



Namaste,

It is a privilege to be here today as we celebrate **International Women's Day 2025**, a day that honours the strength, resilience, and achievements of women across the world. My sincere appreciation to **NRNA Women Forum Nari Nikunja Australia** for bringing us all together in this spirit of empowerment and unity.

As we discuss gender equality and the empowerment of women, I want to emphasise that **the Hindu way of life has always revered women as divine, as creators, nurturers, and protectors**. Our traditions do not see women as secondary but as **central to the very fabric of society**. We do not need a new movement to "empower" women—we need only to **rediscover and uphold the values that our culture has always embodied**.

In our scriptures, the role of women is beautifully captured in the following *shloka* from the *Manusmriti* (3.56):

"यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः।
यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः॥"

**"Yatra nāryastu pūjyante ramante tatra devatāḥ,
Yatraitāstu na pūjyante sarvāstatra aphaḷāḥ kriyāḥ."**

Meaning: "Where women are honoured, there the divine presence flourishes. But where they are dishonoured, all actions and efforts become fruitless."

This profound wisdom reminds us that the progress of any society is deeply linked to the **respect and empowerment of its women**. In Hindu Dharma, we do not just worship power, we call it *Shakti*; we do not just seek wisdom, we invoke *Saraswati*; we do not just wish for prosperity, we revere *Lakshmi*; and we do not just seek protection, we surrender to *Durga Maa*.

From the Vedic period, Hindu women were **leaders, scholars, warriors, and sages**. The *Rig Veda* speaks of women as *rishikas* (female sages), capable of deep spiritual wisdom. Historical figures like **Rani Lakshmbai, Ahilyabai Holkar, and Mata Jijabai** are shining examples of how women have always shaped the destiny of nations.

In Australia, we are fortunate to be part of a **multicultural society that values diversity and inclusion**. As the **Australian Hindu community**, let us take pride in the fact that our **roots are deeply grounded in respect for women** and let us actively work to carry these values forward. Let us uplift the women in our families, workplaces, and communities so that they may thrive and lead with confidence.

Today, let us not just celebrate women but **commit ourselves to Accelerate Action, creating a world where their talents, wisdom, and leadership are recognised and respected** just as our traditions have always taught us.

To all the women here **you are the embodiment of Shakti, of wisdom, of resilience**. May you continue to inspire and lead, shaping a brighter, more harmonious future for all.

Dhanyavad and Happy International Women's Day!

Sai Paravastu
National President