



A very Good Evening and warm greetings to you all.

It gives me immense pleasure to participate in the International Webinar 'Sovaniya World Women's Conference-2020' organised by the All Odisha Women Conference (women wings of International Indecency Prevention Movement) being held at Cuttack.

At the outset, I convey my greetings to all women delegates participating in the International Webinar from Odisha and different States in India and from other countries.

I am happy to note that this International conference is being organised with the themes of 'Kanya Surakhya' – 'Daughters Safety' and 'Key role played by women worldwide in containing Covid-19'. I understand that the main objective of this conference is to stimulate moral, economic, social and spiritual consciousness among women for a better, peaceful society and the world.

According to ancient wisdom "Yatra Naryastu Pujyante, Ramante Tatra Devata" – meaning – 'God lives in places where women are worshipped'

As you all agree, there is an urgent need to strengthen measures for safety of women in the country and instill greater sense of security in them through speedy and effective administration of justice in a holistic manner and by providing a safer environment for women in the society.

Women's movements and agitations by activists in the 70's and 80's against issues such as dowry harassment and related crime, rape and sexual assault were significant as they created greater awareness in the society about violence against women which led to several legal reforms including passing of a comprehensive Prevention of Domestic Violence Act etc.

Women's safety involves their financial security and autonomy. Women's economic empowerment reduces their vulnerability to situations of violence

as they become less dependent on men and they will be in a better position to make their own decisions. Women have a right to be recognized as equal members in the society and they should be made part of decision-making process at all levels of legislation and governance.

Women's safety means a safe and healthy society and quality of life for everyone. Lack of safety has an adverse impact on the lives of people. For instance, harassment of girls in their neighborhoods, while they are on their way to school, and in buses could lead to their dropping out of school. It is high time that necessary strategies and policies are evolved to create a safer

environment for women and girls in the society. Women and girls have the right to live their life without the constant feeling of fear and insecurity.

As Mahatma Gandhi said:

*"There is no occasion for women to consider themselves subordinate or inferior to men. Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacity. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior."*

As regards the key role played by women worldwide in containing Covid-19, it is a fact that women comprise of approximately 70% of the global healthcare workforce. These healthcare professionals have been under immense pressure to contain the pandemic at great risk to their own lives.

Every country where the pandemic is wreaking havoc has reported a shocking number of deaths of doctors and nurses as they perform their duties, often without adequate protective gear or enough time off to allow necessary rest and care for their own mental health.

Among the health care professionals, female healthcare workers globally find their distress multiplied further as they also have to support their

spouses, children and the elderly persons at home, while also taking care of the household work.

It is often said that during crisis women rise to the occasion and act as leaders and render services at frontline.

Across the globe, all the six countries Germany, Finland, Denmark, New Zealand, Belgium and Iceland, that have had the most commendable response to the Covid-19 situation, had one thing in common – all these countries had female leadership and they received much praise from all for their swift handling of the situation.

I wish the International Webinar 'Sovaniya World Women's Conference-2020', all success.

Jai Hind