

Fourth World Conference of Women's Shelters

Nov 5-8, 2019, Kaohsiung, Taiwan

Keynote speech in the Inaugural session by Kamla Bhasin

I feel HONOURED to be up here.

WOW! Look at this amazing site from here. About 1400 participants from over 100 countries. You are SURVIVORS, SUPPORTERS of SURVIVORS, you are STRIVERS, THRIVERS, you are TRANSFORMERS. You look colorful, you look strong, you radiate HOPE, you inspire confidence. Your solidarity will have an IMPACT. Let us CELEBRATE this COMING TOGETHER, by making a HUGE FEMINIST NOISE.

Friends, I salute **Garden of Hope** and the **People of Taiwan** for hosting the **4th WCWS** in Asia. You have done Asian Feminists proud by bringing this diverse GLOBAL GATHERING, to Asia, for the **first time**. A big hand for Garden of Hope and for Taiwan.

Now, all the Asian and Pacific feminists, let us WELCOME feminists from other continents by giving them a BIG hand.

Let us tell everyone that Asia is not only the Continent of the Rising Sun it is the CONTINENT of RISING DAUGHTERS.

Friends, let us **REMEMBER** and let us believe, that **We women are like the PHOENIX**. We know how to RISE from the ashes. The harder patriarchy pushes us down, the **HIGHER WE RISE. We are no more victims, we are SURVIVORS, We are STRIVERS, we are THRIVERS.**

Friends, in a decent, humane world there should be NO NEED for Women's shelters. Every home, every relationship should make every one, feel SAFE,

HAPPY and TOTALLY AT HOME; but sadly our world is NOT SANE, it is NOT HUMANE.

We live in a patriarchal world which discriminates against insults, violates **half of humanity**, the women and girls. Patriarchy has made our homes, our schools, colleges, universities, our offices, our streets WAR ZONES. In this patriarchal war, there is NO PEACE TIME and NO PEACE ZONE. Even the people CLOSEST to us, do not spare us. Millions of women have been saying #MeToo, in different parts of the world.

Patriarchy has close partnership with class, caste, race, capitalism, Militarization, Religious Fanaticism, etc. Along with these powerful Monsters, patriarchy has made life difficult not just for women, but for the MAJORITY. They have destroyed MOTHER NATURE, created fear and hatred, they have created poverty of all kinds, Inequality of all kinds.

In country after country we are ELECTING Right wing leaders, who instead of making bridges of friendships, are erecting walls of hatred.

These hierarchical systems are creating refugees everywhere. So many people are looking for REFUGE and SHELTER because they have been uprooted, violated.

This is the BIG TIME MESS, BIG TIME STRESS we feminists are dealing with. You brave women are creating some hope, some JOY in your shelters.

We feminists, women AND men, girls AND boys, have to come together and CLEAN UP this mess.

We have to remove FEAR and HATRED from people's minds and hearts. We have to create relationships and homes where there is EQUALITY and LOVE.

We have to create schools and colleges, institutions and offices where there is LOVE and EQUALITY.

Let us try and make our feminist shelters NURSERIES of RESISTANCE and HOPE. Nurseries are places where plants are grown, protected, made strong, RESILIENT and then they are spread all around.

Let us make every shelter a GARDEN of HOPE, like our host has done in Taiwan.

Let us turn PAIN into STRENGTH, grief into SONGS and DANCES. Every shelter should become a CITY OF JOY, like there is in the Congo.

In our shelters, in our Feminist Nurseries let us remove weeds like FEAR and HATRED and plant seeds of INCLUSION, COMPASSION, LOVE. Let us Transform **hatred into LOVE, Violence into LOVE.**

Love for Mother Nature, love for every marginalized and excluded person, Love for Peace and Justice.

It is time for us to chant a slogan together. Please say LOVE twice, after what I say.

We are Makers of Love - Love Love

We are Traders of Love - Love Love

We are Students of Love - Love Love

We are Teachers of Love - Love Love

We are Seekers of Love - Love Love

We are Speakers of Love - Love Love

Friends, along with Love, our shelters have to practice and teach EQUALITY, DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, DIGNITY for all.

