

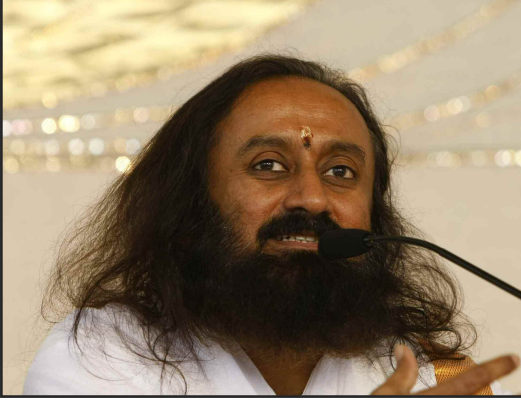


HIS HOLINESS SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

Creating a Stress-Free Mind and a Violence-Free World

‘Spirituality is the backbone of life & values’

(Sri Sri's address at the inauguration ceremony of 3rd International Women's Conference, Feb. 6, 2009 at the Art of Living Centre, India)



I wonder why women never entered the military. It occurred to me that women will never follow. In military, you have to follow. Women are so independent by nature that it is impossible to have a colonel or major and have a group of women follow them. This is why this leadership quality in women, which is inherent, is pushed aside. It is an inborn, leadership quality that needs to be nurtured and brought together. In any peaceful situation, all you need to do is have a couple of women and start a discussion. Soon, there will be a situation that requires conflict resolution. Conflicts begin with women in the house, not with men. This is because women are independent in thinking.

They have their own ideas and it is good. There is an old proverb that says lions are so lazy and snakes are so scared. Though they have venom in them, they are so scared of everyone else. Among the intellectuals, there is a difference of opinions and they never go together. This is why the world is a safe place to be. Women are intellectual and emotional geniuses. They excel in planning and executing tasks. When women head departments in countries, it is usually much ahead of others.

I have seen these inherent leadership qualities in rural and urban women. It has to be nurtured. I am glad we have chosen this topic of leadership. It brings to light, the biggest problem in third world countries which is corruption. Women do not fall to corruption as much as men because it pinches them, though there are exceptions like in Uttar Pradesh. Generally, it is women which will drive the ideal of a corruption-free society.

Leadership is only a social cause but also important on a personal level. Building character and integrity, women can do a better job. Today the situation is such that it is akin to standing on a running treadmill. You have to run to stay in the same place. In this fast pace of life, we need to balance our inner beauty, ethical values, and the challenges we face socially and internationally.

You might have read in newspapers that 2,000 women stood up and pledged their children to be suicide bombers. This sends a shock in the spine. Women can never do such a thing. What can cause this? There is so much injustice, lack of understanding or opportunity. Recently, we saw five or six girl schools bombed by extremists. The Taliban said no more education to girl children. We cannot allow this type of tendency to grow anywhere in the world. It is all the more relevant for women all around the world to sit together and see that women lead the society to a more non-violent, free, and fair society. Take this responsibility.

In these three days, come up with action plans and deliberate and we are all there to support you and follow you in that regard. I would like to speak in Kannada. There is a rural and urban gap and there is a lot we can learn from one another. See how we can integrate society in more than one way. Don't forget spirituality is the backbone of values and life. You are that spirit and you are the one to instill love, compassion and spirituality to those around you and society. Wish you all the best and may God bless you.