

## **Conference on Women and Spirituality -**

To celebrate International Women's Day, a conference on **“Women and Spirituality – Moving Forward to Protect our World”** was organised on March 7 by the Embassy of Costa Rica in collaboration with the Brahma Kumaris at the spiritual organisation's North India headquarters – Om Shanti Retreat Centre – in Gurugram.

The organiser of the event, **Ambassador of Costa Rica, H.E. Mariela Cruz Alvarez**, said: “Feminine leadership is one that comes from the heart and does not follow the path of aggression. It comes by being connected to something higher.”

She said that spirituality helps women to maintain the delicate balance between their personal priorities, looking after their families and work.

**Noted environmentalist and physicist Dr. Vandana Shiva**, the **chief guest** at the programme, spoke about women's power to create through non-violence. Things on earth went wrong, she said, when people let go of the power of non-violence, and thought that power was meant to subjugate others and nature.





Criticising the modern development pattern, she said: “Today, limitless greed is being celebrated as good economy.” She said that communities should be build based on the natural quality of all human beings to share.

“Spirituality means nurturing the positive qualities in any sphere,” she said, adding that everything on earth, including science and spirituality, are interconnected.

Closing her address on a very hopeful note, she said that though conditions on the planet are bad, it is really the last phase and good times lie ahead.

**BK Brij Mohan, Additional Secretary General of the Brahma Kumaris**, said that the founder of the Brahma Kumaris valued the feminine qualities of compassion, kindness, love and peace, and brought them to the forefront by forming a ‘non-violent army’ of women spiritual leaders.



He said: “Real empowerment is one that is accessible to all. Empowerment does not mean improving only health, education or financial conditions of women, but it means uplifting the quality of the soul.”



“Empowerment is not about equality of genders, but equality of souls,” he said.

**Professor Krishna Menon, Dean, Ambedkar University,** said that life is all about interconnectedness. “There are no binaries in life, and there is always room for dialogue.”

She said that spirituality was about being mindful about everything, and knowing that there is much more potential to everything than what is visible in the present moment. She went on to talk about inspiring, unconventional women in the Bhakti movement who understood that they were much more than their bodies.

**Kalyani Unkule, Assistant Professor at Jindal Global University,** said: “One way of protecting the world is to have more women leaders in different positions of power, and that they develop their own brand of leadership by combining softness with strength.”





She said that women leaders could benefit from regular practise of meditation as it helps to delay one's response in situations.

Addressing women delegates, **BK Asha, Director, Om Shanti Retreat Centre**, said that competition and comparison are enemies of women as they force them to step away from their higher feminine qualities of unconditional giving and sharing. She encouraged everyone to tap into their maternal instinct and work as tireless servers of the world, and pass on the same values to others.

**Divya Khosla Kumar, actor, film-maker and producer**, said that to protect the outer world, one needs to protect one's inner world through meditation. Only a person who is happy inside can perform all roles well. She added that spirituality and daily meditation practice must be included in one's daily routine as a fundamental part.

**Noted contemporary artist Manav Gupta** gave the audience a visual treat through a power point presentation showcasing his artwork. His collection of paintings and installations drew the audience closer to nature, asked them to look beyond the current industrialised model of the world. It encouraged them to move towards sustainable living and to have respect for biodiversity.

He said that though it may be our current reality, men are not superior to women, and the myth of male superiority would be shattered soon in times to come.



**BK Chakradhari, Chairperson of the Women's Service Wing of the Brahma Kumaris,** said that women are creators. "Let us, like architects, create a blueprint of the world we want, a world which has purity of human nature and of the environment. Once we visualise this world, we can begin creating it."

"Before creating a beautiful world, we have to create a beautiful family, before creating a beautiful family, we have to create a beautiful us. That will happen when we emerge our intrinsic qualities of peace, happiness, love and power," she said.

The conference concluded with fun activities celebrating the beauty of life, art and nature.

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