

# Transmataran

A decade of reminiscence

**2020**



WOMEN DEVELOPMENT CELL, SHIVAJI COLLEGE

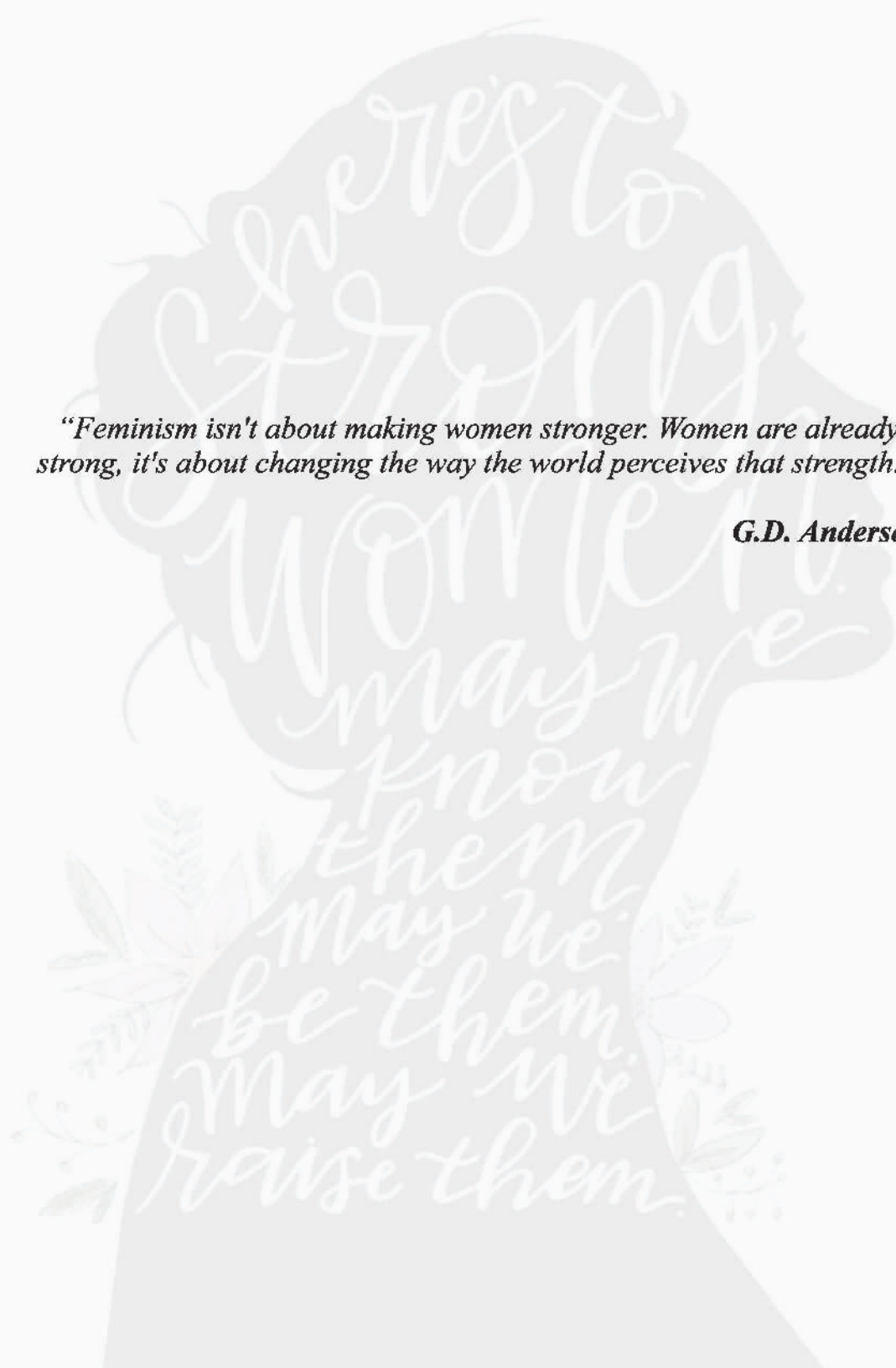












*"Feminism isn't about making women stronger. Women are already strong, it's about changing the way the world perceives that strength."*

**G.D. Anderson**



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**2020**



**Shivaji College**  
**University of Delhi**





## **Shivaji College**

University Of Delhi  
Raja Garden, Ring Road,  
New Delhi - 110 027

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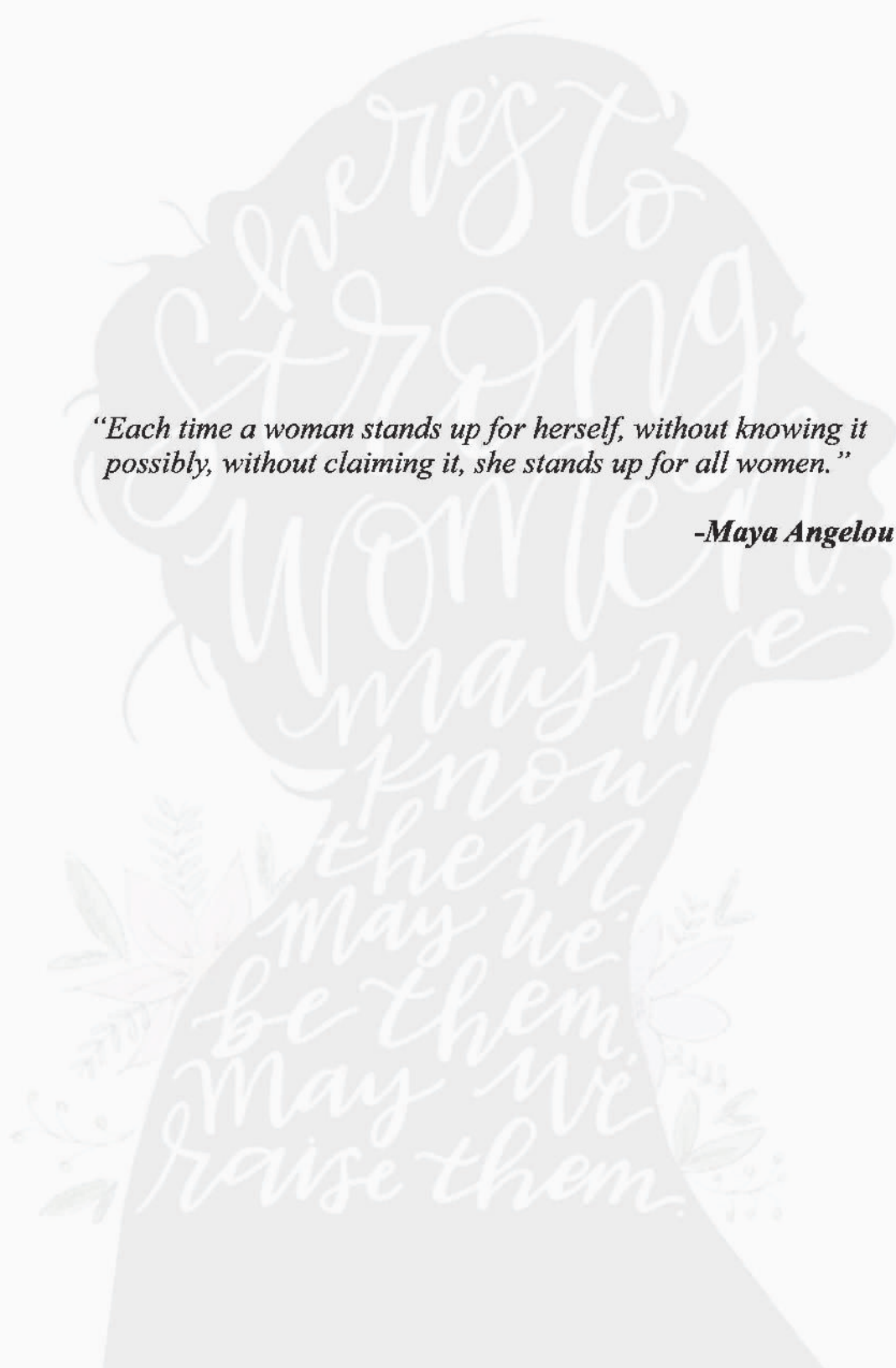
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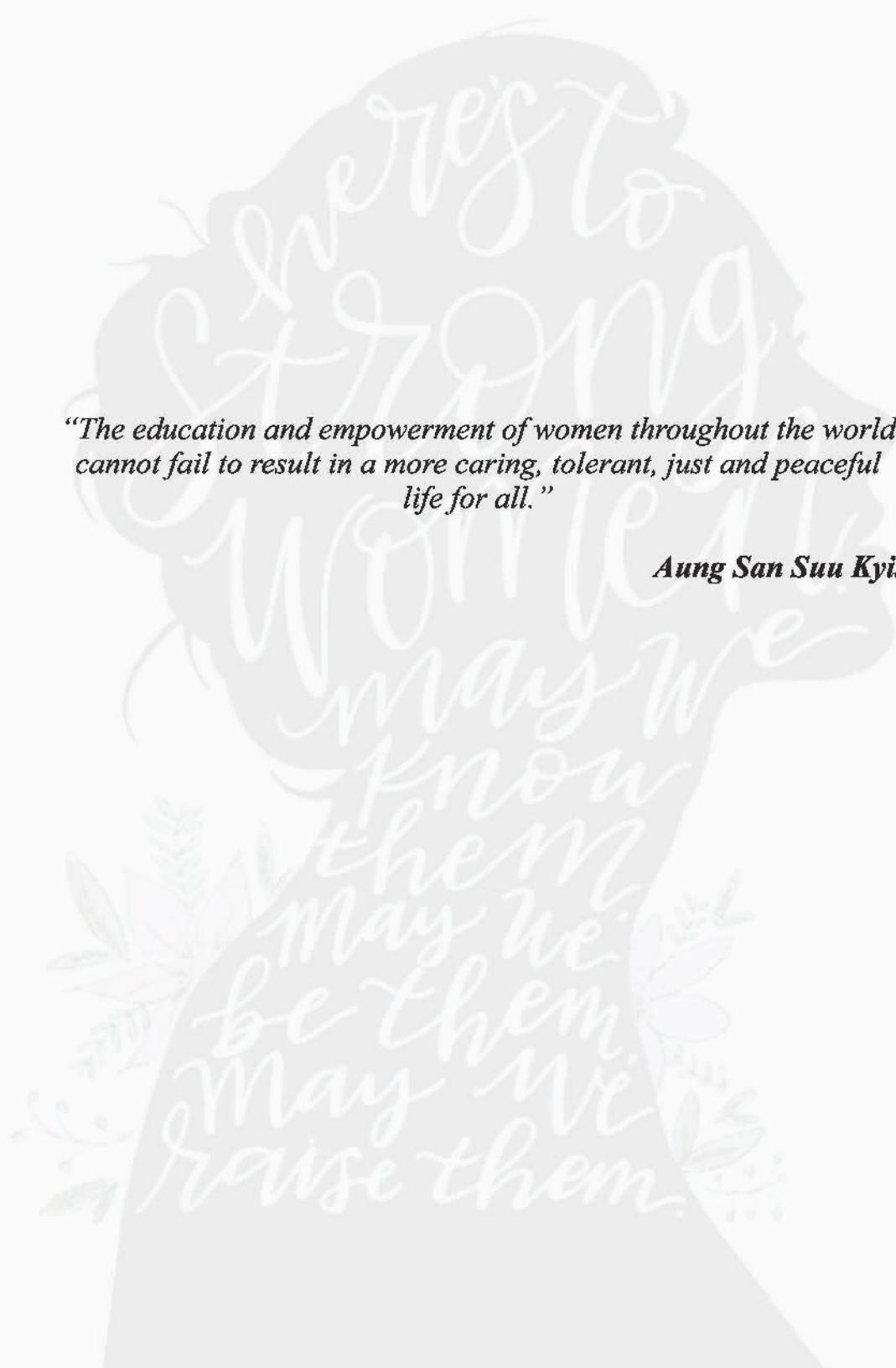
*"Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women."*

