



श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानम्

>>> NEWSLETTER <<<



# WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT CELL



**"ANYTHING MAY HAPPEN WHEN WOMANHOOD HAS CEASED TO BE A PROTECTED OCCUPATION"**

**- VIRGINIA WOOLF**

## PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE



The roots of International Women's Day can be traced back to the initiatives of the Socialist Party of America, which orchestrated the inaugural celebration on February 28, 1909, in New York City. Originally titled "National Woman's Day," this event was championed by activist Theresa Malkiel. While some narratives link the day's inception to a historic march by female garment workers in New York on March 8, 1857, scholars challenge this assertion, suggesting it to be a myth constructed to dissociate International Women's Day from its socialist heritage. The essence of International Women's Day lies in its acknowledgment of the historical struggle for gender equality and women's rights. As we mark International Women's Day in 2024, let us reflect on the progress made, recognize the challenges that persist, and reaffirm our commitment to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. I extend my best wishes to the Women's Development Cell, HCC for their rigorous and consistent efforts to make the institution a more gender-sensitized, compassionate, and inclusive space. May this Newsletter be able to ignite new lights in the reader's mind and illumine it.



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# EDITORIAL

Yachana Lama, Convener



Dear Readers,

I feel very privileged to bring you our Newsletter on this auspicious occasion of International Women's Day. We dedicate our pages to the unwavering spirit of womanhood amidst the challenges and taboos that may seem daunting. Women's Development Cell, Heramba Chandra College has set out to celebrate the strength, resilience, and empowerment that define the essence of being a Woman. In this Newsletter, we embark on a journey to unveil and engage in an open conversation on the societal pressure and taboos a woman faces in the 21st century. We have strived to attain a gender-sensitized environment in our college by organizing various events throughout the years. We claim to live in a modern egalitarian society, yet women in the 21st century are constantly fighting to break away from stereotypes and embrace natural facets like menstruation without being shamed and silenced. In the women's development cell, we believe that the liberation of women from social, and cultural pressure and taboos will collectively lead to a better uplifted society.



## 21st Century Women - Fighting Taboos Internally and Externally

Dr Lily Law

Department of English

Feminists in the 21st century are involved in the fight for equality not only within the family set-up but also in the wider social arena. A strive for gender equality may exist in offices, working places and even within a home where the father, brother or husband's say becomes the final decision. Although it is easy to visualise the 21st century woman as a super successful working woman managing the home front and her office or job deftly enough, in reality she is still at the mercy of domestic and social taboos she has to fight both externally and internally.

Although we are living in the 21st century, in many households there is a taboo or an unwritten patriarchal verdict against the working woman coming back too late at night. In many homes the working woman in spite of being an earning member of the family must return home within eight, nine or ten at night or be pronounced dishonourable by family and neighbours. Double standards in this regard do exist in society and the male members of the family get away with greater and more serious aberrations.

Although the 21st century woman seems to have come a long way from such social evils like 'sati daho', child marriage, dowry deaths and rape - many of these evils do persist in society as we all know through media information. Although it is commendable that the 21st century woman can make her own decisions regarding pregnancy, childbirth or single motherhood, religious norms often make her face such taboos like keeping away from divine worship during the days of her menstruation. She has always been regarded as 'unclean' during her periods and not allowed to do 'pujas' or enter the 'thakur ghor' or temple during those days as if she were a polluted being. Patriarchy, and fear of not adhering to age-old practices, makes any violation in this regard as being sinful on the part of the woman. It is a hard task for the 21st century woman to theorize less and involve themselves in the practical battle against such taboos both externally and internally, thus paving the way for women's emancipation.



