

## **A Report on 'SHAKTI PARVA'** **(Celebrating the Feminine Energy)**

by

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(with special inputs from Bhavana Malhotra)

International Women's Day (IWD) is being observed on 8th March since the early 1900's all over the world. The day is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history. It is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. On the occasion of this day, 8th MARCH 2018, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) organised a festival titled 'Shakti Parva: celebrating the feminine energy' under the aegis of Nari Samvaad Prakalp (NSP) from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2018. The three day long festival comprised women centric activities such as thematic lectures, academic sessions, workshops, book discussions, exhibition and cultural performances along with film screenings.

The festival was inaugurated by Smt. Sindhutai Sapkal 'Maai', an eminent social reformer, in the morning 6th March. The thematic festival was introduced by Dr. Sushma Jatoo, PD, NSP along with a brief introduction of the Chief Guest, Smt. Sapkal. With this the first session titled '*Anubhav-Kathan*' commenced which was chaired by Dr. Sachidanand Joshi, Member Secretary, IGNCA. In her address, Maai shared her personal journey by narrating experiences and encounters faced by her, and how she managed to overcome the challenges, and how blessed she is feeling by 'mothering' thousands of orphans at 'Sanmati Baal Niketan Sansthan'. Smt. Sindhutai Sapkal also inaugurated the photo exhibition titled '*Divine Manifestations of Shakti-Tattva*' held on this occasion. On the second day, the morning session, 'Katha Kathan' was inaugurated by Padmashri Malti Joshi, eminent short story writer; in which she narrated her own short stories in her unique and signature style. On the third day, the morning session titled '*Bhava Kathan*', a lively lecture was delivered by Padmavibhushan Dr. Sonal Mansingh, an exponent of Indian Classical dance, who shared her views on 'Shakti tattva' by narrating inspiring stories from the Puranic sources. She elaborated on the Indian concept of 'Ardhanarishwara' which signifies the balance of Indian society from early times. She also talked about her personal journey, the challenges encountered by her and how she succeeded in overcoming them.

- **Workshop** - In the forenoon of each day a workshop titled ‘Applied Natya Therapy’ was organized is used as an alternate healing modality that provides a more balanced approach towards life. The resource person for this workshop was Dr. Dimple Kaur, noted psychotherapist and Indian classical dance exponent. The workshop was attended by 30 participants ranging from college students to housewives and officials of IGNCA. The positive feedback received from the participants reflected the success of the workshop.
- During the festival, an **Exhibition** titled ‘Divine Manifestations of Shakti-Tattva,’ was put up at the IGNCA Twin Art Gallery which aimed at highlighting the creative role of feminine power from Indian traditional point of view depicted in various sculptures, paintings and other such media. It was jointly organised by IGNCA and Center of Indology, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan.
- **Academic Sessions** - In the afternoon of each day, three academic sessions were held. First session titled, ‘*Women and Education*’ was chaired by Prof. Shashi Prabha Kumar, Dean, Sri Sankaracharya Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan and the other panelists were Dr. Pankaj Mittal, Additional Secretary, UGC; Dr. Swati Pal, Principal of Janki Devi College; Dr. Savita Khan, Associate Professor Janki Devi College; Dr. Shwetanshu Bhushan, Associate Professor, LSR College. Some important and thought provoking questions regarding the presence of women in the field of education were raised by the panelists. The chairperson summed up the session by deliberating upon the aspect of Rishikas who composed vedic-mantras along with the importance of education and how it can become a means of women enlightenment and empowerment.

Second session titled ‘*Women in Arts and Culture*’ was chaired by Padmashri Shovana Narayan, Indian Kathak dance exponent. The panel included Padmashri Padma Sachdev, novelist and first woman poet of the Dogri language; Prof. Shonaleeka Kaul, Associate Professor, Center for Historical Studies, School for Social Studies, JNU; Dr. Lavlin Thadani, chairperson of Muskan Production and Ms. Tanushree Chatterjee a noted filmmaker. In this session all the panelists, through their presentations equivocally consented and made it clear that carriers of Indian art and culture are mostly ‘women’. The session was quite lively as the audience participated in the discussions and interacted with the panelists.

Third session titled '*Women in Politics*' was moderated by Ms. Rakhee Bakshee, broadcaster and media advisor and the other panelists were Prof. Vijaya Laxmi Singh, Professor, Dept. of History, DU; Dr. Monika Pant, a well-established Ayurvedic Doctor and Dr. Kaynat Kazi, author, travel correspondent and blogger. In the session, the involvement of women in the present day politics was well acknowledged and the challenges for women to join the politics were highlighted. The panelists unanimously agreed upon the small presence of women in politics which needs to be enhanced by women only. Also, it was suggested by them that women should voluntarily be a part of mainstream politics which will lead to their involvement in decision making at grass root level along with their empowerment which will bring a positive change in the society.

- ***Cultural Performances*** – On all the three evenings, cultural performances were held. On the first day a contemporary dance, 'Adhirathi', was performed by Ms. Sangeeta Sharma, founder of Anveshana Society for Performing Arts along with eight artists. The dance performance was a reflection of internal conflicts of each individual. On the second day Smt. Shashwati Mandal, Hindustani classical music exponent and noted singer of Gwalior Gharana accompanied by three artists gave a soulful rendition of Hindustani vocal music. On the last day Padmashri Prathibha Prahlad, acclaimed Bharatanatyam dancer, performed a classical dance titled 'Vande Mataram' with a group of 18 artists. The unique presentation brought eight styles of classical dance together, i.e., Bharatnatyam, Mohiniattam, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Kathakali, Chhau, Kathak, Manipuri and Sattriya. All the cultural performances were very well attended.
- ***Panel Discussion*** –A special session 'Bhartiya Stree: Parampara aur Apekshayen', was conducted by Publication Division of Information & Broadcasting Ministry, Government of India. The panelists were Ms. Nasira Sharma, Ms. Manisha and Ms. Mridula Garg. The discussions in this session were based on their newly published books titled 'Indian Women-Contemporary essays'; 'Pracheen Bharat ke Stri Ratan'; 'Bharat ke Naari Ratan.'
- The **Valedictory session** of the festival was graced by Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, Hon'ble Union Minister, Ministry Textiles, Govt. of India. The Hon'ble minister released the IGNCA catalogue based on the exhibition '*Divine Manifestations of Shakti-Tattva*' along with the above mentioned

books of Publication Division of I & B Ministry. The hon'ble minister in her valedictory emphasized on the contemporary social evils and narrated a very sensitive story of suppressed mother who was compelled to do away with her newly born girl child and how the young one fought the hostilities and finally survived. The Hon'ble minister concluded her address by saying that while talking about the empowerment and the education of women, one must not forget the power of a common woman and also stressed that the celebration of the Women's day should not be limited to one day only. Dr. Sachidanand Joshi, Member Secretary, IGNCA stated that through this festival the inherent strength or the Shakti tattva of womanhood has been brought to the fore. Towards the conclusion of the festival, Dr. Sushma Jatoo, PD, NSP, thanked the Hon'ble minister, participants and audience for their whole hearted participation throughout the festival.

The report is prepared under the guidance of  
Dr. Sushma Jatoo, PD, NSP