**-Maya Angelou**



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*"The education and empowerment of women throughout the world cannot fail to result in a more caring, tolerant, just and peaceful life for all."*

***Aung San Suu Kyi.***



## FOREWORD

Tell the women in your life that you care for them, tell them that you appreciate their small efforts to make themselves self dependent, that you feel happy when they make decisions about themselves that you enjoy when they compete and win and that you unstintingly support their fight against injustice. Keep telling them on each occasion and you would have done your bit for equality of women!!

This positive voice is indeed the biggest contribution towards empowerment of women. This exactly is what the Women Development Cell of Shivaji College decided to undertake as a Mission ten years back. The



team under the able leadership of its visionary Principal, Dr Shashi Nijhawan made a promise to itself .They decided to scan the length and breadth of this vast country and identify the change makers at grass root level. These were the leaders who raised their solid voice for women with passion, with no expectation of any reward and without fear of retaliation. They derived their strength from sincerity of their purpose and their unflinching faith and the belief system that their actions were building a better society for generation today and for generations to come. They successfully identified hundreds of such leaders, made their story public, documented it for wider dissemination and did honours by decorating them with Jijabai Awards. This has been a fulfilling journey of an entire decade. The stories of such initiatives have however been immortalized by the College and will continue to inspire young students and others in decades to come.

Award presentation ceremony itself is an impressive initiative and a good practice to follow for the organizations working in field of social communication. The leader speaks through his/her heart and it has a strong emotive appeal. The college community is touched and their lesson in gender sensitization is forever. Thousands of students who passed out during last ten years have all gone home with a sharp imprint of gender equality in their minds. This is a great achievement and a big step towards building a gender sensitive society. Needless to mention that it is the real need of the hour to instill the concept of gender equality in youth of today. Though the society has come a long way in recognizing the true potential of women, but a lot needs to be done to actualize it.

WDC book 2020, **Sansmaran – a decade of reminiscence**, is a live evidence of good work done by the Cell (WDC) in the past decade The inspiring stories of these exceptional real life heroes remind us, that all we really need to bring about change, is having the will to do it and belief in its success. I deeply appreciate the efforts put in by the team year after year. The whole process of painstakingly identifying prospective awardees, interviewing them and documenting properly is really praise-worthy. Heartiest congratulations to the WDC team as well as their champion and motivator, Dr Shashi Nijhawan.

I wish the WDC, Shivaji College, all the very best for its upcoming International Conference on ‘Women’s Leadership for Global Peace and Prosperity’. The issues are socially relevant and will act as a platform for discussion and exchange of ideas. The privilege of hearing such eminent speakers from all over the world will surely inspire the students and faculty alike.

My best wishes to Shivaji College team for their great efforts.

Ms. Surina Rajan, IAS  
HIPA, Government of Haryana



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On the event of completion of 10 years of the Jijabai Achievers Awards, organized by the Women's Development Cell (WDC), Shivaji College, it has been our great privilege to work on Sansmaran - A decade of reminiscence. We are deeply obliged to Dr. Shashi Nijhawan, Principal, Shivaji College, whose vision for the WDC and the publication of an annual book, was to recognize and honor individuals for their exceptional work in enabling women to take their true place in the world.

The creation of this book took us down the memory lane and helped better appreciate and celebrate the real life heroes who have championed the cause of women empowerment and achieved heartwarming changes at the very grassroot-level of the society. We have also included messages from the past conveners of WDC, narrating their struggles and triumphs in celebrating womanhood through the Women's Development Cell.

While remembering the past, we have also forged ahead into the future. This book also contains articles on the individuals chosen for the conferment of Jijabai Achievers Award 2019-20. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to **Smarita Sengupta, Anita Gupta, Shafiqur Rahman Khan, Lakhimi Barua and Masooma Rizvi** for sharing their personal experiences with our team, and permitting us to write about them.

A special thanks to all the organizations associated with us, who helped us in making this event a success. And last but not the least; we would like to congratulate each and every person involved in the creation of this book. It was the collective hard work and zeal of both students and faculty members that made this book possible.

We hope this book brings the realization that financial status, age, gender, education and other factors do not determine our capacity to bring about a change. It is the fire in our hearts and strength of our mind that makes all the difference.

**The Editorial Team**



## From The Principal's Desk

It gives me immense pleasure to see how the Women's Development Cell WDC has grown and blossomed over the past decade. The WDC of Shivaji College works tirelessly towards promoting ideas of gender equality and sensitizing people towards issues faced by women. It strives to accomplish this goal by bringing about awareness amongst students, teaching, and non-teaching members on issues of gender politics and in effect gender discrimination. It organizes conferences, seminars, workshops, gender sensitization programs and self-defense workshops. The



students are also sensitized by the medium of dance, music and theater. The need of the hour is empowerment of not just women but anyone who is discriminated against and oppressed based on gender identities.

In 2010, when we conceptualized this idea to felicitate every day heroes who champion the cause of women empowerment, we decided to name the awards as the Jijabai Achievers Award. Rajmata Jijabai – the mother of the valiant Indian warrior Shivaji, was far ahead of her times. She was an embodiment of the spirit of women empowerment and possessed qualities of selflessness, fearlessness, and courage to speak her mind. These qualities she instilled in her children Shivaji and Sambhaji. To commemorate this fierce and courageous woman, and celebrate the spirit of women empowerment, Shivaji College instituted the Jijabai Achievers Award and is the only one of its kind in the University of Delhi. I am proud to have such dedicated hard working faculty and student members who painstakingly identify such individuals working at the very ground level and creating a change in the lives of women.

The forthcoming WDC annual program is an **International Conference on 'Women's Leadership for Global Peace and Prosperity'**. It will provide a platform to discuss highly relevant issues like gender equality, women's role in policy making and economics, education and women's safety in social and private spaces. During the course of this event, the WDC book *Sansmaran – A decade of reminiscence* will be released. On the completion of a decade of the Jijabai Achievers' awards, I wish the WDC team all the best in their endeavor and hope that this beautiful legacy continues for years to come.

**Dr. Shashi Nijhawan**  
Principal, Shivaji College

*"When women participate in the economy, everyone benefits."*

*-Hillary Clinton*



## Convener's Message

It is rightly said “Women are the real architects of society.” The Women Development Cell (WDC) of the College aims to create a world free of gender discrimination, sensitize students towards gender parity, inculcate within them the awareness of women’s empowerment and encourage participation of NGOs working in the area of women’s development in the activities of the cell. It makes significant efforts throughout the year to promote awareness of gender equality and women’s issues by organizing seminars, interactive sessions, debates, self-defence workshops and street plays. This time we are organising a two-day International Conference on Women’s Leadership for Global Peace and Prosperity, which will help in creating awareness on the roles played by women towards the progress in various aspects of life as well as the measures that can be taken to ensure gender parity. The Conference will bring together eminent academicians from various fields, who will share their expertise and experience with



