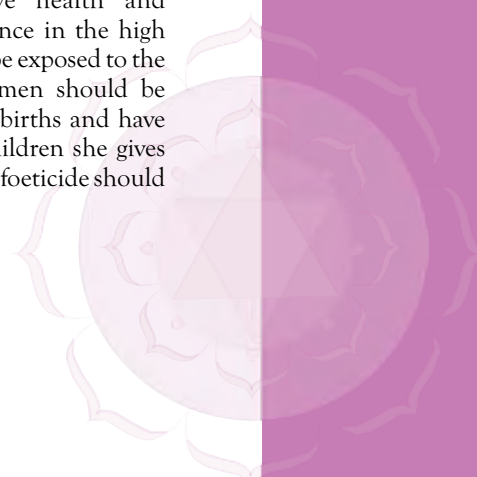
A woman representative from Malur said "I head a self-help group of around 300 women. We need the help of the Art of Living to train and instill confidence in them to become women entrepreneurs, leaders of their community and participate in elections.”

A woman representative from Doddaballapur shared:

“Gender sensitization is the need of the day. We need to stop atrocities inflicted on women and prevent domestic violence. The change should begin at the grassroots level especially in the education system. This is the time to change the stereotyped roles set by a narrow-mindset.”

Another woman representative from Bangalore rural district said:

"Knowledge about reproductive health and nutrition must be given importance in the high school syllabus. Children should be exposed to the rich tradition of Ayurveda. Women should be educated about spacing between births and have an opinion on the number of children she gives birth to. Education against female foeticide should be stressed upon.”



A Dream Come True

One of the highlights of the IAHV Women's Conference 2005 was the building of 100 homes for women in rural areas, providing basic infrastructure, vocational training, and teaching them human values, ensuring a sense of belongingness and making superficial differences of caste creed and religion.

At the inaugural ceremony of the conference some of the recipients were handed the keys to their newly built homes.

“My dream is to help build as many homes for women below the poverty line....In the last few monthsas part of the Women's Conference I have supervised the building of ten homes in Shimoga District in the interiors of Karnataka.”

-Pinky Patel
Yuvacharya
Art of Living



The World Bank Institute & the Women's Conference

The World Bank Institute Washington, USA as co-sponsors offered a unique opportunity at the conference. The opening session of the conference proceedings linked via satellite women from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania and Palestine to interact with those at the conference venue. Moderated by a panel of eminent women the discussions and questions were stimulating and passionate. Each country was allotted time to ask questions and interact with the panelists. The discussions revolved around peace, conflict resolution and creation of women networks to work towards peace.

Isabelle M. Bleas, senior private sector development specialist from the World Bank Institute, attended the meet on behalf of her organization. "The video conference became a

medium of exchange of opinions, ideas and, most importantly of 'feelings', Bleas said during an interview.

She said on one occasion this had brought together an Israeli and a Palestinian activist providing them with an opportunity to work together although their nations were virtually at war all the time.

The WBI, the educational arm of the World Bank, also sponsored women from IDA countries to address and attend the conference. During her interview Bleas said she had worked extensively for development in many countries. To give momentum to continuing projects in these countries the WBI had arranged the satellite link up and sponsored the conference delegates.



From left to right
Reverend Chabaku, Leslie Elkus, Bhanumathi Narasimhan, Isabelle Bleas, Joyce Oneko, Elana Rozenman

Exhibitions & Market Place



"On Women, By Women, For Women"

This Photo Exhibition was designed to create an awareness about issues affecting women today, such as education and employment, support for a girl child, sex-selective abortion and infanticide, religious discrimination, dowry and awareness of fundamental rights. Emphasis was placed on alerting the viewer to the importance of bringing women to the forefront and making women self-sufficient

The Market Place

Sumalatha Ambarish and Bharathi Vishnuvardhan inaugurate the Market Place at the IAHV Women's Conference 2005.

