

## Women

Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir, Indira Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto have all been Prime Ministers. Khaleeda Zia in Bangladesh, Bandaara-Naike in Sri Lanka and Ellen Sirleaf Johnson now in Liberia have been or are all heads of state. And why am I listing them? Because amongst hundreds, maybe thousands, of heads of states- current and past, this is one category I can reel through in less than ten seconds. So maybe, I missed a couple.

Amongst *statesmen* and dictators, democrats and autocrats, monarchs and oligarchs- how many have been women? Amongst war mongers and war wagers, peace makers and peace keepers - how many have been women? Amongst raiding parties since the beginning of time, how many have been women? And since the time that our race began, how many, have been women?

Are women corrupt? Can be. Are women grabbers? Can be. Are women evil? Can be. Can they destroy in anger, in revenge? Yes. *But, more than men?* Are women intelligent? Yes. Nurturing? Yes. Compassionate? Yes. Strong? Very. Can they fight? Yes, but mostly to defend and keep what's their own. When have armies of women gone on a rampage raping men, killing and mutilating children?

We, women, are not weak. We provide the continuum to this world, racing against destruction to ensure survival of our race. A man is not made to bear child-birth- a woman is. But we're equally responsible for what we bring forth, and for the men that go on rampage. For women forced behind the veil. It's our thoughts, our minds that in a large part affect those of the next generation's. As mothers we have power in how we influence our children's minds and power to ensure peace.

Today there are neuro-surgeons that are women, astronauts and body-builders that are women, scientists and economists that are women, soccer-players and home-makers and engineers and carpenters and successful CEO's that are women. If women can pilot ships and companies and homes, so successfully, isn't it time they charted more and more the course of countries? Tend to them, like they would their home and children- fight to defend and aim to succeed? We know of super-moms. How many super-dads have we heard of?

A girl growing in a conservative Muslim household loses her chance to dream as soon as she's born, loses that feeling of free air in her hair as soon as she begins to feel it. A girl in an orthodox Hindu household becomes a burden as soon as she's born, watching her parents worry about collecting dowry for her wedding, understanding her big step in life to be the transition from her father's house to her husband's. What if she happens to go to school and is excellent? What if she even makes it to college and is one of the few brilliant students? Her destiny is to cook and clean and keep house. Who is responsible for these thoughts? These traditions? These narrowing of destinies?

More and more girls are today breaking out of traditional molds in Asian countries- becoming independent- Following their dreams, finding themselves equal if not better than their male counterparts, fighting stereotypes the whole way along. Even in Africa. Yes, in that dark continent full of plundered riches are girls who are growing up amongst war- survivors of rapes, of mutilations, of abusive husbands and parents lost to AIDS- they dare to dream and on bellies partially filled with a paste of maize and water, they work and study hard to succeed- to become engineers and maybe even a president, one day.

So what about us? Here in America? In this free, enlightened west, where the women's lib came many decades ago. What are our girls thinking of as they move to womanhood? What are they dreaming of? What are they aspiring to? And what possibilities do we present to them?

Why is their still domestic abuse of women? Why are girls simpering and bending to the will of boys in higher elementary and middle schools? Even, hey! High school and beyond? Why are we as parents and educators, not guiding them to work towards shaping their destinies instead? Become a strong, independent thinker before they attract a mate as an equal. Here in this democratic and unveiled America, how many women are aspiring to become the next or the next to next president? And how many are voting?