

Dr. Bina Vyas - Greetings from Inner Wheel Madam Vinita Bali

I welcome you to our 18th International Inner Wheel First Virtual Convention.

My dear Friends Change is inevitable & Change is nature's law.

The world is undergoing great changes...

People are changing Infrastructures are changing and problems are changing ...

Expectations are rising & Material Values are increasing ...

But sensitivity of the heart is dying ...

Against this scenario ... we need to re-establish our Values..

Inner Wheel is a 97 year old Organisation.

And the Theme this year is **LEAD THE CHANGE** and Madam Vinita, we want to hear your views about Change in an Organisation.

Friends This is an interactive session..

I welcome the 2 eminent Past International Inner Wheel Presidents –

Catherine Refabert and Dr Kapila Gupta who would be interacting with you Madam Vinita.

The floor is your now.. Catherine and Kapila!

Dr. Kapila Gupta – Thank you President Bina for giving me an opportunity to interact with such a global iconic personality Vinita Bali. My question is on behalf of all the Inner wheel members in 104 countries, Vinita Bali ji. And its regarding the service activities, which activity should we take which is relevant to the problems of Women and Children facing in current scenario of changing economical, social and political environment.

Ms. Vinita Bali - Thank you very much DR. Gupta for that very profound question actually and before I begin, my thanks to all of you and to all the members of Inner Wheel International for doing the work that you do and the way that you do this work. I think it's very important that you are connected to people at the grass roots levels wherever or in whichever country you are doing this work, and you raised a very very significant question which really has to do with our women and unfortunately, when you look at the world around us, whenever there is a situation of hardships, whenever there's a situation when people get dislocated, whenever there's a situation like the one like the current pandemic has created in the entire world, unfortunately, the people who are at the worst end of this are women and children. We have seen reports from the United Nations, from the World Bank etc that over the estimates are ranged anywhere between hundred to hundred & fifty million people will go back into

poverty, there is lack of food, there is lack of nourishment. There is increase in domestic violence, there is abuse of women and children. So I wish I could start on a happy note but, you know, since you asked a question in terms of what are the challenges for women and children, I think those are the challenges. How do we protect? How do we make sure that the women who constitute almost half the population of this world, get equity and fairness and understanding and right now, it just seems to be a very unequal world. And that is why, I think the work that the Inner Wheel club is doing in over, you know, in many hundreds of countries that you are present in, I think, 200 or something if I remember correctly, what Bina said to me of whereabouts, I think the work therefore that you are doing in each of those countries becomes very significant and very important, especially at a time like this. So what is it that we can do? I think first of all, given the resources that all of you have, by that I don't mean only your financial resources, but I mean your resources of your position in society, you know. All the people who are giving off their time on a voluntary basis for the work that Inner Wheel is doing. Or doing a tremendous job in terms of increasing the awareness of these social problems in the middle of our societies. And it doesn't matter, you know, whether you lived urban, lets say, take the case of India, whether you live in Urban India or Rural India and its just the same with countries around the world. I mean I have lived and worked in Africa, I have lived and worked in Latin America, in Europe as well as the US. And I can tell you that, that socio-economic divide exists in every country on this planet. And I think what that socio-economic divide causes, is so much of ahh, you know is so much of inequality, so much of inequity. And as we said earlier whether it is people who are dislocated, you know, currently the estimate is that there are over 70 million people who are dislocated from their homes, because of one reason or another. Aa it could be a civil war in your country, it could be other reasons and again the women and children get the worst of it.

So I will bring one of the things, since your topic is about "leading the change", I think a big challenge that we have is how do we change the narrative around women and how do we change the narrative around women and children so that the decision makers, who, you know if truth be told, most of the decision makers happen to be men because they are the ones who in positions of power. The question therefore or the challenge I would put before each of you is How can you take your sphere of influence, your social status, your standing in the community etc. and try and influence the decisions that are made for the welfare of women and their children. How do we, you know the SDG, the sustainable development goals, talk about empowerment of women, talk about equality, talk ab out many other things from food to nutrition, to job creation etc., and those are to be achieved by 2030. Well, many countries in the world are nowhere close to achieving those goals and a lot of those goals really have to do with the social well being of women, so I think, there is a lot of work for organizations like yourselves, but I think that work has to be focused, that work has to be long term because these changes don't happen overnight. You know these are things you have to work on for a long period of time before you begin to see the shifts.

So I have given a rather long answer to your very specific question but I hope I have answered it. And if there's anything else that you would like me to elaborate on, I will be happy to do so.

Ms. Catherine – What infrastructural changes do you envisage for our organization to acquire to remain relevant to the available technology.