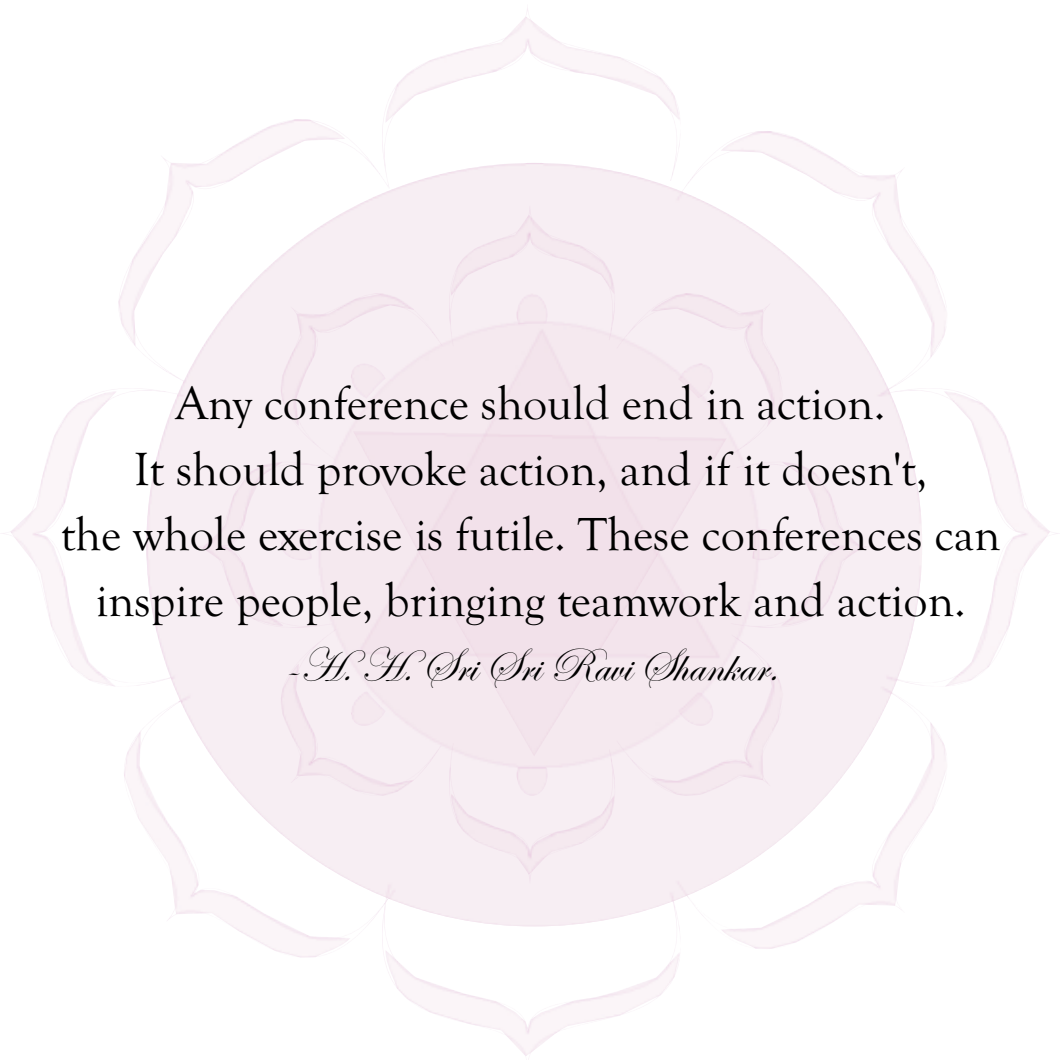


The Devi Exhibition



This display highlighted the exalted position of women in ancient and medieval India, seeking to inspire the modern woman to recognise her true status."

Beyond the Conference - Dynamic Action



Any conference should end in action.
It should provoke action, and if it doesn't,
the whole exercise is futile. These conferences can
inspire people, bringing teamwork and action.

-H. H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

International Conference on Integrated Value Education: June 2006

One of the pivotal contributions of the IAHV International Women's Conference 2005 was to get together and champion causes that would promote a safer, better, more humane and just world. As caretakers of future generations instilling values in children and integrating these values in the educational system seemed to be a natural result of the conference.

Initiated by His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar the International Conference on Integrated Value Education was held in Bangalore in June 2006. It was hosted by the Art of Living in collaboration with INCCU (Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO), Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

There were 1300 delegates and 300 youth from all over the world

including Ministers of Education, members of parliament, distinguished academicians, education visionaries, Vice Chancellors and dignitaries from schools, colleges and universities, media, corporates and NGOs.

Highlights:

Government delegations were sent from Russia, the Chechen Republic and South Africa to participate in the conference.

A special session was organized for all Chancellors, Vice Chancellors and Education Ministers, which resulted in a draft working plan for integrated value education

The conference successfully addressed the need for the education system to focus on and encourage the uniqueness of every child, instill values of a healthy

society and develop every individual as a global citizen.



Beyond the Conference

UNFPA and The Art Of Living

As a result of the Women's Conference 2005 session entitled "In Reverence to the Missing Woman, Celebrating the Girl Child" a dialogue was initiated between the two organizations, the UNFPA and the Art of Living which culminated in a conference entitled "India's Missing Daughters: Faith for Action Against Sex Selection." Held in New Delhi in November 2005, the conference sought to address the alarming imbalance in India's sex ratio.

Data from the Census of India shows a sharp decline in the 0-6 year sex ratio, from 962 girls per 1000 boys (1981 census) to 927 girls per 1000 boys (2001 census). It is estimated that the number of missing women in India has increased from 4 million in 1901, to 35 million in 2001.

The conference brought together 35 religious and spiritual leaders on one platform, along with representatives from the Government, civil society and the media. Faith leaders play such a significant role in India's social fabric, and this conference garnered their support to tackle this serious issue.



Peanut Butter Project- Murewa, Africa

Inspired by the Women's Conference the Breath Water Sound Program was initiated for the women of Chitate in Murewa, Africa. 800 women benefited from the program and this led to the start of a peanut butter project. The women were trained in using the peanut butter machine. The peanuts are grown, shelled, bottled and packaged in Murewa.

The machine presented by the Art of Living volunteers of Zimbabwe was ceremonially handed over to the women of Murewa. The women performed a dynamic dance and sang ganesh sharanam. They also demonstrated the breathing exercises (eg bhastrika) taught on the breath water sound program.



Around 80 women involved in the project get together everyday, do their exercises (bhastrika, aum, ram meditation) and then begin making the peanut butter.



We thank all those who contributed
in making the conference a great success.



Women's Conference Secretariat

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