

2015 Women Achievers Rally: A Day of Celebration

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This Saturday, April 4, 2015 marked the second annual Women Achievers Rally (WAR). The event was organized by Odanadi and took place in Mysore. The day served as a joyous, peaceful celebration of women, their strengths, and achievements.

Started in 2014, WAR originated in order to honor women and the men that support them. Women struggle every day of the year for their rights and opportunities. This event is a time for women to forget their struggles, celebrate, and showcase their strength. WAR is intended to inspire women to emerge from their cocoons and experience this day as a colorful and joyful protest.

Odanadi Seva Samsthe and the global community of supporters work year-round to seek equality and fight for the empowerment of women. The Women Achievers Rally is one day out of the year for women and men from Mysore, as well as supporters from other parts of India and the world, to celebrate the achievements and progress that has been made.

One important element of the rally was the involvement of male participants from Odanadi's Real Men Campaign (RMC), an initiative of men that support women and publicly stand up for their rights. In order to enact positive change in the lives of women, we need to change the psyche of men and sensitize men to women's issues. Both women AND men need to be engaged in the fight to end discrimination of and violence against women. It is important to create an environment where men can openly support women without fear of losing their masculinity. One of the main principles of the RMC is that men can openly use their voices in order to support women, as well as to respect and protect all human beings from violence, regardless of gender. The planning committee for WAR is comprised of both men and women.

The goal of the day is for women to leave the event with smiles on their faces, feeling the STRENGTH and being PROUD to be a woman. Women should feel this way every day of the year and spread this feeling to other women. The hope is that men leave the day with a sensitive and respectful open mind to follow democratic and humane principles in their personal and social lives.

RALLIES

This year, the event started with three rallies from different parts of the city. All three rallies came together at Maharaja College Grounds where the program continued.

Women Achievers Rally

The Women Achievers Rally, a motorbike rally for women, started at Bannumantap. A group of 70 women on motorbikes drove through the streets for awareness of women empowerment. The rally was kicked off with speeches from the following leaders:

- Vasu – MLA, Chamaraja Constituency, Mysore

- M.G. Krishnan – Vice-chancellor, Karnataka State Open University, Mysore
- Dr. Dharani Devi Malagatti – Deputy Director, Karnataka Police Academy, Mysore



Walkathon

In another part of the city, a walkathon took place. 600 women participated in the walkathon. Women walkers dressed up as Mother Teresa, Kittur Rani Chennamma, Akka Mahadevi, Onake Obavva, and other female leaders. These women have all played an important role in the fight to empower women. The walkathon was led by the following community leaders:

- Meera Nayak – Social activist and feminist
- Dr. Rati Rao – Retired scientist, CFTRI, Samatha Vedike, Mysore
- S. Kiran Kumiri – Samuada Organization, Bangalore
- Bhanu Mushtaq – Kannada writer and social activist
- Chukki Nanjundaswamy – President, Karnataka State Former Association

Bell dance and drums were used by women during the walkathon. Traditionally, these are men's activities but nowadays are also performed by women.



During the walkathon, there was a fancy dress competition featuring dresses created by various university students. The competition was judged by the following people:

- Sumathi, NSD – Theater Expert, Mysore
- Prof. Shashikala – Retired professor, Sharada Villas College, Mysore
- Prof. Mannonmani – Head of the Psychology Department, Maharani Arts College, Mysore



1st Place – Mangala



2nd Place – Swetha



3rd Place – Chaitra Prakash

Real Men Campaign

The last rally was a motorbike rally for men in support of the Real Men Campaign. One thousand men rode on motorbikes to support women and “be humane men”. Additionally, 250 rickshaw drivers participated in the rally. They donated their time to this cause, foregoing their wages in order to support the rally. The Real Man Campaign was kicked off with speeches from the following leaders:

- K. Krishna – Ex-speaker, Karnataka Government

- Rajashekara Koti – Chief Editor, Andolana Daily Newspaper, Mysore
- G.S. Jayade – President, Deenabandhu Organization