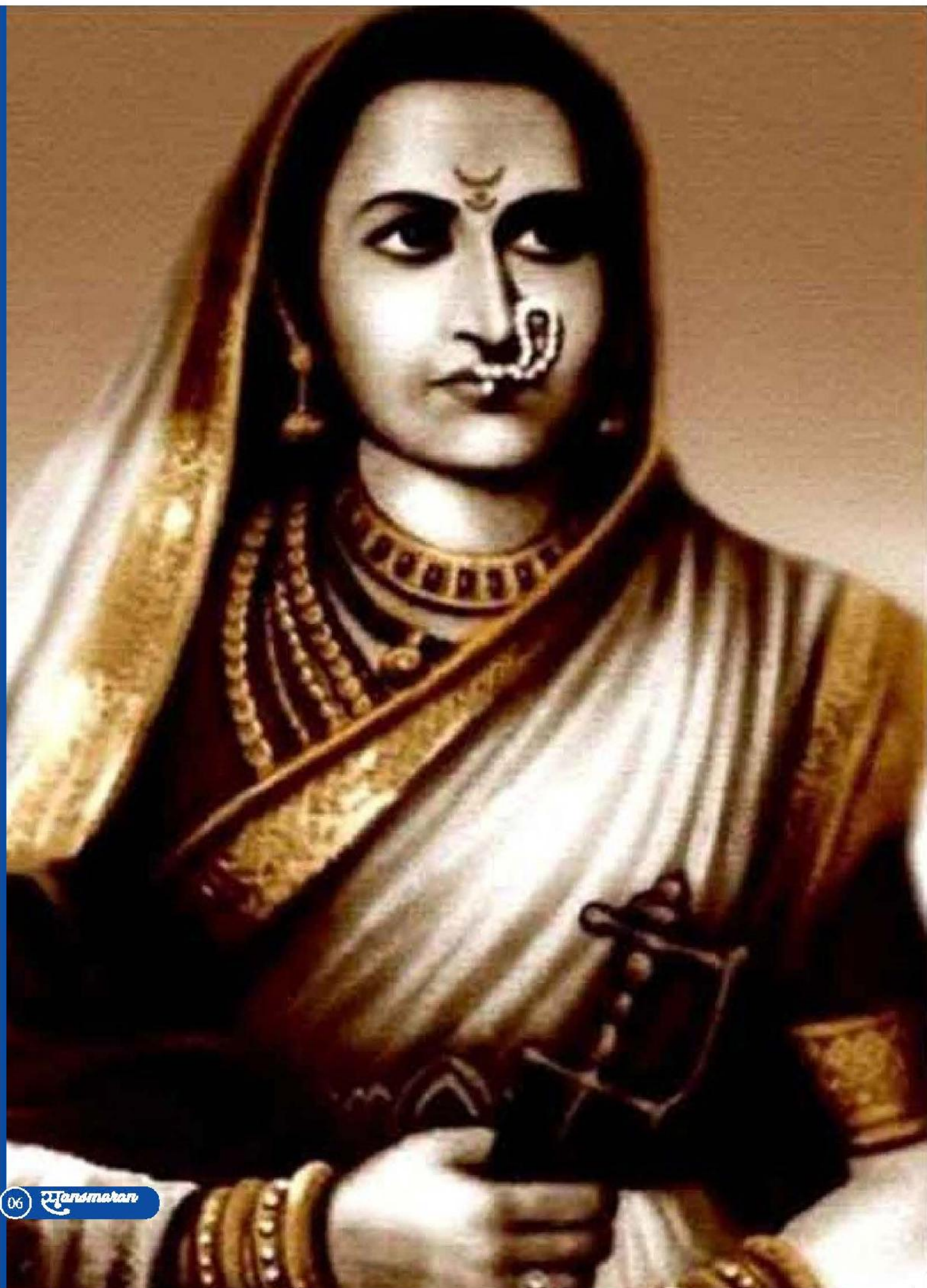
students and faculty in a series of interactive sessions. The deliberations will be on a plethora of themes such as women’s leadership, the contributions in the sphere of education, human rights and gender equality, women’s safety in public and private spaces and women’s role in policies and economics. This event will also provide a platform for exchanging ideas and formulating new and evolved policies to ensure gender parity.

In addition to the discussions, the event will also include the momentous Jijabai Achiever’s Awards Ceremony. The WDC of the College has been conferring this award for the last ten years to those individuals who have worked at the grass root level towards bringing about gender equality. These awards were instituted in 2010, in honour of Rajmata Jijabai, Chhatrapati Shivaji’s mother, a woman who was the epitome of courage, independence and warrior spirit.

In the valedictory session, the Chief Guest Hon’ble Governor of Uttarakhand Smt. Baby Rani Mauryaji and Guest of Honour Ms. Surina Rajan IAS, Director General, HIPA, Government of Haryana will release the Coffee Table Book Sansmaran –A Decade of Reminiscence. The book is a testimony to the unsung heroes and highlights their path-breaking contributions towards women empowerment. It has been a heartening effort and a work of love collectively by faculty and our students. I thank the previous Conveners of the WDC as it is owing to them that the cell has reached such great heights and become an integral part of the Vision and Mission of the college. We are also fortunate to have a Principal who is a true visionary. A leader and an empowered woman who leads by example, she dares to dream and then makes sure those dreams are translated into reality. I thank her as well as everyone who has been part of the writing of this book. I further extend my best wishes to all the Jijabai Awardees over the last decade and wish them success.

**Dr. Sunita Singh**  
Convener, WDC







## **Jijabai Achievers Awards**

The Jijabai Achievers award is named after the honourable Jijabai Shahaji Bhosale (12 January 1598 – 17 June 1674), mother of the great Indian warrior Chhatrapati Shivaji. She sowed the seeds of patriotism in Shivaji and moulded in him with the values necessary to be an ideal leader. We believe that lessons of a mother mark the beginning to every great man or woman. Hence empowering the women would create a ripple effect and better the society as whole – with gender parity, equal opportunity and mutual respect.

In keeping with this philosophy, Shivaji College instituted the Jijabai Achievers' award in 2010 to felicitate those extraordinary individuals who have been change makers in the lives of women and enabled them to attain their true potential at the grassroots level.

The WDC team comprising of faculty and students, is involved in identifies such exceptional persons, interviews them and confers on them the award in a humble attempt to applaud their efforts annually, through the Jijabai Award Ceremony. This year we have also organized an International Conference on 'Women's Leadership for Global Peace and Prosperity' in conjunction with the award ceremony. WDC through these events and awards acknowledges and honours the contributions of visionary individuals in redefining traditional contours.

### **Jijabai Achievers Awardees of 2020**

- Smarita Sengupta
- Anita Gupta
- Shafiqur Rahman Khan
- Lakhimi Baruah
- Masooma Rizvi

*"No country can ever truly flourish is if stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half of its citizens."*

***-Michelle Obama***



# **Jijabai Awardees 2020**



## **SMARITA SENGUPTA**

*Founder and CEO of Destiny Foundation and Reflection*







One of the biggest hazards the modern global society is encountering today is sex and labor trafficking with over 40 million victims across the world. With numbers on the rise of these sex slaves, Kolkata, the capital of the eastern state of West Bengal is a major international human trafficking hub. Poverty and lack of employment opportunities, often force the women to venture into the sex trade.

Smarita Sengupta has made it the mission of her life, to make a difference in the lives of these women. Her social entrepreneurship enterprise— Destiny Foundation/Reflection has the mission to “Educate, employ and empower vulnerable children and women in Kolkata, so they can avoid social exploitation”.

Ms. Sengupta was born and brought up in Kolkata in a middle-class progressive Indian Bengali family. The youngest of three siblings, armed with a degree in commerce, she worked in various jobs before she took the plunge in the social development sector.

She worked for an anti-trafficking NGO ‘Apne Aap’ in Kolkata, which is where she was first introduced to the atrocious reality of human trafficking. During her stint there, she visited brothels and shelter homes; she was deeply moved by the plight of the survivors. She realized that the lack of good rehabilitation and reintegration options were actually reinforcing the vulnerability of these women and girls. With nowhere to go once they turn 18 and barely equipped with any vocational skills, the survivors are highly vulnerable to being re-trafficked once again. The lacuna in the existing system, prompted Smarita to start thinking of ways to bridge the gap by capacity building of survivors and access to decent employment.

This is when Smarita envisioned the idea of Destiny Foundation and Reflection: a safe place where survivors can take their time to learn skills, get gainful employment, and also have a trusted community of friends and mentors. Through this sustainable social business model she addressed the severely limited economic opportunities for survivors of trafficking, which makes young girls







vulnerable to re-experiencing exploitation. The victims of trafficking, once rescued are relocated to a Government shelter home where they live and continue their education until they are 18 years old.

West Bengal government has made several shelter homes which not only provide basic care, but also essentially empowers girls with skills which make them resilient and safe once they leave the shelter home to face the real world. Without this, the risk of re-trafficking rises significantly. The girls have been bought up thinking that trade is the center of their lives. A more daunting task is to break this cycle and empower them with vocational skills. The idea here is to make them equipped to lead a financially independent life.

A number of rescue victims are children who have been robbed of their childhood, deprived of

emotional care and sensitivity in their formative years. These kids come with mental baggage, and trust issues. Some young girls have already attained motherhood; some have damaged bones due to beating ferociously in brothels. The challenge is to rebuild the lives of these victims, to instill confidence in them to lead their life with a new meaning and letting go of the nightmare they have lived in. Ms. Sengupta derives her courage and emotional strength from the victims she works with.

Destiny provides holistic and sustainable reintegration services to the survivors of sexual slavery in Kolkata, India by providing connected social care, right from the time they are at a shelter home, through to adulthood. Started in 2008, the organisational model operates under a non-profit hybrid structure named as Destiny Foundation and Reflection.







Destiny Foundation is the social division that pursues the organisation's social objectives. Reflection is the fashion business division that pursues the financial objectives of the organisation through designing, manufacturing, and selling fashion accessories. The foundation is an ideal hybrid model, having both charitable and business wings. They offer training programmes for different age groups, motivating them to study, boost their creativity, equip them to earn their livelihood and to turn over their psychology.

The women are trained to make fashion accessories, scarves, clutches, bags, bookmarks, and other items which are sold worldwide. It is in the pipeline to make these products available on their website so that they are easily procurable. The foundation recently helped a 15-year-old young mother, who

now plans to go back to her village and become an entrepreneur.

Over the past decade, 444 women, and children have availed Destiny's multi-layered program of training, safe accommodation, education and life skills. To date 108 women have been employed at Reflection, the social business. Smarita has further expanded her work in USA, UK, Canada, Japan and mobilised a global advisory committee with experts from different arenas, developed meaningful partnership with international universities and ethical buyers. At present, the Destiny Foundation has 21 full-time employees who work with over 150 survivors.

Smarita Sengupta is the founder and CEO of Destiny Foundation and Reflection. A fellow of Global Women's Leadership Network (GWLN) and was also a recipient of their 'Leader of Impact Award' in 2013. She has also held fellowships at Columbia University and Ford Foundation. Ms. Sengupta won the 'Iconic Women of the Year: Creating a Better World' award at Women's Economic Forum, 2017 and was nominated for CNN & News18 'Indian of the Year- Public Service' award in 2015. The mission of 'Destiny' is to educate, employ and empower vulnerable children and women in Kolkata so they can avoid sexual exploitation. The aim of their work is about survivor rehabilitation and the prevention of re-trafficking of survivors.







