

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR ON THE OCCASION OF 9TH STATE LEVEL LADIES' DAY CELEBRATION ON 19TH NOVEMBER, 2016 AT LAMYANBA SHANGLIN, PALACE COMPOUND, IMPHAL.

Dr. Ch. Jamini Devi,
Former Chairperson, Manipur State Commission for Women,
Smt. O. Sumati Devi, Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Trust, Manipur,
Dr. Th. Umavati Devi, State Mahila Education Coordinator,
Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation,
Friends from the Media,
Distinguished Invitees,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be with you today to observe the 9th State Level Ladies' Day Celebration by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Manipur. I am also very happy to see several prominent women of this state joining the celebration and I feel encouraged that the women of the state are actively promoting social causes.

You will be happy to know that I am a great believer of Shri Sai Baba and my marriage took place because of the blessing of Sai Baba. There was some problem in our marriage as my husband belonged to a different sect of Muslim and his family had objections. My husband went to Putparthi and Baba blessed him and his car and said we will get married in December and it happened so. I have still got that car with me. I went to Whitefield to meet Baba and that is another story.

I knew a pilot named Sharma who came to meet me. He was a batch of Baba. I told him I want to meet Baba. So, he took my card and said he will give it to Baba. One day I was going to Delhi. The pilot met me and showed me my card. I said why he did not give it to Baba. He said before he could give the card, Baba said ask that lady to come any time. It is her home. Then, I went to Putparthi and Whitefield many times. I appreciated his work in the field of education and social upliftment and respect for women.

The first Ladies' Day Celebration of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation was held on 19th November, 1995. Sri Sathya Sai Seva

Organisation, Manipur became a state unit of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, India on 23rd November, 2007 and since then it has also been organising the celebration. The theme of this celebration today ‘Woman: The pillar of value based society’ is of much significance. The Bhagavad Gita says that a woman has seven qualities, whereas a man has only three and they are most virtuous.

As you are aware, the first title given to a woman is ‘Griha-Lakshmi or the goddess of home. A woman is expected to confer all prosperity, honour and good name on the home and the family. Another title for a woman is ‘Ardhaangi’ or the better half. This means that she is better half of the husband and not partner in his job. The third title is ‘Illalu’ or the Mistress of the Home. She is the mistress in the house. Dharma-patni is the fourth title conferred on a married woman. This implies that the home is the dwelling for all righteousness. The home is the birthplace of all ‘Dharmas’ or rules of right conduct. Hence, righteousness should be fostered at home. A home is no trivial place and it is the building block of the society. It could be said that it is the women who make the society worthy and strong.

In His teachings, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba laid much importance on honouring one’s parents and on parents raising children in a proper manner, and the essentiality of respecting and glorifying women in the society. He considered women the cornerstone for a sturdy family, nation and the world at large. On the love of a mother, Swami says **Quote** “More fragrant than the sweet smelling flowers like the Jasmine and the Champak, Softer than the cheese and the butter, More beautiful than the eye of the peacock, More pleasant than the moonlight, Is the love of the mother” **Unquote**. Only dedicated mothers can offer to the nation children who will be assets to the country. One pre-dominant quality of women is that they are concerned about the purity and welfare of the community. I am also an admirer of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and deeply impressed by the loftiness of His teachings. If we can imbibe and follow even a little of His teachings, the world could be a much better place to live in.

History has been unkind to women. Religions and traditions have been manipulated to subvert the society by excluding women. To build a healthy society, we need to remove age-old gender biases in educational, health, social, legal, economic sectors. Women must be recognised and accepted as an independent social actor. My association with the women’s cause has been from my student days and became more intense when I was nominated to the

National Committee for Women constituted on the occasion of the First World Women's Conference in 1975 by Prime Minister Late Mrs. Indira Gandhi. During those days, the focus of the issues was social marginalisation and welfare. However, since then we have travelled a long way. Here, let me recall the words of Mahatma Gandhi **Quote** "I am firmly of the opinion that India's salvation depends on the enlightenment of her women" **Unquote**.

I am the first woman to be elected the President of a Parliamentary Organisation of more than 150 countries and I have campaigned for the upliftment and empowerment of women all over the world. I respect the views of Baba on the role of women.

The Ladies' Day should not be observed only by making speeches or holding Bhajans. The Swami also professed that the women devotees can start Mahila Sathsangs not only for Bhajans but for service of women. While Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations are encouraging women to develop good ideals of character and propagate them to the world at large, they should also endeavour to help the poor and the destitute. Helpless women who have no means of livelihood should be taught some occupations like tailoring to enable them to earn an income. Slum dwellers should be helped to keep their huts clean. The environment also should be cleaned to help the children grow in a pure atmosphere. There is nothing that women cannot achieve and only if women come up in society, will the whole world turn sacred.

With these words, I thank the organisers for inviting me on this memorable occasion.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.