Our shelters should teach AUTONOMY. FREEDOM of MIND and BODY. We should also teach how to shoulder RESPONSIBILITIES, because No Rights without Responsibilities. No freedom without responsibilities **because we are Feminists.**

In our shelters we should practice and teach the RADICAL NOTION that WOMEN and GIRLS are HUMAN BEINGS. We have to RECLAIM our HUMANITY.

Our shelters should make every one RISE, RISE against every violence, every injustice, every discrimination.

We should make every girl/woman be BOLD, FEARLESS, DARING, CREATIVE and full of HOPE. All this means our shelters should be experiments in Feminist Living, Thinking, Acting. They should not just be a shelter; with their Radicalism, they should make Patriarchy run Helter Skelter.

In our shelters we should practice and teach NETWORKING and SOLIDARITY because to make an IMPACT we need SOLIDARITY and UNITY. This is the theme of this conference, IMPACT and SOLIDARITY. If you agree, then let everyone hear it.

Please join me again and chant SOLIDARITY, after me.

We Love	Solidarity
We want	Solidarity
We create	Solidarity
We nurture	Solidarity
For deepening contact	Solidarity
For creating impact	Solidarity

With Women Workers	Solidarity
With Domestic Workers	Solidarity
With Sex Workers	Solidarity
With Home Makers	Solidarity
With LGBTIQ	Solidarity

International	Solidarity
Local Level	Solidarity
National Level	Solidarity
We Celebrate Solidarity	Solidarity

You know WHY we Love Solidarity? Because

Women United – Will Never Be Defeated

The Workers United – Will Never Be Defeated

Indigenous People United – Will Never Be Defeated

The Dalits United – Will Never Be Defeated

The Minorities United – Will Never Be Defeated

Friends, feminist conferences like these are **for** sharing perspectives, for strengthening our Networks, for deepening our solidarity and for expanding our Global UNITY.

In the next three days let us build our solidarity based on shared perspectives and collective commitment.

For us feminists UNITY does not mean UNIFORMITY; Solidarity does not mean only one way of Thinking or Only One Truth. Our solidarity should have space for different opinions and experiences based on our different contexts. We feminists believe in DIVERSITY, we promote PLURALISM.

Friends, my last point is on INCLUSION. Today we all know, that **like** girls and women, men and boys are also stereotyped, they are also imprisoned by gender and patriarchy, albeit in different ways. Boys, men, LGBTIQ people also face tremendous discrimination, exclusion and violence.

Patriarchy is **dehumanizing** and **brutalizing** boys and men. Their immoral sense of entitlement is making them dominating, aggressive, violent. I believe NO MAN IS BORN VIOLENT or MACHO. Patriarchal families and societies make them so.

Therefore, let us create and strengthen our alliances and cooperation with men's groups fighting patriarchy, with LGBTIQ groups.

Let us strengthen our **alliances** with the Ecology Movement, working class Movement, LGBTIQ Movements and All Human Rights Movements. Solidarity and Impact all around.

Come, each one of us make this conference CREATIVE, MEANINGFUL, VIBRANT. Let us go back ENERGISED, EMPOWERED ready to SAVE THE PLANET, and to **Humanize** our families, communities and institutions.

We HAVE to conclude with a slogan. This one is for AAZAADI or FREEDOM.

WE WOMEN WANT – AAZAADI
OUR DAUGHTERS WANT – AAZAADI

FROM ENDLESS VIOLENCE – AAZAADI
FROM HELPLESS SILENCE – AAZAADI

FROM DISCRIMINATION – AAZAADI
FROM SUBJUGATION – AAZAADI

FROM PATRIARCHY – AAZAADI
FROM ALL HIERARCHY – AAZAADI

FROM PATRIARCHAL RELIGIONS – AAZAADI
FROM ANTI-WOMEN TRADITIONS – AAZAADI

FROM CAPITALIST RACKETS – AAZAADI
FROM NON-FREE MARKETS – AAZAADI

FROM BEAUTY CULTURES – AAZAADI
FROM MEDIA VULTURES – AAZAADI

FROM MILITARISM – AAZAADI
FROM TERRORISM – AAZAADI

FOR SINGING LOUDLY – AAZAADI
FOR DANCING WILDLY – AAZAADI

FOR SELF-EXPRESSION – AAZAADI
FOR CELEBRATION – AAZAADI

WE LOVE IT MADLY – AAZAADI
COME SAY IT LOUDLY – AAZAADI