## ANITA GUPTA

*Co-Founder of Bhojpur Mahila Kala Kendra- An organisation for women empowerment through education and financial independence*





Anita Gupta has paved a path towards the empowerment of women by training them to gainfully employ themselves. Her efforts towards battling patriarchy and oppression of women, has helped thousands of rural women. Hailing from Arrah, Bihar, Anita was just 10 years old when she witnessed the misogyny and suppression that women suffer from in our society.

While talking about her background, she said "My grandfather 'bought' a girl half his age to bear his children after the demise of his three sons. I saw him beat the girl and tortured her both physically and mentally. That's when it struck me - if the girl had not been poor and uneducated, she would have definitely stood up for herself." This incident left an indelible mark on her and by the time she turned 20, she co-founded the Bhojpur Mahila Kala Kendra with the help of her brother Santosh Kumar. The mission behind this foundation was to empower women in every way possible and train them to be financially independent.



Spreading awareness amongst women and overcoming their patriarchal setups was not an easy task. They would go door to door to make women aware of the opportunities they could have by telling them about the importance of education and employment. Many times, they were hampered in their efforts by various male members of the women's families. This went on for a long time, and she faced many obstacles but persevered. She says that though it was a hard journey but, "jab bachpan mein he thaana liya, toh kaun rok sakta tha?" (I was determined to succeed since my childhood, who could stop me now?)"







In 2000, she received a supporting hand from Amitabh Verma, a senior IAS officer, to register Bhojpur Mahila Kala Kendra for government support. The NGO then went on to create around 300 self groups for aid in livelihood, health care check-ups, training, education and many more. They are supported by Pact – an international development organization.

Bhojpur Mahila Kala Kendra is now empanelled with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and DC Handicrafts, Government of India. The NGO has also sought help from the government to introduce handicraft training to rural women. Currently, the jewellery made by the rural women are sold at various government organized fairs. The jewellery is also supplied to various stores located across Delhi, Pune, Mumbai, and other cities.

Due to her tremendous efforts towards women empowerment, she won acclaim and prizes from the Bihar Government in 2008. She has been an active member of the Usha Silaai School in Bihar and Jharkhand and teaches women to work on stitching machines.

Since its inception, Bhojpur Mahila Kala Kendra has trained around 20,000 rural women in different skills sets and at present, has 200 women in its cluster. Today these women are doing well and are financially independent. In the near future, she wants to seek help from the government to open a permanent store for handicraft items that would generate a regular source of income for rural women.











**SHAFIQR RAHMAN KHAN**

*Founder-CEO of Empower People*





Shafiqur Rahman Khan has been instrumental in identifying and establishing the cause against the societal evil of Bride Trafficking through intense research and activism on ground. He founded 'Empower People' to work for rescue and rehabilitation of girls and women trafficked for the purpose of marriage.

Mr. Khan has fought against the social evil of bride trafficking and exploitation of women. He has been very active for the education rights of Dalit children and other excluded communities in Gaya (Bihar). It touched his very core when he realized that some people were so poor and starved, they became forced to sell their children to traffickers to just barely survive.

Shafiq is committed to help, protect, support and organize trafficked women and girls, who were deceived in the name of marriage and exploited sexually/physically. His brainchild, 'Empower People' works to protect, support and organize victims and potential victims of social crimes against women and children by focusing on factors contributing to the crime.

In Shafiq's own words, "It is not the organization that is the source of empowerment but people who create the organization through empowered aspirations." Empower People was founded in 2006 and is officially registered under SRA 1860 with the Registrar of Societies, Government of NCT of Delhi.

A whopping 85% of Empower People workforce is

volunteers. The team includes 6 staff, 40 regular volunteers, with 20 survivor leaders.

Empower People promotes community-based sustainable livelihood to the rescued girls. Many such survivors have been trained in commercial farming and they are doing very well for themselves now. He led a 300-kilometer Padyatra against Female Foeticide and Gender Inequality in 2006 from Jind to Hisar in Haryana.

In 2012, the March Against Bride Trafficking was organized from March 1st in Barpeta to March 17th in Kolkata which covered around 4400 kms across 21 districts of Assam & West Bengal in which 500 community groups were created and around 5000 people became members of these communities. Shafiq proudly recounted the story of a few brave trafficking survivors who are now a part of his group in combating the problem.





In 2016, a programme called 'Pahal' was initiated to reach out Paro women who were brought to Nuh in their childhood. Under this programme, they were reunited with their parental family after as long as twenty five years. As a part of the Pahal initiative, Paro Jagriti Abhiyan was launched to organize the open assembly of Paro women at the village and block levels, to encourage dialogue between the locals and the Paro women.

In 2018, the March Against Bride Trafficking was organized at a massive scale from March 25 to June 1. The total distance covered under this march was 14000 km, starting from Diphu of Karbi Anlong District of Assam and culminating at Shimla, Himachal Pradesh. This march covered about 70 districts of 10 States from Assam to Himachal Pradesh, where 1000 cases of trafficking were identified and 127 rehabilitations enabled.

The Paidal March on Forest and Land rights (Jal – Jungle – Jameen Adhikaar Yatra) was organized successfully in the month of February 2019 that covered 110 kilometers to restore and protect the full rights of the tribal communities on the land, water and other resources of the forests. Around 10,000 people including children, men, women and even senior citizens of tribal communities from 20 districts of Jharkhand were participated in this March for their right on Forests and Land.

Shafiq is of the view that people can be motivated and inspired for change through awareness and participation. Rather than working in project-wise schemes or with limited focus, he believes in attacking root of the society problems and plans to

have a mass movement and an ideological campaign within the society against female foeticide and gender-based exploitation.

Shafiq sees his survivors as the real revolutionaries and leaders of the organization. He works in collaboration with communities to understand the conditions that gave birth to the social evil of bride trafficking. His extraordinary way to tackle this evil is through conversations, folk stories, and music and through these he is able to connect with people with his vision for equality and liberation. Till date, Empower People has rescued and rehabilitated approximately 4,250 trafficked women and girls, taken up 88 cases of honor killings, and 27,500 cases of domestic violence. Through the support of Empower People, approximately 3,200 girls are continuing their education, and 12,650 children of trafficked women are attending school in 85 villages across 10 Indian states. Additionally, more than 400 women survivors have obtained land in their destination communities, an essential step in establishing their sovereignty and preventing re-trafficking.

He set up innovative processes for empowering the survivors of bride trafficking to become leaders of the movement with training in legal matters and skills to develop sustainable independent livelihoods. For survivors who cannot be repatriated, he helps secure their right in the property of their buyer-husband. During repatriation, he involves community leaders to ensure acceptance and safety of survivors. Bride Trafficking (BT) involves selling of girls and







women for the purpose of marriage and this gruesome violation of their human rights is seen as something normal in a society that has great blind value for the institution of marriage. Tackling this issue involves delicate non-threatening work on the mindsets of communities whose people populate the families that buy girls and the government administration that ought to safeguard their rights and dignity but fail to see anything wrong when it comes to crime associated with the dearly held custom of marriage. Shafiq closely understood the mechanics of what helps BT prevail and developed multi-pronged approaches to tackle this issue.

Shafiq has spent the best years of his life for this cause without care or worry about his own safety or security. He has been able to work on the issue in such a sensitive and incisive manner that the communities which earlier overlooked the plight of trafficked women are today his greatest allies in fighting the crime and standing up for wronged women and girls. His empathy and a strong sense of justice led him to extensively study various aspects that shape a society and he has developed a depth of understanding and continually evolving way of thinking which is very unique to him and reveals to the world absolutely refreshing perspectives and thus solutions to some of the issues which have been plaguing humanity since time immemorial. His

work deserves recognition and support because the universality of his unique approach may inspire and help other fighters for humanity as well.

He works dedicatedly pouring in all his resources to ensure every case is dealt with utmost care and precaution for assuring the safety of survivors and has also faced bullets in rescues while always overlooking his own well-being (health, social and financial security) in his absolute devotion to the cause.

Shafiq made India proud by becoming first Indian to receive Grinnell Prize for Social Justice Award for the year 2019 for his work against Bride Trafficking. He was also honoured with the 'Amazing Indian Award' by Times Now for his single-minded work towards the cause of rescuing girls who fall victim to 'bride trafficking'.







## **LAKHIMI BARUAH**

*Founder and Managing Director of  
Konoklota Mahila Urban Cooperative Bank (KMUCB)*





Lakhimi Baruah has dedicated her life to empower women by making them financially independent and secure. She opened a micro-finance institution- Konoklota Mahila Urban Cooperative Bank (KMUCB), the first bank of its kind in Assam, which was run for women, by women. Her motive was to rescue underprivileged women from penury and make them financially secure.

Before starting KMUCB, Lakhimi worked as an Accounts Manager at a District Central Co-Operative Bank in Assam. Through her banking experience she became intimately aware of the condition of deprived and illiterate women of North-Eastern India. She knew that they barely managed to receive benefits from any banking services.

In 1983, she established a Mahila Samiti at Dakshin Sarbaibandha area of Jorhat district of Assam. This Samiti worked with a large number of economically and educationally backward women. Many of them were workers at tea estates or worked as domestic help. These women had no

financial security even though they had sources of income generation. The reason being, these women did not have the habit of saving money or have financial literacy. Their husbands often took away all their money, leaving them in dire financial distress.

She realized that the Samiti was hindered in its ability to help women in accessing banks due to their poor education and lack of clarity regarding necessary paperwork like address proof etc. it was







her experience with the Mahila Samiti that made her determined to run something that was run exclusively for women, and run by women themselves.

This led to the inception of the idea of the Konoklota Mahila Urban Cooperative Bank in 1998. The bank was named after Konoklata, a freedom fighter from Assam, who was shot dead at the age of 17, while she was carrying the Indian National Flag during the Quit India movement.

With an initial capital of Rs. 8.46 lakh, 1420 account holders and permission from the Reserve Bank of India, KMUCB came into being on May 22, 1998. The bank is run by women and grants loan to women interested in starting their own business. KMUCB now has the working capital of Rs. 8 crores and the share capital of Rs. 65 lakh. It lends individual women sums from Rs. 500 to Rs. 8.5 lakh at interest rates ranging from 4 per cent to 16.5 per cent



depending on the scheme. A customer can also avail of microloans of up to Rs. 1 lakh.