# 'INSPIRE INCLUSION'- ACCOMMODATING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL CRISES OF 21ST-CENTURY WOMEN IN INDIAN ACADEMIA

Amrapali Bose

Department of English

According to the United Nations policy, every year International Women's Day is celebrated with a theme dedicated to women's independence. The theme for 2024 is "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress". Also, 'Inspire inclusion' is the campaign theme for Women's Day. Gender sensitization is an integral aspect of building a diverse and inclusive workforce that traverses beyond the gender binary and is essential to encourage inclusion and accelerate progress. In Australia, the Victorian Women's Trust (VWT), a women's advocacy agency with 15 employees, offers their staff a menstrual policy that extends to employees in menopause (the first of its kind); furthermore, they have created a policy template to encourage other companies to offer menstrual leave. Their policy began with the Waratah Project, which explored issues surrounding menstruation and menopause to end stigma. In an online survey, they found that 58% of respondents across Australia and globally supported the idea of menstrual leave, believing that it would contribute to a better menstrual experience. VWT's menstrual leave policy provides employees with multiple options, including working from home, working in the office in a more quiet and comfortable area, or using one paid menstrual leave day per month. The VWT hopes that its policy will send the message that menstruation and menopause are natural and normal biological processes.

This might appear to be a little too much to even ask for in a country like ours. However, a basic understanding of the psychological and physiological upheaval, challenges, and crises women are subjected to in the different stages of their biological womanhood might make the workplace a far more gender-sensitive space.

Unfortunately, workplace policy does not adequately address the reproductive health needs of women. This could be because the policymakers prioritize male-dominated ideologies, resulting in this neglect and oppression of women. This hierarchical structure, where men occupy most leadership positions and dictate policies, is a significant factor in gender inequality in higher education. Although discussion surrounding periods has increased, research indicates that women still lack support in the workplace for managing painful menstruation. Women may experience severe pain and heavy periods in certain situations owing to medical conditions such as endometriosis, fibroids, or pelvic inflammatory disease. But the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. of India, finds such sufferings ordinary and hence confidently waves off any appeal for period leave.

The same thing happens with the issue of menopause, which affects the majority of women at some point in their lives. When treating menopause as a barrier to workforce participation, it needs to be viewed as an equality issue at an organizational level, not just a women's issue. Although menopause policies are starting to creep in within some occupations, higher education has a long way to go. Academics report feeling devalued and discriminated against because of their experience of menopause, leading many to take periods of absence or leave their profession entirely. Although Maternity policies exist in the academy, appropriate steps are not being taken to ensure women's careers do not stagnate due to changing perceptions when they return to work. These policies give a facade of equality, while stigmas and perceptions of motherhood work to reduce equality in real-time, leaving apart sympathizing with a new mother dealing with postpartum depression. Even a humble crèche seems to be a distant dream in the elite Indian academia. Taking steps to raise awareness of menstruation, maternity, and menopause issues: Communication aimed at all employees should raise awareness of the difficulties womanhood can create for working women. This sets the precedent that support is available and can be reinforced by institutional leaders. Supportive communications are the first step, and any practical support that can be accessed should be signposted. This mustn't be a one-off occurrence but part of a wider workplace culture of accessibility. Providing flexible work arrangements can help to ensure that female academics are not adversely affected and can effectively balance their health needs with work responsibilities. Likewise, such flexibility can prove to be a significant advantage for academics returning from maternity leave, allowing them to resume work alongside childcare responsibilities.

Menstruation, maternity, and menopause are intrinsic to womanhood. These issues must be recognized and respected within policy and practice to prevent further discrimination and ensure space for women in higher education. The day from which women's contribution in nation building will be respectfully valued and treasured, gender sensitization or gender complaint work environment would not seem to be a fancy gimmick. Inclusion will happen voluntarily.

## MESSAGES FROM THE FACULTY

Significance of Women's Development Cell, Heramba Chandra College

At Heramba Chandra College, the Women's Development Cell isn't just a space—it's a movement. With a finger on the pulse of gender dynamics, it ignites conversations, hosts hackathons, and empowers femmes to break ceilings. It's where empowerment meets innovation, shaping tomorrow's leaders, one fearless woman at a time.

