

**IGNCA**  
**Nari Samvaad Prakalp**

**Symposium titled INDIAN WOMEN: TRADITION, CONTINUITY AND MODERNITY**

**A Report**

-- **Dr. Sushma Jatoo,**  
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A symposium titled **INDIAN WOMEN: TRADITION, CONTINUITY AND MODERNITY** was organized under the aegis of the Nari Samvaad Prakalp of IGNCA as a part of the 30<sup>th</sup> foundation day celebrations of establishment of IGNCA on 19.11.2017. Eminent ladies from different walks of life were invited to present their views on the topic.

Dr. Sushma Jatoo extended a hearty welcome to all the panelists and the audience. She congratulated all the members of IGNCA family on the occasion of commemorating the three decades of existence of IGNCA she recounted the successful journey of the institution and wished that the IGNCA family works together in harmony, to take the aims and objectives of IGNCA to the next level, overcoming all obstacles. She complemented her wishes with a hymn from the Rigveda *"samgachchadhvam samvadadhvam sam vo manamsi janatam/ deva bhagam yatha purve sanjananam upasate// samaano mantrah samitih samaani samaanam manah saha cittam esham/ samaanam mantram abhimantraye vah samaanena vo havihsa juhomi// samaani va aakutih samaana hridayaani vah samaanam astu vo mano yatha vah su saha sati//"* (RV—X.191.2-4). (i. e., *"let all move together, speak in one voice, live harmoniously, with equal distribution of wealth, even as the Gods enjoy their shares harmoniously, and equally with each other. Deliberate together and arrive at a unanimous decision. Let there be uniformity of minds, and of all! I charge you with the bond of like-mindedness and equal share and participation in all. Let your interests be uniform, let your feelings be uniform so much so that you respect and regard each other."*

The dignitaries lighted the ceremonial lamp with the auspicious hymn addressed to the divine light. Dr. Sushma Jatoo briefly introduced the aims and objectives of the IGNCA, as well as gave a brief about the Nari Samvaad Prakalp and presented a prologue to the conclave. She also introduced the panelists, which was followed by their felicitation by Sh. Anurag Trivedi, Director, IGNCA. Prof. Madhu Khanna, Tagore National Fellow, moderated the conclave and invited the panelists to make their presentations. She also congratulated the IGNCA for reviving the Nari Samvaad Prakalp and for holding the symposium.

The first speaker, Dr. Shashi Kala Wanjari, Vice-Chancellor of SNTD University, Mumbai, belonging to the field of education, gave her perspectives on women through education and remarked that an enlightened woman is a source of immense strength. She stressed on finding solutions alongside finding problems related to women issues. She strongly advocated that education and enlightenment are the roots of empowerment.

Taking forward the discussion of Dr. Wanjari, Lady Kishwar Desai, leading author and columnist, further added that education is not only confined to schools and colleges. Most women are self-taught and are bereft of formal education but, they should also be considered as equally educated and modern. She further stated that there are many parents who themselves are uneducated but have provided good education to their daughters, which is commendable. She highlighted the oral cultures of women, who have not been tutored but have brilliant education in terms of being the best cooks, seed preservers, etc., and this oral culture is what makes up as “genetic education”, which is passed from one generation to the other.

Ms. Sharon Lowen, noted exponent of Indian classical dances, began her speech by stating that there are certain things, certain experiences which are universal to all women. She narrated the account of her life as an artiste, who had come to India to learn classical Indian dances. She shared her experiences as a foreigner in India, who landed at the feet of great Odissi master Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra and got trained under him and went on to become an accomplished artiste herself.

Ms. Shazia Ilmi, Senior journalist and filmmaker put forward the grim reality of having lost the ease of being a “free child” because of the prevalent stereotypes of a girl child in towns. She lucidly explained the pain of being the little girl who is not allowed to live life in her own way. She further stated that generally, in the present day society, the character and moral values of a woman are being judged by her outward appearance. She also complimented the speakers who presented their views of having done deep structured analysis in a limited time-frame.

Ms. Adwaita Kala, author, script writer and columnist, highlighted the grave concerns regarding the safety of women. She further put forward the fact that it is essential to look at the context of agency and then pass judgments rather than judging through skewed concept of Indian women. Gender politics was an integral part of social reforms. She firmly protested the objectification of women in the contemporary Indian cinema and advocated that there should be a change in the way women are shown and viewed in the world today.

Dr. Dimple Kaur, noted psychotherapist and Indian classical exponent, started by asking an apt question of, what traditions are we continuing in modern India. She further raised other thought-provoking questions about what are we seeking freedom from and from whom are we seeking this freedom. Dr. Kaur seconded the view expressed by Dr. Shashi Kala Wanjari regarding the importance of education in the modern world. Dr. Kaur emphasized that stress should be put not on gender equality but on gender sensitization.

Expressing his happiness over the revival of the Nari Samvaad Project, Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, Member Secretary, IGNCAspoke at length about the dynamic interpersonal relationship between man and woman and emphasized the need of a change in the social outlook and mental framework, with regard to this dynamic relationship. He recounted the Indian concept of 'Ardhanarishvara' as a symbol of gender equality and stressed on the need of being more liberal and inclusive towards each other, and to have mutual respect which will ultimately prove beneficial in having a balanced and healthy society. He also announced that such conclaves should be held at regular intervals to promote a healthy dialogue amongst the young men and women.

Prof. Madhu Khanna summarized the day's proceedings and provided a conceptual context to the entire programme. She brought the session to a close referring to the concept of '*shesha*', which signifies continuity in the Indian philosophy.

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