Lakhimi believes that a bank should not only help people to open accounts or take loans, but also educate customers on how to utilize the money and avail various schemes financial schemes launched by the government. The employees of KMUCB have been especially trained to help the economically backward women, as most of them have no exposure to such matter.

Apart from connecting with rural women, the KMUCB is the preferred banker of a large number of Self-Help Groups, as it has introduced a number of micro-finance schemes. Lakhimi has come up







with new schemes like Zero Balance Account, the Konoklota Daily Deposit (KDD) and the option to start a recurring deposit at just Rs 20. It was Lakhimi and her team who started zero balance account in a small town in the Brahmaputra valley 15 years ago. The share holdings and lending of the bank is open only to women while all other services are open to everyone.

At the age of 70, Baruah continues to tirelessly work towards the betterment of bank. She reaches out to larger women audiences across Assam by holding meetings and social gatherings. Today, the bank manages more than 35000 accounts with four branches, and has made a difference in the lives of hundreds of women from socially deprived and economically backward classes. The recovery rate of the bank is known to stand at 93 per cent. She believes that in the times when a woman has moved from being a housewife to being an employee or entrepreneur, an all-women's bank will further facilitating the upliftment of women. Her work was acknowledged by various NGO's, Private and Government organizations. She is recipient of many prestigious awards.







## **MASOOMA RIZVI**

*Founder of Belita Design Solutions*

*(Designer, Entrepreneur, Artist and Champion of Women Empowerment)*





Dr. Masooma Rizvi, Founder, Managing Director and Lead Designer of a Delhi- based company. Apart from being an acclaimed designer, she is also an entrepreneur, artist, author, art critic, cultural ambassador, art curator, mentor, trainer and more importantly a champion of women empowerment in all her pursuits.

She has worked for years in nurturing dreams of women artists and artisans. Her activities include guidance for better conceptualizing of the final product, as per the market's requirements, training them in use of modern media, opening of bank account in their own names and operating them and encouraging the traditional women artisans to put their children through good education.

In Uttar Pradesh, she has ventured into the villages of Gonda and Chitrakoot using the 'Sanskar Bharti' platform and has transformed the lives of many women artists. She is also working with an NGO, 'Chaupal', as a platform for women empowerment, wherein old artists who can no longer work or whose children are not artistic are given e-rickshaws so that the family livelihood continues. She was also involved with cancer care through the Navoothan Cancer Foundation, where she organised and curated art exhibitions, the proceeds of which went towards cancer awareness and cure. She also brought out a Coffee Table Book, which was sold to raise money for this cause. The book was released by the Vice President of India in Vigyan Bhawan and sold many copies raising a lot of funding.



She has designed and executed many prestigious projects including the State Dining at Rashtrapati Bhavan, (being art advisor to Presidents APJ Abdul Kalam and Pratibha Patil), the Manekshaw Centre and Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra at New Delhi. As a build-up to the visit of Ms. Ivanka Trump to India in 2018, she organised an Art Exhibition and Entrepreneurship Workshop at the American Centre for young female artists (most from very poor backgrounds) from all over India. She is now associated with 'Tribes of India', a government initiative for promoting tribal artists, as a senior advisor. Her role is to design entrepreneurship capsules for ensuring quality, contemporary focus, and self-reliance of these artists.





*"You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation."*

***-Brigham Young***



# **A decade of Jijabai Awards**



*“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.”*

***Kofi Annan***



# Jijabai Awards

## 2018-19



**Chief Guest, Pinky Reddy President, FLO &  
Rakesh Srivastava, Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development**



*“Every woman’s success should be an inspiration to another.  
We’re strongest when we cheer each other on.”*

***-Serena Williams***



## LAKSHMI N. MENON

*Founder of Grandmark – a trademark to identify and promote products made by our elderly, to bring them back in the mainstream*

Ms. Lakshmi Menon, a social entrepreneur who initiated the idea of PURE LIVING which aims to find sustainable, eco friendly and innovative solutions to modern day problems, and extends a life of dignity and economic independence to elderly women and disabled people.

Ms. Menon lives in the company of her mother and grandmother, in a quiet home in Kerala, where together they try to save every bit of waste they can for a healthier planet. A designer by heart, she attained a degree in home science and went to the United States of America to pursue a career in designing. She had an excellent career there and also designed jewellery for models in the New York fashion week.

In this era of increasing modernisation and technology, Ms. Menon has tried to implement old school techniques which have paved the way of green living. Ms. Menon's products compel us to think about things we take for granted, like fresh air and cleanliness and she has made ingenious innovations to enhance the same. She has crafted a pen made from paper waste and a seed from Agasthya tree is embedded at the bottom of these pens. When the used pen is planted in the soil the seed sprouts and becomes a sapling. These pens are completely biodegradable.

The prime reason behind using the seeds of this tree is because of its ability to grow quickly. These pens help in upcycling paper and reducing plastic waste. They also boost women empowerment and ensure employment and inclusivity.

With the help of elderly women, she formed WICKSDOM (Grandma Wicks) which not only aims to provide means of survival, but also helps senior citizens live a life resplendent with dignity and happiness. The project currently supports 30 elderly.

Ms. Menon is the perfect example for those who wish to bring about positive change in the world and inspire other women to follow their hearts and lead a dignified life. This enigmatic personality has selflessly and tirelessly worked for the upliftment of not just women but also the weaker sections of society. She is a key figure in the empowerment of women in India. For the same reason Women Development Cell Of Shivaji College, felicitated her achievements with Jijabi Awards In 2019.

It is one of those activities cultivated among the earlier generations right since their childhood. Today, in old age homes, one of their favourite activities from yester-years is helping them earn a livelihood and enabling them to keep their heads high, says Ms. Menon.





## MANISHA GUPTA AND DR. RAMESH AWASTHI

*Founder of MASUM (Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal)*

Dr. Manisha Gupte and Dr. Ramesh Awasthi, together instituted Mahila Sarvangeen Utkarsh Mandal (MASUM) in 1987 after their five year stay in drought-prone Malshiras town in Solapur, Pune. They follow a rights-based approach with aim to establish equal rights and awareness about gender equity.

Dr. Gupte is a microbiologist and has done her doctorate in sociology from University of Pune, Maharashtra. While Dr. Awasthi has studied B.Tech and M.Tech from IIT Delhi and later moved to Mumbai to complete his doctorate. They were associated with various organisations and movements in their student life as social activists where they worked for social justice for all. Both of them left their well-paying and secured jobs to accomplish their goal of total social transformation of the marginalized.

They believe that real democracy lies at the grassroots level which can be strengthened through transforming the community by providing better education and spreading awareness about rights irrespective of caste and gender.

At the time, when they decided to quit their jobs and move to the village, they were working as a research officer at Antia's Foundation for Research in Community Health. Dr. N.H. Antia, suggested them to submit a project proposal for a financial grant for rural

health education project. This grant helped them to start a handloom project under MASUM. The community programmes work for women in about 20 villages in Pune and Ahmednagar districts in Maharashtra.

Currently, MASUM is successively running six right based programmes namely, women's right to physical and emotional health, right to a life free of violence and discrimination, right to economic empowerment, right to political participation, right of children, right of adolescents and youth. The primary belief of MASUM is not to create dependence on itself but to make women realise that they can resolve their own problems where external support only act as a catalyst.

Dr. Gupte withdrew from the leadership position of MASUM in 2010 to enable local people to have leadership and decision making power to do collective good. MASUM is able to gather regular financial assistance from various funding sources. In 2018, MASUM is conferred with Global CSR- Excellence and leadership award. MASUM continues to make a tremendous contribution towards strengthening people's perceptions of democracy, equality, secularism and social justice. And later felicitated by Jijabi Award By Women Development Cell, Shivaji College in the year 2019.





## SHYAM SUNDER PALIWAL

*Sarpanch, Piplantri*

Mr. Shyam Sunder Paliwal is the former Sarpanch of a village Piplantri located in Rajsamand district in Rajasthan State, India. Mr. Paliwal was born in the village Murad, a little over a mile away from Piplantri. To augment the family income he dropped out of school at the age of twelve and began to work on the family farm.

Mr. Paliwal's colossal mission to plant 111 trees at the birth of each girl child in his village began in 2005 when he lost his daughter Kiran due to dehydration. He planted a tree in her memory and remembered his daughter through it every day. Later, this idea of planting trees for girl child was extensively popularised by Mr. Paliwal in his village. Henceforth, the birth of a girl child would be celebrated with the planting of trees. To make sure that the girl child receives proper education, the parents sign an affidavit that they would send her to school regularly, take care of the trees planted in her name and would not marry her off till she attains the legal age for marriage. To ensure financial security for the girl child, the villagers collectively contribute Rs.21,000 and combining it with Rs.10,000 taken from the parents of the new born girl, bank it in a fixed deposit. This money can only

be availed when the girl turns twenty years of age. This money is to be used for her education or to offset the cost of her wedding.

Piplantri, a small village once considered a barren land, is now blessed with around 3.5 lakh trees. Even the water level has improved phenomenally. The initiative has also helped the economy of the village.

'Gramudhyog Piplantria' is now a global term whose foundation has been cemented by women of the village. Mr. Paliwal ensures that women go out and work to stand on their own with pride.

Shyam Sunder was awarded 'Nirmal Gram Award' by the then President Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam in the year 2007. Later after getting felicitated with Jijabi award by Women Development Cell of Shivaji College in 2019 he also appeared with TV actress Sakshi Tanwar on the Karamveer Episode of Kaun Banega Crorepati 11 on 7th November 2019.

"No work is bigger than this work and it will sustain for centuries and correspondingly improve the social, economic and environmental conditions of the areas where these plans are implemented", says Mr. Paliwal.





## SISTER ANNIE JESUS MARY

*Director of Jeevan Jharna Vikas Sanstha which works fighting the evil of Human trafficking and empowers the one rescued*

Sister Annie Jesus Mary is a director of Jeevan Jharna Vikas Sanstha (JJVS), a not-for-profit organization in the Jashpur district, Chhattisgarh. She creates awareness regarding the evil of human trafficking, rescues the victims from human traffickers and empowers them by engaging them in income generating activities through various initiatives.

