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VEPACHEDU EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

మన సంస్కృతి

Mana Sanskriti (Our Culture)

Chief Editor: Dr. Sreenivasarao Vepachedu, Esq.

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WOMEN IN POLITICS

Equal participation in politics by one and all disregarding their gender, race and other criteria is a cornerstone of democracy⁽²⁾. So far as the Ancient Indian Continental Culture and Civilization is concerned, the Vedas and Smritis speak highly of equality and brotherhood. **Vasudhaika Kutumbakam** (One World One Family), "the entire world is one family" was the motto of Ancient Indian Culture and Civilization. All had equal opportunity in all walks of life in ancient India and followed their family vocations and businesses in harmony with each other as if the society was one body with various parts having different functions in an anthropomorphosis of society as one of the forms of the innumerable forms of the all pervading, omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent supreme being. The Vedic age was more liberal in providing equal status to the people, yet recognizing an inevitable natural hierarchy among humans who fight in an attempt to dominate and impose their will on others, and recognizing and rewarding the natural differences in character and intellect and allowing the competition to determine winners and losers as in the modern capitalist democracies of the world. Modern Native Indian religions such as Buddhism, Jainism, Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Sikhism and other indigenous Indian religions also preach the principles of brotherhood and equality, without resorting to proselytization of others. One fundamental idea that percolates through these ancient and modern native Indian Cultures of the Indian Continent is the recognition of the One Supreme Being manifesting in various forms, having various names and resulting in various paths and diverse rituals to the One Supreme Being, all being respected. Another fundamental idea that percolates through the Indian Continent is the female superiority, power and divinity, together with the equality with the male counterpart, as evidenced in the Shivite religion which explicitly recognizes the **Ardha-Nareeswara** and **Shivalinga** among various forms of the One Supreme Being⁽³⁾.

For both the public and private sectors and societies at large, the economic empowerment of women is a win-win with the knowledge that it results in empowered women and empowered economies benefitting the entire family, where male and female are united forming a unit. Throughout the world, attempts are being made in terms of achieving this equality. Unfortunately, the bickering and power struggle continues. The domination of the patriarchy has been the norm across the world even today, where a social system in which males hold primary power, predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property. Some countries like the countries from the Indian Continent such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, etc and some European, African, American countries are ahead

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and some countries like the beacons of hope and super powers of the world USA and Russia are still far behind in showing the leadership, especially the gender equality in democracy⁽⁴⁾.

An ambitious agenda to advance gender equality was set 21 years ago at the landmark Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China⁽⁵⁾. Since then significant advances have been made by many societies in advancing women's legal rights. However, in an era of unprecedented global wealth, millions of women are still consigned to work in low paid, poor quality jobs, denied even basic levels of health care, without access to clean water and decent sanitation. Thus, the annual report from UN Women⁽⁶⁾, released last year, called for far-reaching changes to the global policy agenda to transform economies and make women's rights, and equality, a reality. It takes an in-depth look at what the economy would look like if it truly worked for women, for the benefit of all.

Globally, only half of women participate in the labor force, compared to three quarters of men. In developing regions, up to about 95% and in developed world about 45% of women's employment is informal and unprotected by labor laws and social protection.

Women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region face unique barriers to political participation, inclusive of restricted freedom of movement, limited access to resources and cultural norms that see politics as a man's domain. Included in MENA are Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen; with a population of 355 million, a vast majority of them living in middle-income countries⁽⁷⁾.

Discrimination against women is a concern in this region, where discrimination is often still inscribed in the law, religion, and traditional values and perpetuated through interlocutors. Inequalities throughout the region, in terms of economic and social human rights, require effective responses. Armed conflict and insecurity, coupled with violations of the right to life, physical integrity, and economic and social rights continue to affect countries across the MENA region. Serious violations of international human rights are common, including violations amounting to war crimes or crimes against humanity⁽⁸⁾.

In May 2016, a Summit of Female Parliamentarians will be co-hosted by the Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP) and the House of Representatives of Jordan, in coordination and cooperation with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Jordanian National Council for Women (JNCW), the Council of Women World Leaders (CWWL) and other international

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organizations. On this occasion, the Council of World Women Leaders, the Network of Women Presidents and Prime Ministers will convene⁽⁹⁾.

Speakers for the WIP Global Summit in Amman, Jordan, 4-6 May

- Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of Lithuania and Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders
- Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta
- Tarja Halonen, Former President of Finland
- Mari Kiviniemi, OECD Deputy Secretary General and Former Prime Minister of Finland
- Paula Cox, Former Prime Minister of Bermuda
- Jennifer Smith, Former Prime Minister of Bermuda
- Atifete Jahjaga, Former President of Kosovo
- Iveta Radicova, Former Prime Minister of Slovakia
- Linda Lanzillotta, Vice-President of the Italian Senate
- Ragnheiour Elín Árnadóttir, Minister of Industry and Commerce of Iceland
- Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Member of the European Parliament and Vice Chair of Subcommittee on Human Rights
- Augusto Lopez Claros, Director, Global Indicators Group Development Economics World Bank Group
- Jewel Howard Taylor, Senator and WIP Ambassador in Liberia
- Bayartsetseg Jigmiddash, State Secretary of the Ministry of Justice of Mongolia
- Louise Mushikiwabo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation in Rwanda
- Åsa Regnér, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality, Sweden
- Marriet Schuurman, NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security
- Denis Mukwege, Founder and Director of the Panzi Hospital
- Amal Al Qubaisi, Speaker of the UAE Federal National Council
- Laura Liswood, Secretary General Council of World Women Leaders
- Mara Marinaki, EEAS Principal Advisor on Gender and on UNSCR 1325/WPS
- Tawakkol Karman, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

References and Notes:

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