**Dr. Bodhisattwa Bardhan Choudhury**

**Assistant Professor**

**Department of Commerce**

**Heramba Chandra College**

21st Century Women – Fighting Taboos Internally & Externally

In 21st century women are challenging taboos by educating themselves and participating in male-dominated workforces.

Due to present legal system, women can now protest domestic violence as well as enjoy single motherhood.

Nevertheless, it is time to start changing the systems that prevent women from achieving their potential.

**Mrs. Shinjini Ghosh**

**Department of Statistics**

**Heramba Chandra College**

Overcoming The Taboos for Women at Workplace to Empower Women:

Working women constitute a significant part of the society. They face innumerable challenges at the workplace on all the positional levels. Gender disparity, health issues, pressure of maintaining balance between career and devoted motherhood, socio cultural factors, environmental factors are a few worth mentioning. Appropriate workplace policies, implementation of law, along with ensuring the provision of three 'S' i.e., strength, safety and security can be some of the effective measures in curbing the multitude of problems confronted by women at workplace.

**Mrs. Suravi Kar Roy**

**Department of Economics**

**Heramba Chandra College**

Maximum women in India specially from remote areas are expected to get married and have children at a young age till date. If they choose to remain single or pursue their careers or higher studies, they are often viewed as they are going against social norms. Women are often made to feel ashamed or embarrassed about their periods. However, they are now fighting for getting free from these barriers and challenges of the old beliefs and practices. Now women are pursuing education, careers, and they are establishing their selves, breaking down barriers and creating positive change in society to prepare India for an equality for all.

**Mrs. Sanchita Das**

**Department of Education**

**Heramba Chandra College**

## MESSAGES FROM THE STUDENTS



In the 21st century, women face many challenges of societal and internal taboos. Externally, they confront stereotypes, discrimination, lack of opportunity, and inequality.

Internally, they defy

self-doubt, lack of support and empowerment, and traditional constraints.

Through support, resilience, and solidarity women could be able to fight all these objectives and could be able to establish a more equitable future.

**Mubshira Khatun**

**Semester-3**

**Department of Geography**

In the 21st century, women are valiantly challenging societal stigmas and taboos and are taking control of their narrative. Internally, they are breaking free from the socially imposed limitations and expectations and embracing their worth and potential. Externally, they confront cultural norms and gender biases while advocating for their equality and recognition and dismantling oppressive structures.

Together, women in today's world are redefining the concept and narrative of womanhood through resilience and sheer determination and paving the way for a more inclusive future.

**Shaunak Gupta Bakshi**

**Semester 6**

**Department of Geography**

# WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT CELL

## OVER THE YEARS

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2022

Women's Development Cell in association with IQAC celebrated International Women's day in a befitting manner on 8th March 2022. As a part of gender sensitization program, Film Screening and group discussion were arranged in the auditorium. Dr Nabanita Chakrabarty was invited as the chair person. Two films titled JUICE by Neeraj Ghaywan and Vikalp by Neha Sharma was screened which initiated a thoughtful discussion. Dr Lily Law and Dr Sutapa Bhatta Guha were the guest speakers. The program was conducted by Dr Madhubanti Shome and Ms Amrapali Bose. The logo of Women's Development Cell was also inaugurated on this day. The event was successful in arousing some interesting questions amongst the audience and creating a gender friendly space in the college



### VIDYASAGAR'S THOUGHTS ABOUT THE WOMEN AND THE CONTEMPORARY

Women's Development Cell in association with IQAC organised a Program titled Vidyasagar's thoughts about the women and the contemporary on 27/09/2022 in Room number 19, Heramba Chandra College. Dr Nabanita Chakrabarty was invited as the keynote speaker and Dr Sutapa Bhatta Guha was invited as the Concept Note speaker. The program began from 3pm. Dr Nabanita Chakrabarty inaugurated the program and shared her thoughts on Vidyasagar's role on shaping modern women. The program was followed by a concept note shared by Dr Sutapa Bhatta Guha. The students both male and female actively participated in the question answer session and expressed their views on modern women and their struggles. This event was successful in opening a meaningful dialogue amongst all genders for the development of women.



