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entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by The Sant Nirankari Mandal, Delhi, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The same divine spirit permeates all whether man or woman. All have the same physical structure carved by the same Almighty God. Naturally, there should be no wrangles of gender equality and the need to appease the people. When the same God dwells in all, it is incumbent on us to treat all human beings alike and shed our vanity.

Wo-man includes man and woman is the one who bears the woes of man but man is not ready to share the woes of woman though himself instrumental in creating most of them. Whenever we refer to the gender equality and empowerment of woman, we admit that somewhere she is weak. Man is generally projected as ill-treating woman and discriminating against her. There is a lot of evidence to quote to establish the validity of this feeling.

History tells us that many derogatory practices have been archaic gender-based discrimination that led to oppression of women who were victims of man-made notion of inferior sex. For years women have grown in the male-dominated atmosphere where historical, cultural and religious doctrine defined their life-style and status. Even today in the 21st century, despite constitutional rights and various other laws granting equality, protection and empowerment to women, they remain a disadvantaged lot with discrimination at various levels.

Who loses when women suffer? It is not just women's loss, it is everyone's loss, it is men's loss. Man who maltreats his wife has made his son suffer who sees his mother being tortured and weeps helplessly. Does that child feel empowered in such a situation? How can we empower the father of a girl who cannot do much when dowry becomes the cause of her suffering; is the sufferer just the girl or the father also? Count as many situations where women are not given fair treatment and we find that men are affected equally.

Not sure, if the need is to empower women or men? A boy is a boy and a girl is a girl. Parents need to do their part to ensure that young boys and girls are raised with the same respect and encouraged to reach their full potential as human beings. Society would prosper if both the sexes enjoy liberty to utilize and excel in unique strengths they have. It is not about making of a men's world where women become a utility item. It is about making a men's world where women is a partner and making of women's world where man is a partner. It is quite simple; one leg cannot be strong by weakening the other leg. If men need to be empowered, women has to be empowered, else both shall stay crippled. Relationship with gender biasness leads to tragic ends.

It is often remarked in spiritual parlance that "supreme faith" binds humanity and transcends barriers. The recently witnessed nationwide hue and cry over the alleged prohibition or ban of women devotees from entering certain temples to pray is gender discrimination at its worst. One would have certainly liked to nurture the illusion that at least gods do not practice gender discrimination. But the present day self-declared agents of God and self-appointed protectors of religion seem to be hell-bent on demolishing any sacred premises of gender equality.

Violence against women and girls is a direct assault on the United Nations Charter and a threat to peace. Hate-motivated violence and discrimination deserve no place in a civilized society. "Violence against women and girls will not be eradicated until all of us men and boys refuse to tolerate it", said Ban-ki-moon with concern. That is why the protest by woman demanding equal rights of worship becomes relevant. Behind this demand is the claim of equal rights to women in several spheres.

When women get decision making opportunities and power, they can challenge the structural barriers that cause inequalities.

Over the past several years, there is increasing evidence regarding the importance of women's economic participation, both for the enhancement of women's rights as well as for the economic well-being of families, communities, sectors and nations. Advancing women's political participation, leadership and economic empowerment is central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Women have a critical role to play in all the SDGs, with many targets recognizing women's equality and empowerment as both the objective and part of the solution. SDG5 is known as the stand-alone gender-goal because it is dedicated to achieving these goals. The cherished objective of the SDG5, is quite encompassing and promising, hence the need to sort out the challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and women empowerment, the priority theme of CSW-62.

Equality through Spirituality

This world is full of conflicts, fights and riots; this world is full of enmity, cries and bawling's. Just as bamboos rub against each other and catch fire, likewise, people in this world fight with one another. If they know the Common Father (God) there would be no wrangle. Realization of Fatherhood of God spontaneously spells out universal brotherhood of mankind enriched with love and peace.

For Sustainable Development we are heading towards a set of economic, social and environmental crisis and the only way to change things is to rethink. Gender discrimination is one of the multiple intriguing problems plaguing mankind at large. Magnified power of technology, religious terrorism, socio-economic imbalance and psychological attitudes becoming a way of living on earth, all these factors combined, we are behaving as if the planet is a business in liquidation. We have to make a dramatic change in the pattern that now represents business as usual. Yes, we can fulfil the task but we will first have to change attitudes and awareness and recognize it as a spiritual issue, a challenge that goes to the core of who we are as human beings. In such a situation, awareness is important; warmth is important where spirituality has a game changing role to play.

This is the universal version of the Sant Nirankari Mission that spirituality has proved to protect us from evils like discrimination, domination, violence and persecution of the weak. This has effectively proved preventive as well as curative measures against these social evils. Spiritual support in the Nirankari way of living is the basis of equality among all humans, be it male or female. The Mission prescribes pious, pure and quality living in the society, where women are pivotal figures around whom the entire wheel of families revolves. Thus Mission has not only addressed the malady on the face of it but has attacked the roots of discrimination. Living as equals in an ideal environment of spiritual bliss, the message is firmly conveyed that all kinds of inequalities including gender, economic and social can better be sorted out with spirituality. The Hon'ble Secretary General United Nations when received statement of Sant Nirankari Mandal, it was circulated by the Economic and Social Council vide their No. [E/CN/6/2016/NGO/113](#) dated 7 December 2015 in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council Resolution 1996/31 for use in Sixtieth Session 14-24 March 2016. During CSW-60, Sant Nirankari Mission was permitted to participate in UN Rally on 18/03/2016 and also to host parallel event in partnership with UN Women on 21/03/2016 to discuss interfaith role in women empowerment.

The Mission has marked its sufficient presence in the rural areas eliminating ill-founded rituals and superstitions to gradually modify the restrictive, destructive and dividing beliefs into progressive, constructive and uniting beliefs. Rural people are ready to listen and amenable to the message of gender equality. Media of the Mission, partaken by men and women alike, also plays meaningful role in accelerating the process of achieving gender equality through spirituality.

Nirankari Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj left his mortal vase on 13 May 2016 and His gracious spouse Mata Savinder Hardev was pronounced as Spiritual Head of the International Sant Nirankari Mission on 17 May 2016 amidst global gathering. Babaji's intention to bring women empowerment and gender equality through spirituality led to the grant of Special Consultative Status by UN to the Mission. This transition of Guruship (Spiritual Head) was a part of that vision. This is the towering example of women empowerment in the spiritual domain of history.