Sister Annie was born in Sinnandipatti village in Tiruchirapalli district of Tamil Nadu. She pursued a Master's degree in social work from Chennai with an aim to serve the society at large. She also did a diploma in Hindi in order to communicate directly with victims of trafficking. Sister Annie joined the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM), a congregation that is part of the Christian Roman Catholic Church that commits itself to serve the poor and the marginalized sections of the society. She took her initial vows in May 2002 and her final vows in November 2008.

At a very young age, she made up her mind to work towards the betterment of the economically weaker sections of society and ensure equal opportunities for girls. The FMM is a group of nuns working in Delhi for the social and economic upliftment of girls and women who are survivors of trafficking. Sister Annie's work brought her to Chhattisgarh where Jashpur district has become the unofficial capital of human trafficking.

The work of JJVS does not end with creating awareness and rescuing victims of human trafficking. It also works towards their rehabilitation in the event of non-acceptance by their families by skill training them to enhance their livelihood opportunities and making them self-reliant. JJVS believes in capacity building, counselling and training the victims and rural women for empowering them.

Under one such initiative, 20 rescued girls were skilled by JJVS in making and marketing bakery products in Pune, and certificates were issued to them. When the girls returned with renewed assurance about their lives, they were supported by JJVS in establishing a bakery shop of their own. Nine years since Parvati was trafficked, she supports herself through the Beti Zindabad Bakery in Jashpur, Chhattisgarh, along with other girls rescued from trafficking. The young brave-heart Parvati was selected by the Ministry of Women and Child Welfare, New Delhi for the Nari Shakti Award in 2017 which was presented by the President of India. And was later felicitated with the Jijabi award by the Women Development Cell Of Shivaji College in the year 2019.

Sister Annie has single-handedly made a tremendous contribution towards women empowerment and has given many girls a new life and solid goals.



## VIDYA NAMBIRAJAN

*CEO Paramount Auto Bay Services and Nambirajan Foundation Automobile Academy*

Ms. Vidya Nambirajan, a crusader against gender inequality and one who has carved a niche for herself and for many other women in the servicing and technical training segment in the automobile sector.

Ms. Nambirajan was born on 12th April 1966. She completed her schooling from Delhi and Hyderabad. She completed her graduation from a government institution with Zoology, Botany and Chemistry as her subjects. She could not pursue further studies and was forced to take up a teaching job due to family constraints.

She started her decade long corporate career in HCL and rose to elite positions of Regional Manager and General Manager in Annapoorna Foils and with the Shalivahana Group. Ms. Nambirajan decided to further enhance her technical skills and knowledge. She studied the industry fundamentals and exposed herself to hands-on training with the equipment. She tied up with various car companies in a bid to get acquainted with new cars. To counter the issue of physical capacity, she introduced a number of pneumatic tools in her workshop. She followed the Japanese principles of 5S: Sort, Set In order, Shine, Standardize and Sustain, while keeping an eye on the upgraded technology in a highly dynamic industry. Her efforts bore fruit, as Paramount Auto Bay Services became the first ISO certified garage in Andhra Pradesh/Telangana.

As she grew in experience and confidence, Ms. Nambirajan started training young men and women. She discovered that women acquired this skill quickly and unlike their male counterparts were more committed and accountable for their work. According to her, men are result oriented while women are process driven as they possess the productive capacity and a talent for nurturing. Paramount has the

unique reputation of training girls and employing them.

To ensure that the initial difficulties that beleaguered her did not bother the newcomers in the industry, Ms. Nambirajan established the Nambirajan Foundation Automobile Academy that trains graduates as automotive technicians, gratis. This institute is unique as the students gain hands-on experience alongside classroom learning. The training also provides scope for self-employment as the trainees are able to set up their own garages with financial assistance from banks. She is the first woman entrepreneur in the garage business and also to train women as mechanics and technicians. She has now joined hands with the Automotive Skill Development Council (ASDC) and the All India Automobile Workshop Association (AIAWA) for professional recognition and certification for technicians for improving their prospects in the industry. The training is in conformity with the standards of National Skill Development Corporation. Her students were the first batch of students in India to be assessed by the NSDC. She is the recipient of the Indian Women Network by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), an award honouring women entrepreneurs for their path-breaking contributions as well as the Jaycee Udyo Marathna Puraskar by Jaycee for her innovative ideas.

"Today I thank all those who said no to me because I wouldn't be what I am today. It is thanks to them that I learnt so much. Many a times I would want to run away from this, but again I would motivate myself and come back to work. I always wondered who motivates a bird to fly high - the bird itself. My dream is to see an all-women run workshop one day. We women should help one another by empowering other women, either by leading or guiding."



*“It took me quite a long time to develop a voice, and now that  
I have it, I am not going to be silent.”*

***-Madeleine Albright***



# Jijabai Awards

## 2017-18



**Chief Guest, Smriti Zubin Irani, Union Cabinet Minister for  
Women & Child Development**



*"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her  
shackles are very different from my own."*  
**-Audre Lorde**





## MANDAKINI AMTE

*Medical Doctor, Social Worker, Maharashtra*

Dr. Mandakini Amte, popularly known as Manda Amte is a medical doctor and social worker from Maharashtra. She was felicitated with the Jijabai Awards in 2017-18 for her exemplary work for the downtrodden and differently abled. Born in Maharashtra, Mandakini Amte completed her MBBS from Nagpur and later decided to do her post-graduation in Anesthesia.

Dr. Amte and her husband made efforts to improve present conditions in Anandwan, located around 5 kilometers from Warora in Maharashtra. This is an ashram and a community rehabilitation centre which was mainly started for leprosy patients and the disabled from downtrodden sections of society. It was begun in 1952 by well-known social activist Baba Amte. This inspired Mandakini to work further towards the aid of the downtrodden. She, along with her husband, Dr. Prakash Amte was awarded the Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 2008 for their philanthropic work in the form of the Lok Biradari Prakalp amongst the Madia Gonds in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra and the

surrounding areas of Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The Principality of Monaco initiated a postage stamp in honour of the life and work of Dr. Prakash and Dr. Mandakini in 1995. The only other non political entity for which they had done this was Dr. Albert Schweitzer in 1955. Also, this was only the second time that the Kingdom of Monaco brought out a stamp to honour a foreigner for their humanitarian work.

Today their close-knit community centre called 'Lok Biradari Prakalp' houses a Residential School providing education up to 12th standard, an animal rescue centre and orphanage (unique in its kind in the world as it is designed especially for animals), a vocational training centre and a bank. For over 20 years, theirs has remained the only medical facility for over a 100 square mile area that today covers the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Chattisgarh. Even today, despite the many government healthcare centres, the tribals trust them so much that they still come from as far as 200 kms for treatment.





## GIRISH KULKARNI

*Medical Doctor, Social Worker, Maharashtra*

Dr. Girish Kulkarni is the founder of Snehalaya (1989) which means 'Home of Love', an organisation that provides support for women, children and LGBT communities, who have been affected by HIV and AIDS, trafficking, sexual violence, and poverty. He was felicitated with the Jijabai Awards in 2017-18 for his extraordinary work towards the empowerment of marginalised sections.

His defining moment that led to his life's work was in his childhood. As a child, while taking a shorter route to his classes, Girish would pass through one of the city's red-light areas, an area that children were generally forbidden to enter. As he walked through the dingy streets, he saw young girls sitting outside brothels selling their bodies due to financial destitution. Despite being so young the injustice of being born into a poor situation had a deep effect on him. He thus grew up seeing mushrooming brothels across Ahmednagar. These were defining moments

for him and he set up Snehalaya 23 years ago. He started visiting brothels and counseling women, trying to spread awareness about sexually transmitted diseases and also trying to build confidence in the women that they could lead a new life in the mainstream. His tireless efforts have ensured that no minor girls are bought and sold in Ahmednagar.

In the present context, he runs a hostel for children of sex workers, a hospital for HIV positive women and a vocational training center. Snehalaya works across 17 projects, benefitting over 100,000 people, including women, children and LGBT communities, who have been affected by HIV and AIDS, trafficking, sexual violence, and poverty. In his own words, "Our mission is to develop awareness and capability in those members of society who have been deprived of their rights because of inequality in society."





## SUMITA GHOSE

*Founder and Managing Director, Rangсутra- a social enterprise that aids the economy in rural India*

Sumita Ghose is the founder and managing director of Rangсутra, a social enterprise which seeks to bring about socio-economic development and inclusive growth in rural India by engaging both the community and the market. She was felicitated with the Jijabai Awards in 2017-18 for her efforts towards the development of the economic and commercial aspects of

Before she set up Rangсутra, Sumita lived and worked in different parts of rural India for many years, mostly in Western Rajasthan with the URMUL Trust, making efforts in villages for social change and economic development. She then began Rangсутra, which is now owned by 1800 rural artisans. Rangсутra provides design, marketing, technical and organizational support needed to make crafts and allied rural industries into viable

enterprises, so that they provide employment to 3500 rural artisans. Artisans own as well as possess shares in the enterprise. They are part of a board of directors and have a voice in costing, planning, production and wages.

Today, 70% of Rangсутra's artisan owner-workers are women. The respect and money they earn through this work enables these women the right to participate in decision-making at home. Three of the six board members are female and the others are artisans. Female empowerment is extremely important at the firm and as shareholders, Rangсутra's women are developing their skill-set to include management as well. These women now want to send their daughters to school and some have become group leaders in their villages, motivating other women to follow in their footsteps.





## SISTER LUCY KURIEN

*Founder and Director, Meher- An organisation for abused and domestic women*

Sister Lucy Kurien is the founder and director of Maher organization. She was felicitated with the Jijabai Awards in 2017-18 for her efforts towards the aid of abused and destitute women and children, headquartered in Pune, India.

She has been deeply inspired by Mother Teresa's work and driven by the desire to help alleviate poverty. In 1989 she joined the HOPE organization, founded by Sr Noiline Pinto of the Holy Cross Convent to help abused women. In 1991 she witnessed the death of a woman caused by her alcoholic husband and this event left indelible scars in her memories.

