

**Speech of the Hon'ble Governor at the inauguration of the 4th
Global Women in Nature Network summit on 29th January, 2019
at Hotel Radisson Blu, Guwahati**

Distinguished guests on the dais, Founder of Women in Nature Network Dr. Leeanne Alonso, Prinipal Chief Conservator of Forests wildlife D.P. Bankhwal , Prinipal Chief Conservator of Forests wetland Dr Ranjana Gupta, Kamrup Deputy Commissioner Kamal Baishya, Kamrup SP Partha Sarathi Mahanta, Aaryanak's president Ranjan Bhuyan and CEO Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar and Aarnayak's esteemed members, Hargila Army members on the dais, all esteemed women conservationists, scientists from various parts of the world, representatives from various organizations and government, officials, my dear media friends, ladies and gentlemen.

Good evening! I consider it to be my pleasure to be here on the 4th Global Women in Nature Networking event organised by Women in Nature Network in collaboration with Aaranyak and Global wildlife conservation along with Kamrup Police and Kamrup District Administration and Forest Department.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Leeanne Alonso, founder of WiNN for selecting Assam for this event. The theme of the event **“empowering women for nature conservation: connecting and Inspiring women globally”**, definitely reflects the need of the hour. I

am told that the Women in Nature Network (WiNN) was founded in 2013 and it is working to develop a global learning community of women in order to create and support a future generation of environmental leaders.

I would like to thank Ms. Purnima Devi Barman for inviting me to join you and this auspicious gathering. As you know, Srimati Barman is one of India's foremost conservationists and we are very proud of her work directed to conserve the wildlife of our country.

Friends, Women have long been the nurturers and keepers of our Earth's magnificent bounty. In Indian culture, the rivers, the night, the forest, or the dawn, even the planet in which we are living is described in the feminine gender. The environment itself is called 'Prakriti', which is a feminine term. Natural objects are described as mother, sister, young maiden, and daughter, Ancient Indian literature was the reflection of the bond between humans and nature, especially between women and nature. Classical literature depicts this bond to show the intrinsic bond. For instance in *Abhijnana-Shakuntalam*, the great poet Kalidasa showed how Shakuntala nurtured an intense relationship with the environment—trees, animals, and forest. In the *Rig Veda*, the forest goddess Aranyani is presented as the protector of forest. She is the protector of flora and fauna.

This concept of representation of forest by a female deity can be seen in most of India's forest region. Unfortunately this intense bond and its recognition have dwindled through generations and need to be rekindled urgently.

Earth's resources are today facing an existential threat and women must rise up and take on greater leadership and decision making roles in the management and conservation of the earth's natural resources. It is wonderful to see that you all are gathered here today to help each other towards that goal.

Some of you have come from very far away, as far as Guyana and Argentina, Honduras and Mexico as well as from USA. We also have significant representation from our neighbors in Nepal and Bhutan, as well as Vietnam. The experiences and learning from all around the world will serve to enrich the conservation work and bring new ideas and approaches to the women working in India. I thank you all for coming to India, particularly to our beautiful state of Assam, to share your work with your colleagues.

We need to ensure this movement continues in Assam, and through it many women conservationists will get a platform to work with each other. Assam has rich biodiversity, it is a land of precious flora and fauna including the One Horned Rhino, Tigers, Elephants, Pygmy Hog, Greater Adjutant, Deer, Gibbon, River Dolphin... the list is endless. Many endangered and endemic flora are yet to be explored and it lies in the hands of our young generation to do so. I feel and I earnestly hope that this network and this effort will not only empower the women participants present here who are going to participate in

different round table discussions, networking, socializing, panel discussions, field trips but also create a sense of motivation and awareness among the potential women leaders in Assam.

I am told that 50 rural women conservationists from Kamrup's, Dadara, Pachariya, Singimari Village are present here as participants along with their global counterparts. This brave group of over 200 women who have attracted global attention as the Hargila Army are a shining example of how women can change their communities and the world. Their efforts have increased the Greater Adjutant nests from 30 to the present average nest of around 150, making this the largest breeding colony in the world.

Women's large participation has reminded me of the Chipko movement of the 1970s when people mostly women hugged trees to save them from being cut down. India has a history of women's leadership and its impact on nature conservation. We need to carry this legacy forward.

I view of the immense role played by women towards transmitting knowledge of conservation of biodiversity from generation to generation, women's participation in natural resource management and decision-making remains limited. That has to be looked into and efforts should be made to increase their role in decision making.

In conclusion I would like to quote Diane Mariechild, "A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and

transform.” I am happy to be a part of this event and will do what I can for the cause in the future. I hope this event will be a huge success and my best wishes and blessings to all of you.

Thank you,

JAI HIND