

Need for social reform in parenting and schooling and re-inventing notion of success to enable women to rise as leaders, say women achievers

NEW DELHI, 2 May 2017: Leadership positions have eluded women for long as self-doubt and embedded customs have been some of the main barriers that they face every day while seeking out and carving their position in the male-dominated society. Though women are making their presence felt in the professional world they are still far from being equal partners in the socio-economic structure.

FICCI, jointly with Australia India Institute @ Delhi and the LaTrobe University, Australia organised a roundtable on **'Women in Leadership: Expanding Influence and Catalysts for Success'** with the aim to encourage women to take up leadership positions. The roundtable emphasized that to break the glass ceilings it was imperative for women to feel confident and be a force to reckon with.

Dr Kiran Bedi, Lt Governor, Puducherry, said that there was a need for social reform in parenting and schooling. Girls are often held back in the race of life owing to societal pressures and mental conditioning. It must be realized that women can reach a leadership position only if they are not held back in their formative years. She added that since childhood, her parents had taught her to be transformative and not accept status quo position. A tennis player, she learned about healthy competition and fair play early in life, which gave her the stamina to face adverse conditions.

Dr. Bedi said that she drew inspiration from social, political and academic personalities besides spiritual gurus and the diverse influence gave her a holistic perspective. Though she trained in dealing with various life situations but was unprepared to face breach of trust, deceit, corruption and defamation. Reminiscing on her life learning, she learned to deal with situations by being detached.

Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Educationist, Political Scientist, Writer and a Former Principal of Lady Shri Ram College, said that the biggest challenge for a woman is her inner self. The need is to re-invent the notions of success and overturn conventional notions of leadership while encouraging the language of inclusion. She added that networking was an important aspect of professional life but women should forge alliances that are nurturing and compassionate.

Ms. Vasvi Bharat Ram, President, FICCI Ladies Organisation, said that leadership and competence has no gender. The need was to celebrate women role models who have risen to leadership positions despite all odds. She added that a woman's career is often considered less important and therefore she has to restrict her professional movements keeping in mind the societal norms. At every stage in life, for women there are various barriers such as child bearing which leads to taking a break from work; therefore the need is to provide a flexible and considerate environment to women to thrive.

Speaking on the completion of 50 years of LaTrobe University, **Prof John Dewar, Vice Chancellor, LaTrobe University, Australia**, said that last year the institute featured amongst the top two per cent universities in the world. To celebrate 50 years of the institute, in the last week of August, the university would engage with its alumni across the globe digitally. He added that LaTrobe would be offering scholarship to an Indian female student who otherwise cannot afford it to complete her post-graduation.

Mr. Vinod Mirchandani, Deputy Director, Australia India Institute@Delhi, said that the institute plays a crucial role in strengthening the relationship in education and research between Australia and India and was committed to deepening and enriching the strategic relationship between Australia and India, which was emerging as one of the most significant Asian partnerships.

The panel session was moderated by **Prof. Amalia Di Iorio, Associate PVC & Partnerships, College of Arts, Social Sciences & Commerce, LaTrobe University, Australia**.

On the occasion, LaTrobe exchanged MoUs with AIIMS, Amity University, Jindal University and JSS Mysore.

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