This was a defining moment for Sister Lucy and the determination to help such women now became a mission for her. As a result, she founded Maher in 1997 in Pune. This organisation was a single-handed effort by this extraordinary woman, because finding sponsors for a non Christian endeavour

proved to be a formidable task. However, her efforts yielded positive result. Maher is now a well-established, secular organisation that provides rehabilitation to women who suffer from abuse, starvation, or neglect.

Meher continues to make a tremendous contribution towards the aid of women. Sister Lucy gives lectures at many places to inspire people through her own journey. Practicing spirituality in many forms, Maher celebrates holidays of all Indian religions. Over 1,400 children, women, and men live in 40 homes around India. Children go to school and take extra-curricular classes such as dance, singing, soccer and taekwondo. If they are interested and have the capacity, they may go on to college and university, while still living at Maher. Women learn vocational skills and literacy. Some return home or marry or start their own small businesses, while others stay on to work as housemothers or social workers at Maher.





## RADHIKE KHANNA

*Owner, Om Creations Trust-An organisation in aid of mentally-challenged young girls*

Dr. Radhike Khanna is the owner of Om Creations Trust, formed in the year 1991, a pioneering non-profit project. She was felicitated with the Jijabai Awards 2017-18 for her visionary work in the aid of young mentally challenged girls. A National Award winner who has helped many specially-abled girls live a life of dignity for over 20 years, she is the owner and manager of Om Creations Trust. Started 25 years ago, the trust helps autistic young people find a path to their dreams.

Dr. Radhike pursued her doctorate in special education during which she put all her heart and soul into learning about the differently -abled. She then started Om Creations in 1991. She wanted to provide a life of dignity to her students and planned a five-year long diploma course which included painting, sculpting, baking, cooking, chocolate making, etc. All this is taught at SPJ Sadhana School

where students above three years of age are enrolled. After the course is completed, the girls come to Om Creations where they can work in their area of interest. She had to face a lot of challenges initially as she had to deal with the stereotype that girls could do nothing, but persevered.

Dr. Khanna stands proud today as her organization has a success rate of 93 percent. Om Creations functions out of three centres in Mumbai. It manages productivity of more than 200 products, including artwork, bags, wallets, scarves and food, such as bread and other baked goods, chocolates and made-to-order meals. The workers here are particularly women and female children with Down syndrome. The women are paid a stipend as well, for their creative contribution, ensuring empowerment and a sense of fulfilment in its truest sense, to help them anchor their families.



*“Unlikeable women accept the consequences of their choices,  
and those consequences become stories worth reading.”*

**-Roxane Gay**



# Jijabai Awards

## 2016-17



**Chief Guest, Surina Ranjan, Director General, HIPA  
Govt. of Haryana**



*“A huge part of being a feminist is giving other women the freedom to make choices you might not necessarily make yourself.”*

**-Lena Dunham**





## MANJULA PRADEEP

*Human Rights Activist and Dalit leader*

Ms. Manjula Pradeep is a leading human rights activist in the country. She was felicitated with the Jijabai Awards 2016-17 for her efforts in addressing the issues of Dalit discrimination and gender based discriminations for more than three decades now.

She was the first Dalit woman to join the Navsarjan Trust in 1992. The trust aims at eliminating caste and gender based discrimination. In 1998, the trust gave her an important responsibility to be the programme director for mainstreaming Dalit women into leadership roles amongst Dalit communities. The success of the programme leads her to United Nations where she addressed the issue of caste as the Dalit rights activist in 2001. In 2004, she took the responsibility of as state coordinator for the Swadhikar Rally across the country by National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights culminating in the World Social Forum held in Mumbai. Another breakthrough took place in 2004, she was appointed as the Executive Director of Navsarjan Trust. In

2008, Manjula defended the case of a 19-year old Dalit girl who was reportedly gang-raped by six teachers of the Primary Teachers' Training College in Patan, Gujarat for six months. The teachers were sentenced to life imprisonment by Gujarat High Court. The success of the case was followed by 30 similar cases where the trust represented and fought for the rights of minors and young women. She encouraged Dalit women to participate in the public sphere and proposed the establishment of Women Rights council in the villages of Gujarat.

Her works and life have been documented in her work, Broken Can Heel. In 2014, the trust was conferred Times Social Impact award under her leadership. L'Oreal and Femina selected Manjula for the Woman of the Year in Social Impact category in 2015. Her stature stands second to none as she is one of India's foremost Dalit women leaders. She is an inspiration not only for Dalit women but for every individual of this country.





## AJEET SINGH

*Founder, Guria-An organisation that fights against sexual exploitation*

Ajeet Singh is the founder of Guria, an organization founded in 1993 that works towards fighting sexual exploitation of women and children, especially forced prostitution and sex trafficking. He was felicitated with the Jijabai Awards in 2016-17 for his efforts in fighting sexual exploitation.

Ajeet Singh began his activism during college days and got deeply influenced by the questions on social justice as guaranteed by our constitution. It was at the age of 18 when Ajeet Singh started his fight against sex trafficking and child prostitution. The fight is still on and his crusade against such social evils has changed dimensions, as it acquired strength with time, but did not lose the focus and mission, i.e. to eliminate the second generation prostitution and end sex tourism and discrimination in the name of HIV/AIDS.

In 1988, Ajeet Singh attended a wedding in his home town near Varanasi where he saw a Nautch girl performing at the wedding. "The way people were looking at her and treating her that shocked and deeply saddened me. It was then and there that I decided to do something to free girls like her from such a profession. (Recalls Ajeet)

Today, the Guria organization is handling more than 1800 cases, including PIL in High Courts and Supreme Court of India. His achievement stands unparalleled to any other and his contribution to the society and the nation has duly fetched him global acclaim and prestigious awards like Man of the Year 2011, Real Hero Award by CNN-IBN, Asian of the Year 2010 by News Asia, Nari Shakti Award 2015 by the President of India, Lifetime Achievement Award 2016 by Star Network and many more.



## RANI BANG

*Founder, SEARCH and Shodhagram for women's healthcare*

Dr. Rani Bang is social activist and researcher and working in the field of community health. She was felicitated with the Jijabai Awards 2016-17 for her significant contribution towards improving women's life as a gynecologist, a research scientist and a social activist both in India and abroad. Dr. Rani founded the voluntary organization, SEARCH, (Society for Education, Action and Research in Community Health) 22 years ago in one of the most underdeveloped districts, Gadchiroli, in the state of Maharashtra along with her husband, Dr. Abhay Bang. They also established the famous community health care and research center 'Shodhagram' in this tribal area. Dr. Rani and Dr. Abhay have evolved an innovative and powerful approach of 'Research with the People' which has generated, time and again, new evidences and solutions to shape national and global thinking. By conducting the first ever study in

two villages of Gadchiroli and publishing in the Lancet, Dr Rani Bang first brought to the notice of the world that rural women had a hidden burden of gynecological diseases. She subsequently trained the Dais in villages to make them village level gynecologists.

Their innovative approach of empowering the village women to take care of their community's health has reduced the infant mortality rate in their work area from 121 to 30. This model has been successfully replicated by the NGOs and by the Indian Council of Medical Research of the Govt. of India in 5 states and was incorporated in the 11th Five Year Plan of India. She has written three books namely Goineen, Kanosa (in Marathi) and Putting Women First (in English) on women's lives.





## V. RUKMINI RAO

*Executive Director for Centre for Women Solidarity*

Dr. V. Rukmini Rao is Executive Director for Centre for Women Solidarity (CWS) and on the Boards of the Deccan Development Society (DDS) and Gramya (Gramya Resource Centre for Women). She was felicitated with the Jijabai Awards 2016-17 for her consistent fight against gender discrimination.

She moved to Delhi in December, 1974 and six months later Delhi witnessed the 'state of emergency' in 1975, because of which young activists like her and many others suffered as their rights were curtailed. She organized the worker's union and demanded better wages and better working conditions in 1977. Living in Delhi, she came across several reports of women being murdered due to dowry related issues and in 1981, with the formation of Saheli, she campaigned to prevent the violence against women and create awareness about gender rights, especially in rural areas. After ten years of rigorous struggle for the

betterment of women in Delhi, she noticed that women in rural areas are still unnoticed and living in miserable conditions as victims of patriarchal society.

She moved to Telangana and worked with the Deccan Development Society from 1990 to 2003 where she promoted the collective leadership of women and helped them to stand for their rights and seek gender equality. She set up the first rural shelter in Pastapur village in the Medak district, Andhra Pradesh. In 1994, she along with her friend Jamuna set up Gramya, for creating awareness about gender issues among women. They have expanded their work from 12 to 255 villages which reflects the sheer success of Gramya and Rukmini Rao simultaneously. Her immense struggle brought her fame and recognition as she was awarded the prestigious title of Woman of the Year in 2014.



## BINALAKSHMI NEPRAM

*Activist, Advocate of Women-Led Disarmament Movements*

Ms. Nepram is a humanitarian, author, female activist in advocacy of gender-rights and women led disarmament movements. She was felicitated with the Jijabai Awards 2016-17 owing to her efforts in arresting gun culture and bringing about peace in northeast India. She established many institutions such as the Control Arms Foundation of India (CAFI), Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network (MWGSN), Manipur, and Secretary General Control Arms Foundation Of India

The Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network has aided more than 20,000 women in facing the trauma of decades of armed conflicts and ethnic violence in the northeast Indian state of Manipur, especially on the borderlines.

Her defining moment was when she witnessed the consequences of the killing of a 27-year-old man in a village in southern Manipur, whose survivors were his young wife Rebika Akham. Nepram helped Akham purchase a sewing machine so that she could secure a living. She has helped several such women stand on their own feet and gain financial independence.

But Binalakshmi Nepram said the group's work is not only limited to helping those who have lost fathers, husbands and sons in the violence but to also assist women and girls raped and sexually assaulted in the current conflicts. "Every day the violence continues unabated ... with our region seeing some of the highest numbers of rape and women trafficked in the country," says Ms. Nepram





## CHHAVI RAJAWAT

*India's first woman sarpanch with an MBA degree, Soda, Rajasthan*

Chhavi Rajawat belongs to village Soda in Malpura Tehsil, Tonk district, which has been declared by the government as the most backward district of Rajasthan. She was felicitated with the Jijabai Awards 2016-17 for having become India's first Woman Sarpanch with an MBA degree. She has been working in the villages to bring water, solar power, paved roads, toilets, bank to her village.