## LAWS RELATED TO EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

A one-day seminar and workshop was organised by the cell on 22/12/2022 on 'Laws related to Equality and Empowerment of Women'. The speakers for the workshop were Ms Dyutimala Bagchi (Advocate/mediator and special Public Prosecutor, Juvenile justice board, South 24 paraganas), Ms Tutul Roy (Counsellor, CINI-TEENLINE), and Ms Mau Bhattacharya (Uddami India Foundation). Ms Solanki Roy was also invited as a special guest. The workshop conducted by Ms Mau.B included a case study given to various groups of students facilitating the active involvement of both genders. Ms Tutul Roy delivered a very impactful lecture on Mental Health of women. Ms Dyutimala Bagchi enlightened the students on various laws protecting the rights of women and how women can fall back on those laws if need arose. Ms Solanki ended the seminar by sharing her personal experiences as a woman in the entertainment field and the struggles she had to face. This workshop and seminar was successful in sensitizing the women and men of HCC.



## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2023

International Women's Day was celebrated on 5/04/2023 in HCC. To commemorate the special event a Film Show and debate competition was organised on the controversial topic 'Men are the Custodians of Women's Destiny'. This event saw an active participation of students and teachers. Two intriguing short films were shown which was bound to create a variety of opinions. The students and teachers shared their opinions and came up with interesting questions paving way for a new narrative. The next part of the event included a debate on the above topic. Both male and female participants expressed their views for or against the topic. The objective of campus sensitization was achieved by this successful program.





# A QUIZ COMPETITION ON DETECTIVE FICTION

A quiz competition was held on Detective fiction by the Women's Development Cell in association with the Department of English, Department of Bengali and IQAC on 30th September 2023. Participants were divided into four groups namely Mitin Mashi, Byomkesh, Feluda and Sherlock Holmes. The event was graced by eminent Actors of Bengali Film Industry, such as Koel Mallick Lekha Chatterjee and Subhrajit Dutta. The trailer of a film adaptation of Suchitra Bhattacharjya's detective fiction was launched. Students also received 'Jongole Mitin Mashi' T shirts and also a few free tickets from the team. The winners of the Quiz Competition were felicitated by Koel Mallick who plays the lead role in the film. The event highly motivated students to break the gender stereotypes in their choice of career.



# ORIENTATION PROGRAM ON 'CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN WRITERS IN LITERATURE

The Women's Development Cell at Heramba Chandra College, along with the Bangla and English Departments, organized an Orientation Program on 'Contribution of Women Writers in Literature' on 16/12/2023. Dr Nabanita Chakrabarty inaugurated the session by symbolizing women's struggle for basic education. Dr Madhubanti Shome and Ms Amrapali Bose discussed the challenges faced by Bengali women writers and theorized women's writing across spatio-temporal dimensions. The session included an interactive quiz by Ms Bose, fostering debates and encouraging participants to explore the socio-historical and political context of women's writing.



# AN AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Women's Development Cell in collaboration with ICC and Psychological Counselling Cell organised an awareness campaign on 23rd Dec 2023. The members introduced the cell, its aim and activities. The students were made aware of the different programs, facilities and steps taken by the cell to combat gender discrimination.



## THANK YOU NOTE

The Women's Development Cell is hopeful that this Newsletter will foster a deeper understanding of social issues, promote awareness, and help create a gender-sensitized environment in our institute. We are thankful for the contribution of all our Teachers and Students whose messages and articles helped us realize the objective of the Newsletter. We hope to continue issuing articles concerning Women's Empowerment and encourage everyone to contribute actively.

