

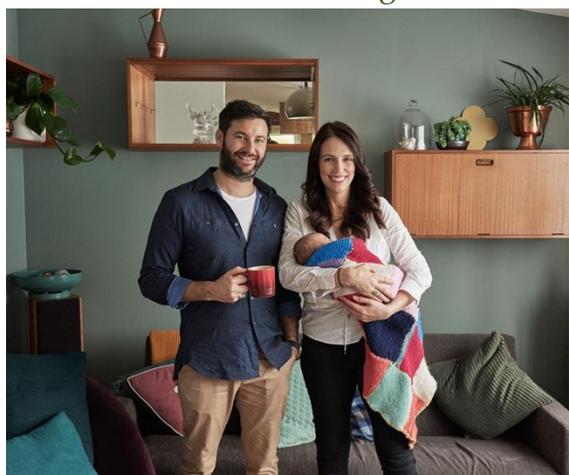
Observation

“Young Women as Role Models”

by Anil Shrivastava ‘Musafir’

I live in a state where our governor is a young woman, Gretchen Whitmer. Our representative in Washington is another young woman, Elissa Slotkin. You may have noticed that this trend is sweeping many countries and is not limited to the state of Michigan only. Finland, considered one of the happiest countries in the world, elected a woman Prime Minister in Sanna Marin. She is only 34, the youngest Prime Minister (PM) in the world. Not only that, her party will be ruling Finland with the support of coalition of four other parties led by women. Three of those women are in their 30s.

New Zealand has a similar story to tell. Ms. Jacina Ardern assumed the office of PM of New Zealand in August 2017. Ms.



Arden is 39 years old. This is also important to note that more than 40 per

cent of elected members in New Zealand’s House of Representatives are women. That will be a topic for some other day.

It is heartening to see a new generation of women stepping forward to address some of the many challenges that we all face. I, personally, don’t see this as women’s empowerment. I see this as an alternative to self-serving old men who have traditionally been leading the world into chaos and corruption. None of the women mentioned above were elected on the basis of their gender. They were just convincing to the voters.

Women leaders know that they have to be different from their old male predecessors so that the world can realize that they are here to work for the people sincerely. I have seen this trait in young women leaders of today. Becoming PM was not easy for Ms. Marin. Born in 1985, she had a chaotic childhood moving often from place to place as she came from a low-income family. Politics seemed out of reach for her. She moved up from ranks of her political party to the top job helped by her extraordinary and proven organizational skills. Rather than focusing attention on herself, Ms. Marin only talks about issues at hand. Speaking to reporters shortly after being

sworn in earlier this month (December 2019), Ms. Marin avoided questions about herself saying, “She was focused on governing.”

New Zealand’s current PM, Ms. Jacina Ardern also is a breath of fresh air for the Kiwis. She was elected in 2017. By the way, New Zealand was the first country to grant women the right to vote in parliamentary elections in 1893. Despite being the Prime Minister Ms. Arden leads a very ordinary life. Ms. Arden had to face nasty terror attacks in two mosques in Christchurch, a city in New Zealand. She showed her strength in calming the nation with a forceful speech and compassion for the victims. When Donald Trump made a condolence call and asked what support the U.S. could offer, she told him, “Sympathy and love for the victims.”

She negotiated with the conservative opposition party to enact immediate and sweeping changes to the country’s gun laws, banning all assault rifles and military-style semiautomatics which is a major achievement in a country with a sizable rural population. The fact that the conservatives supported her in this deal shows her ability to work amicably with the opposition. According to my observation, most leaders in the world lack the skill of deal making.

Coming to the young women leaders of my own state, Michigan, USA, we elected a new governor, Ms. Gretchen Whitmer in 2016. She also leads an ordinary life in person and is very approachable. She started the construction of a new bridge over the

Detroit River going into Canada that was pending for at least a decade. One of her first acts after becoming governor of the state was fixing the highways and byways of Michigan which were shamefully the worst in the United States. Her predecessors neglected the roads as they kept on bickering about the funding.

I find these women leaders empathetic, courageous, adaptable, assertive, kind and caring, something that old career politicians usually lack according to my personal experience. It will be naïve to assume that all young women leaders will be as good as women mentioned above, but I do welcome the trend set by them. May be the young women of today will take the clue from them and will treat them as their role models.