Ms. Vinita – you know, Another very very interesting question, Catherine! My view on technology is that, you know, technology is not in end in itself but technology is an enabler to that end. And I think what technology has done for us is, on the one hand it has made communication very very accessible, you know if you have access to a smartphone, you can have access to communication or information or news from anywhere in the world. But I think, having the hardware of technology is one thing, how technology is used, and how technology is used for good verses umm, you know just creating rumors is not a good use of technology. If technology is used as it currently has during the pandemic to actually teach people who are out of school their school lessons, if technology is used to help the farmers with giving them tips on what they should be doing to grow their crops, if technology is used to inform women about what they need to know about opening bank accounts and how to operate those bank accounts, it's a great use of technology. So I think the way I would like to think about it is that technology in an of itself is neither good nor bad. Its what we do with technology, it is how we use technology, it is how we access technology, it is how we democratize information and understanding where, you know, those are the areas where technology really begins to benefit people and I think there's a lot that can be done with the technology in the work that you do. For example, if there is any communication around a program or an incentive that women can be eligible for or entitled to, then using technology that those women use which essentially happens to be smart phones is actually a very very good way of communicating with them. On the other hand, you know there are, you use the word infrastructure, so infrastructure is part technology but infrastructure is also a lot more. And if I were to think of infrastructure, it is, you know how are we reaching the people we are serving, the people who are dependent on us in our organization, aa you know, part of it is technology, part of it is how do we actually get to them, you know, are there roads that are available to take us to those, you know those villages, to those farms, or wherever it is. Is there infrastructure available to the people with whom we work and the people whom we are serving, that we should be thinking about. So I think infrastructure has many many ramifications, but I think the way to think about infrastructure is that if we were to put some hardware and software in place, does that enable us to do what we are doing more efficiently, does it enable us to do what we are doing more effectively and does it enable us to keep in touch with the communities and the societies and the populations we are working with and serving.

Dr. Kapila – So my another question to you is, as president Bina says, lead the change, and you have also gone through lot of changes in your global iconic personality to be recognized today in this world, could you tell us, when we are talking of the change, is it the women who need to first change within themselves before they think of change in their organization as well as the community around them?

Ms. Vinita – you know it's a question with many dimensions to it. I think, You know as Gandhiji put it very effectively when he said be the change what you want to see in the world, so we can all talk about change but you know if you don't see that in my behavior, I lose credibility and you know, nobody wants to listen to someone who only talks but doesn't walk the talk as it were. And I think, we talk a lot about change but essentially you know, it is the nature of human being to resist change. We are very comfortable with the way we are, there are some changes we adapt to very quickly, so for example, you know, we have been talking a lot about smartphones, but yes the moment smartphones came, everybody knows how to do this, that, whatever we know how to look for information, send photographs etc. So some change that makes my life either more interesting or makes my life easy or you know, makes my connections better, I think people adapt to that change. But those are not the kind of changes we are talking about, we are talking about changing mindsets, we are talking about changing perspective, we are talking about changing thinking, we are talking about changing behavior, we are not talking about, you know use of technology or something like that and calling it change, you know I think the serious question that all of us have to ask ourselves is that we live at a time where we have answers to most of the world's problems, we know that climate change is something which has to be tackled, we know that we shouldn't be going around cutting trees because deforestation is not a good thing for our planet, we know so many things and yet, we behave in ways which are exactly the opposite, we talk about the fact that's enshrined in the constitutions of every country is equality between men and women, and yet it is a very unequal world for women. So I think when we talk about change, we have to start with ourselves, I cant expect to change anybody, if I am not willing to change, so yes, back to your question, change has to start with realization that change is important, change has to start with the conviction that without that change, the circumstance or the situation around us will not change. Change has to start with the understanding that it will take a long time, change is not something that you know, you decide, and it happens. You know you have to, there are so many, we are so conditioned in many ways about the way we think, you know, our minds have been colonized because as we are growing up, we are told that this is what you can do and this is what cant do, girls can do this but boys cant do this, or you know, let your brother do this but you cant do this as a girl, so if we have to change those mindsets not just within ourselves, you know we have been talking a lot about what women need to do, I think, a very very important point that I would like to leave with you is to say that, you know unless the other half of the world changes, you can do all the change but nothing significant will happen! It is not just women talking to other

women, it is women engaging with men in this conversation, the world is not going to change just because we say it should change, the world is going to change when we engage in conversations with people who think differently from us, you know those people could be our colleagues at work, those could be our fathers, those could be our spouses, those could be our sons, those could be our daughters, those could be anybody. So I think, what we really have to understand is that change is easy to talk about but hard to accomplish, because it involves conviction, it involves tenacity, it involves hard work and most importantly it involves the ability to engage with people who think differently from you, who's beliefs are different from yours, who you know, who's world's view is very very different. So if the condition of humanity is going to change, if the condition of this world is going to change, then humanity must include women and children who often times get marginalized in these conversations. And therefore it is so important, not just to reach out to the women but also to their families, because you know if, if men could participate in this change and if all of us could believe that this planet and everything that it has given us is everybody's to share, it's not meant for the rich, its not meant for the people with fair skin, its not meant for the people with the dark skin, it is not meant for the people with certain religious beliefs etc, then and only then will we create the big shift and the big change that we are talking about. You know what is true about bringing the change in the world is also true of organizations. Whether you talk about an academic institution, a business, an organization like yourself, you know we are all very comfortable working the way we have worked in the past because everybody knows what to do. But unless we question that, we can only change a result if we change the process, and we can only change the process if we have the courage to question what we are doing, the courage to change what is not working, and also the courage to stay with what is working, so change is a process, change is a mindset, change is a conviction, and it has to be participative, it cannot be thrust down anybody!

