

[Social Issues: Sadhvi Conducts 'Woman Power Camp'](#)

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SOCIAL ISSUES

Sadhvi Conducts 'Woman Power Camp'

Leading woman saint of Niranjani Akhara convened the Kumbh's women constables for an evening of education and inspiration

BY RAJIV MALIK, DELHI

SADHVI ANANDAMAYI MA, MAHAMANDALESHWAR of Niranjani Akhara, spoke to the policewomen assembled before her with deep conviction and passion: "The idea is to inspire and encourage you to fearlessly work for the betterment of exploited and harassed women. You can do this in a better way if you are yourself enlightened, aware and spiritually powerful."

She continued, "The killing of female children in the womb and the rape of young girls are issues that have shaken my soul. As a result, on this holy land of Kumbh, I have taken a vow from now onwards to completely work for the empowerment of women. It is the duty of spiritual people to cure social evils. Every day we say, "Let dharma prevail" and "May adharma (unrighteousness) be destroyed," but unrighteousness is increasing day by day. My aim is to organize one million women who will work together with the power of one hundred million."

The animated gathering, attended by some fifty policewomen, was well timed. Saints across the entire Kumbh were discussing female infanticide and crimes against women. Maa Anandamayi organized several other events at the Kumbh, with the help of activists such as Dr. Rama Singh, to highlight the plight of the

common Hindu woman in today's society.



Bettering the lot of women: Sadhvi Anandamayi Ma (center) poses for the media with participants of the camp

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Inspector General Alok Singh of the Kumbh police force addressed the gathering. He revealed first that the force has scrambled to hire women constables, and some of those present in uniform were assigned to the Kumbh even before completing their basic training, so great was the need. "There is a big demand for women police," he said, "as they are sensitive to the needs of the young girls and also the elderly. The saint's discussions here at the Kumbh on woman empowerment and female infanticide are sure to yield solutions that will be implemented by society."

"We women constables are generally reluctant to speak from public platforms," Vibha Pandey confided. "Preventing the harassment of women by their own family can be achieved not only by educating women but by making them financially independent. Illiterate women are beaten by drunk husbands and harassed by mothers-in-law. Financially independent women are given respect, because the husband and his family realize you can manage without their support."

Suman Goswami, a social worker based in Allahabad, spoke up: "Whenever there is a crisis for women in this country, it is the forces of Sanatana Dharma which come forward to save them. Working women, including women police constables,

face a lot of problems in their professional and personal lives. It is a constant challenge for them to maintain their dignity and independence both at home and in the offices. Whenever there are atrocities against women anywhere, we must all stand together and oppose them.â€œ

Manju Pathak of Allahabad, also a social worker, explained: â€œOurs is a male-dominated society. Men want to keep women dependent on them and confined within the four walls of their homes. However, while we fight for our rights, we have to live within the bounds of good social conduct and not cross those boundaries.â€œ

Dr. Singh told HINDUISM TODAY, â€œSadhvi Anandamayi Ma is asking women to claim their rights from their family and the world, not by revolting but through love. She is working to secure their right not to break up society but to unite it and make it better. When women receive such direction from a spiritual personality, it has a positive impact on them.â€œ Nothing similar to Sadhvi Anandamayi Maâ€™s event has been organized, even though the treatment of women is a major topic among the saints. Her gatherings were well advertised and attracted significant attention from the media.



The young constables listen attentively