CULTURAL PROGRAM

After the rallies, the afternoon continued with sports events and a cultural program. Over 2000 people attended the activities after the rally. The program was divided in to several parts:

- sports program
- speeches from local leaders and prominent individuals from the community
- honoring women who have made contributions in the area of women empowerment
- arts program

Sports

The sports program was attended by 200 students playing volleyball, kabbadi, tug of war and wrestling. These are traditionally masculine sports, but women have also started playing these games with the same power and strength. Students from Mysore University, JSS College and Karnataka State Open University took part in the games. These universities participated in WAR in order to acknowledge the need for social change in college. A special guest was Sumana, Advocate and Trustee, Shakthidhama, Mysore.



Speakers

Community leaders from Mysore and surrounding areas joined the WAR and spoke about women empowerment. Speeches were given to spread the word and create awareness of human trafficking and to make one voice to support women.

One important item in the speeches was the focus on mothers. Women that are mothers have achieved something important. They gave birth and raised children, and children are the stars of the future. Mothers should celebrate this achievement of being a mother. Women can be proud to be a woman, to be a mother, and to raise our future generations of leaders and achievers.

The following people shared their thoughts and experience:

- V. Srinivasa Prasad – State Revenue & District In-charge Minister Karnataka Government
- Vasu – MLA, Chamaraja Constituency, Mysore

- Prof. K.S. Rangappa – Vice Chancellor, University of Mysore, Mysore
- Dir. Dharanidevi Malagathi – Famous writer and Deputy Director of Karnataka Police Academy
- Manjula Manasa – President, State Womens Commission, Bangalore
- Dr. Pushpa Amanhath – President, Zilla Panchayath, Mysore
- K.T. Shivaprasad – International artist and trustee at Odanadi

Honoring

The afternoon continued with a social program. Minister V. Shreenivasa Prasad honored women achievers from different fields on women empowerment. The following women were honored:

- Dr. Pushpa Amarnath, ZP President, Mysore
- Bhanu Mushtaq, women activist, Hassan
- Chukki Nanjundaswamy, Working President, KRRS & Hasiru Sene
- S. Kiran Kumari of Samvada Samsthe, Bangalore



Dancing

Different types of tribal dance were performed by Tibetan women and girls from Odanadi.



A karate performance was given by Odanadi girls. Three of the girls that performed have achieved a black belt in karate.



Painting

Ten artists made paintings on women's issues during this day. They are for sale, and the proceeds will support the girls and women of Odanadi.



Media Coverage

Many newspapers and reporters covered the event and a lot of media exposure was given to this day. The following newspapers have published articles on WAR 2015: Kannada Prabha, Prajavani, Times of India, Vijayavani, Andolana, Deccan Herald, Mysore Mithra, Udayavani, Samyukha Karnataka, Prajanudi, Star of Mysore, The New Sunday Express, Rajyadarma, and Vijaya Karnataka. These articles draw further attention to the need for women empowerment.



Deccan Herald



Vijaya Karnataka



Times of India

Participants

This day was possible thanks to the many participants who see the importance of supporting women and raising awareness of trafficking issues. Together with them, we can make one voice and increase women empowerment.

Four elected state officials and 152 elected leaders from the local Mysore district attended and participated in this event. These government leaders have expressed a commitment to drive positive change in the treatment and status of women in their local villages and communities.

Additionally, the event was supported by countless organizations and companies. Special thanks to the Organization of Developing People? State Farmers Association, DSS, Rural Literacy Health Program (RLHP), Myla Okkuta – Women’s Health Organization, Tibetan Women’s Association, Samata Forum, Democratic Front, InfoSys, LT Software, Wipro, Spy Software and many more!

WAR 2016

Next year, WAR will be held over several days with women and men from other parts of India and the world participating. Sports and all types of arts will be part of the program.

There will be a special day for the rally to celebrate with all of you (women and men) this colorful and joyful day of being a woman.

We hope to see you all at WAR 2016!