

**Social, economic & political empowerment of women should be given top priority: Vice President**  
Vice President's Secretariat

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### **Greets Women on the eve of International Women's Day**

Posted On: 07 MAR 2018 8:19PM by PIB Delhi

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that social, economic and political empowerment of women, including providing reservation in the Parliament and State Legislatures, has to be accorded top priority for the country to achieve rapid progress. He gave a message on the eve of the International Women's Day, here today.

Following is the text of Vice President's message:

"The famous words of Mahatma Gandhi ji -- "Be the change you want to see in the world" are probably more relevant today than ever before.

Many issues concerning women get highlighted today. But two things which I feel should receive renewed focus are gender equality and safety of women. We all have to act collectively to raise awareness against discrimination of the girl child.

Every household, neighborhood, school, institutions and community should start gender-sensitization. The mindset to respect girls and women should be promoted at home and in schools, public areas, public transport and at every place and every stage.

The change should begin at home first. Parents should ensure that there is no discrimination between a boy and girl. Boys should be made to treat girls with respect and affection, while girls should not be made to feel inferior in any way. There cannot be two opinions on the need to eliminate even the remotest possibility of discrimination against the girl child.

After parents, comes the turn of teachers. Here I would like to quote the observations of former President Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam, who had said : "if a country is to be corruption free and become a nation of beautiful minds, I strongly feel there are three key societal members who can make a difference. They are the father, the mother and the teacher."

In fact various campaigns and laws are definitely making a difference. Recently, the UNICEF has stated that 25 million child marriages were prevented worldwide in the last decade with South Asia witnessing the largest decline largely due to progress in India. It was stated that in the current trend, 27 per cent of girls get married before they turn 18 years—steep decline from 47 per cent a decade ago.

An important area of concern is lower female literacy rate when compared to male literacy. This problem has to be addressed on a war footing to educate and empower women.

As far as curbing crimes against women is concerned, visible policing and patrolling has to be increased, particularly in desolate areas and during nights. Visible policing will not only provide

reassurance to people but will also be a deterrent to trouble-makers.

From times immemorial, we have the tradition of respecting women. In fact, no religion denigrates the status of women. Aberrations have crept into our ways of living in modern times and they have to be eliminated. Ancient Indian thought and vision were idealistic. Unfortunately, there seems to be a big hiatus between ancient Indian thought and harsh contemporary realities.

Time and again women have proved that they are not only second to none in any field, but better than men in multi-tasking. Women have made outstanding contributions in various fields in the country from building rockets to wielding a cricket bat. Be it politics, poetry, sports or business, women have excelled whenever they had an opportunity.

The architect of the Indian Constitution, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had said "I measure the progress of community by the degree of the progress which women have achieved". With women constituting about 50 per cent of our population, social, economic and political empowerment of women, including providing reservation in the Parliament and State Legislatures, has to be accorded top priority for the country to achieve rapid progress."

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