Ms. Catherine – Our international president Bina ji has given us a relevant theme this year “lead the change”, as we are approaching the 100th year of our organization, how do you our women members should promote and lead the change for a better and bolder organization?

Ms. Vinita - Thank you Catherine! You know some of it we have already discussed, so, you know one big point of change that I see is , you talked about better and bolder change, you know, can inner wheel start engaging with men and not just women, I think that will be very big bold move which says that we are all part of this humanity, so why should we only talk to 50% of that humanity, and pretend as though the remaining 50% doesn't exists. So I think, those to mind would be the big bold move which is to say if our ethos is service, if our ethos is to make this world a better place then we have to engage with everybody who is in this world, and not selectively because you know, when we are selecting to interact with women, we are selecting, aa you know a certain gender interaction and we are excluding a very large part of the

gender. So I would say, you know perhaps your upcoming conference is a very good time really to reflect on what inner wheel has done over this long period of existence that you have had and then to say, lets be very candid about what has worked and what hasn't worked as well as it should have. And can we also say, going forward, what will be our theory of change that we would want to bring about in the world because all of you start with a desire to improve something in the area in which you are working, it could be access to education, it could be access to jobs, it could be anything else. So if you want to say, in order to do this and in order to do this effectively and for that to be sustainable, you know who are all the stakeholders that are part of this, we will then realize that whilst women are important stake holders, men are equally important stake holders because if they encourage you then things will go doubly fast. And if they are not with you, they will slow things down, it will become an obstacle. And therefore for the efforts that you are expanding, your results will be inadequate. So I think, one of the facets of change really is to say how can change be inclusive. It will be harder work, it will take more time, but when it happens, I think, it will be like magic and it will be there to stay.

Dr. Kapila – Before we handover MIC back to President Bina, my last question to you Vinita, which has been haunting me for quote some years since I joined Inner wheel, we have come a long way of 97 years of our service to community and friendship, should you be advising us to all the inner wheel members world wide, what should we adopt to become an household name promoting community service and the friendship amongst women?

Ms. Vinita – So ahh, you know what you are saying is, for 97 years in a 104 countries you have done very good work and it remains the world's best kept secret, ahh, so you know there are a few things, umm, you know one is, it depends on which audience you are talking about, if you look at it at a country level atleast in the areas where you are working, I am sure there is recognition not just for name but also your work. You know, there isn't a magic bullet to this, you know organizations are existed for years and organizations such as yours need to build their, name and fame on the basis of the work that you are doing, so at a local level, you know, can people write about the work that you are doing, can you actually in this world of social connectivity, you know, is there a Facebook page that Inner wheel has, our members of inner wheel actually telling the world either through Facebook or through Instagram or through tweeting about the fabulous work that you are doing, can you get some of the people who have benefitted from your work to tell real stories about what inner wheel does. You know, I looked at your website, you know it's okay but I think that website can be used to be made far more dynamic in terms of telling the stories of Inner wheel. You know there are organizations where people follow the Facebook page, people like to know about real things and real changes that you have made. Is there something that can be done with media for example, you know I can talk about India, there are TV Channels that collaborate with organizations, you know to raise funds, to do something, in fact I was

associated with something last Sunday, which was about collecting money to give loans, education loans to families of children who are being pulled out of school because the parents don't have the job. So is there something where, with the people who support you, organizations who support you, you know, they could talk about it where you collaborate with a media house to tell the stories or the stories of the lives that you have changed as a result of this, you know, I am sure there are many of you who are very well connected, I would go to somebody like, you know BBC, or CNN and say, you know, we would like you to cover you know, 10 stories from 10 different countries around the world, all the difference that Inner wheel has made. So it could be little things, it could be the stories in traditional media but it could also be where you are not relying on traditional media and you are using the resources that you have, you know, I think if I remember correctly, Bina you had said there are about a hundred thousand volunteers, now if a hundred thousand volunteers were to have a strategy on what to do with social media which is really to tell the story of Inner Wheel to the world, not to the country in which I am living but to the world, then slowly over a period of time, you come into the public domain, people begin to talk about you, people begin to talk about the work that you are doing, you know, so these things are built up over a long period of time in a manner which is very sustainable and with a very clear cut strategy which is really to say, we want people to think of Inner wheel when they think of organizations that help humanity, that help women, that make this world a better place.

Dr. Bina - Thank you Past International Inner Wheel Presidents – Catherine & Kapila for this wonderful Interactive Session... Friends... Change we must... because we have to continue to be the Change Makers in the World of Inner wheel. Thank you, Madam Vinita, for your views on Change and for guiding us to be courageous and bold enough to accelerate our efforts in the Change process.

Publicizing our work in our communities, through various media, is the best way to make our name and fame. Thank you, Vinita, for expressing your views with all the inner wheel members in the world...

Ms. Vinita – Thank you very much, I appreciate the opportunity and all the best to your conference. Thank you.