After getting elected as Sarpanch in February 2010, she faced many problems like erratic water supply, low literacy level and fear of drought in Soda. With her dedication and hardwork she got re-elected in 2015 for the second term. She has set up the village's first branch of State Bank of India for the people of Soda which provides financial aid and protects the villagers from corrupt moneylenders who charged exorbitant interest. Chhavi is also working towards

improving the education facilities in the village. Through her efforts a German company SAP has also opened computer lab and an internet portal in the Soda village. The portal provides information related to governmental services, including the information about the public funds, marriage, birth and death certificates. On 25th March 2011, she addressed the delegates at the 11th Info-poverty World Conference held at the United Nations.

Chhavi was successful in providing regular supply of drinking water to drought hit regions, felicitating the construction of many roads to connect Soda with the main roads and other villages. She was diligent in pursuing issues such as lack of proper sanitation, use of solar electricity and independent operation of a Water Conservation Project.





## CHETNA GALA SINHA

*Founder, Mann Deshi Mahila Bank-First rural co-operative bank owned by women*

Ms. Chetna Gala Sinha was felicitated with the Jijabai Awards 2016-17 for working for social change in some of the poorest and most drought-stricken areas of rural India. She founded India's first rural co-operative bank owned by women. This bank named Mann Deshi Mahila Bank is a micro enterprise development bank. The bank works with low income women and provides business loans. She also established B-schools for the rural women that provides training in entrepreneurial skills.

Since 1996, Sinha has been organizing women in rural areas of Maharashtra in the fight for the land and housing property rights and launched a community radio station, providing a valuable platform for information sharing and creative self-expression. Chetna is also behind the unique new

"Mann Deshi Chamber of Commerce with toll free number" initiative and "Finance Company" for rural women which started in 2014. Now, there are three such chambers. It also operates a toll-free number to provide them with instant business solutions. Chetna received the Forbes India Leadership Award 2017 for Entrepreneur with social impact. She received this award for providing a platform for the women's empowerment in rural Maharashtra by giving access to finance and also for financial and business literacy.

Chetna Sinha along with six other women chaired the 48th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum held in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland on 23-26 January, 2018. She was also a Ted speaker in Vancouver, Canada for event held on 10-14 April, 2018.



*"If you want something said, ask a man; if you want  
something done, ask a woman."*

***-Margaret Thatcher***



# Jijabai Awards

2015-16



Chief Guest, Swati Maliwal, DCW



*"You may not control all the events that happen to you, but  
you can decide not to be reduced by them."*

***-Maya Angelou***





## ANURADHA KOIRALA

*Founder, Maiti Nepal*

Born in 1949, Anuradha Koirala, also known as Dijiul, is one of the most popular Nepalese social activists of India. She is the founder of Maiti Nepal, an organization which was started in 1993. Maiti Nepal started with setting up small homes for girls rescued from brothels as a safe shelter to stay. She has always been inspired by the work and ideologies of Mother Teresa and always tries to adopt her principal in work and life.

Maiti Nepal started with setting up a small home so that girls rescued from brothels could at least have a safe shelter to stay as often sex trafficking survivors are even disowned by their own families. It not only started rescuing trafficked children and girls, but also started taking up the responsibility of rehabilitating them. There is no boundation for such women, and they can stay as long as they want and till they become capable of living lives of their own. Today, Maiti Nepal has three prevention homes and eleven transit homes.

Anuradha Koirala has been awarded 38 national and international awards in recognition of her courageous acts and achievements furthering the cause of children's and women's rights. Some of the national and international awards include; Prabal Gorkha Dakshin Bahu Medal- Nepal 1999, Trishaktipatta Award 2002, Best Social Worker of the Year Award- Nepal 1998, German UNIFEM Prize 2007, Queen Sofia Silver Medal Award 2007, The Peace Abbey, and Courage of Conscience 2006. Due to her continuous struggle, Government of Nepal now recognizes 5th September as an anti-trafficking day. Ms. Koirala was also appointed as a former Assistant State Minister of Women Children and Social Welfare as an honour to her contributions. Anuradha Koirala, is the only foreigner to be awarded with the country's fourth highest civilian award in India. In reverence to her tremendous work towards the rehabilitation and development of women rescued from sex trafficking, Shivaji College presented her with the Jijabai Awards in 2015-16.





## NALINI SHEKAR

*Co-Founder of Hasiru Dala*

Nalini Shekar is the co-founder of Hasiru Dala, an organization of waste pickers in Bangalore, Karnataka. She is also a co-founder of Kagad Kach Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP), a similar union of waste pickers in Pune, Maharashtra (founded in 1997). Before coming back to India, Nalini Shekar worked on the issue of all kinds of violence against women for over a decade in the United States. Her primary focus in Hasiru Dala is on the inclusion of waste pickers and other waste workers in the informal waste economy in the Solid Waste Management systems of Urban Local Bodies across Karnataka. Hasiru Dala is working on organising and skilling waste pickers to provide services in the waste management sector. Providing access to social security privilege offered by the government is another major objective of the organisation. Nalini Shekar was awarded the “Kempegowda Award” in 2015 from the City of Bangalore, the “Vasundara Mitra” Award 2016 by Kirloskar Ferrous Industries Limited, and Jijabai Award from Shivaji College, University of Delhi in 2016. She was also a finalist

for the “Namma Bengaluru Award,” which is nominated by citizens of Bengaluru. She was chosen as one of 100 women in India who make a difference in the society by the BBC, and received several awards in the USA for her work with immigrants and women survivors of violence, to name a few.

Hasiru Dala is a for-benefit, not-for-loss social enterprise that focuses on creating better livelihoods for waste pickers through inclusive businesses having an environmental impact. Their current services include holistic waste management for bulk waste generator, event waste management for the eco-friendly event host and decentralized composting for householders and residents welfare associations. They are currently on Bangalore’s municipal corporation empanelled service provider list for bulk waste generators in Bangalore. During 2018, the company has raised around ₹1.5 crore from investors including the Tata Trust-backed Social Alpha, Innovent Mauritius and Millennium Alliance.





## SURINDERJEET KAUR

*Assistant commissioner, Delhi Police*

Surinderjeet Kaur is Assistant Commissioner of Police in Delhi Police. Her father was also in police. She may be an ACP today, but she is always remembered for her stint as the station house officer of the Kamla Market police station, next to the capital's infamous red-light district of GB Road. She rescued over 100 women from manipulative women traffickers and handlers. She sensitized her colleagues and fellow officers to sexual crimes and trained them for the battle against human trafficking. However, not as a police officer, Surinderjeet Kaur, also personally helped some of the women she rescued to get married. Her efforts won for the Kamla Market police post; the Best Police Station Award, known for handling the most notorious areas in Delhi from among 182 in the capital, Delhi. She herself received the Police Medal in 2012 for meritorious service from the Hon'ble .President of India.

During initial days in the force, Surinderjeet was one of eight girls against 44 boys, where she faced bullying from counterparts. This inspired her to work very hard to turn things around. She topped her batch and also won the first prize in law. Over the years, she has rescued more than 110 girls from the brothels of GB Road and 90 minors working as child labourers. After her transfer to Special Police Unit for Women and Children, Nanakpura, in 2011, she continued to work for vulnerable women and children till 2014, when she was transferred to New Delhi district to handle women-related issues there. Since she became an Assistant Commissioner of Police, Surinderjeet has made it her mission to visit training centres and "sensitise and guide" other officers in human trafficking. Shivaji College presented her with the Jijabai Awards in 2015-16.





## SONALI KHAN

*Vice president at 'Breakthrough'*

*Director of the Knowledge Creation and Dissemination pillar at 'Dasra'*

Since past sixteen years Sonali Khan had been working to highlight and end violence and discrimination against women and girls. For the cause she convened campaigns, 'what kind of man are you?' and 'Is this justice?' through the organization she was leading as vice president, 'Breakthrough'. She has also worked against early child marriage in the form of campaign, 'Sefies4School', 'Nation against early marriage'; and campaigned against skewed sex ratio in the form of '#Mission Hazaar'.

Her 'Bell Bajao!' campaign against domestic violence was adapted in China, Pakistan and Vietnam and won many prestigious awards.

Besides, she worked as Director of the Knowledge Creation and Dissemination pillar at the organization 'Dasra' and later as independent consultant with Dasra. She also has produced programs and documentaries for networks including the BBC World, Star Plus and CNBC.

She received the prestigious Nari Shakti Puraskar (Women's Empowerment Award) from the President of India for protecting women's right and efforts against the practice of sex selective elimination. She also received the Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship for her work in ending early child marriage.





## **PYARE LAL**

***Teacher in Department of Commerce in  
Government Senior Secondary School, Kirtan, Hisar, Haryana***

Mr. Pyare Lal was a teacher of commerce at Government Senior Secondary School, Kirtan Village, District- Hisar. Despite his school teaching job He undertook the task of transforming the life of villagers by giving them education. His untiring effort in the last few years made more than 700 adults of the area clear class-V exam. Of these 350 men and women were from Kirtan village only who cleared

class-V exam. His student groups included men and women from all age groups including one as old as 85 years! His program included vocational training also empowering the citizens of the area. Forty women have been given “Free Computer Training”, while other women were trained in stitching, cooking, pickle-making etc. to make them financially self-reliant.



*"You may not control all the events that happen to you, but  
you can decide not to be reduced by them."*

***-Maya Angelou***



# Jijabai Awards

## 2014-15



**Chief Guest, Meenakshi Lekhi, MP**



*“Feminism isn’t about making women strong. Women are already strong. It’s about changing the way the world perceives that strength.”*

**-G.D. Anderson**





## MEENU VADERA

*Founder, Azad Foundation and Sakha Consulting Wings - A cab service run by women for women*

Ms. Meenu Vadera, is a feminist and a social entrepreneur who has been working extensively on women's issues for over 20 years both nationally and internationally. She was felicitated with the Jijabai awards in 2014-15 in recognition of her efforts in empowering women by training them to become trained chauffeurs through initiative of Women on Wheels. She has founded the Azad Foundation and Sakha Cabs for Women and is currently the CEO and Secretary of the Trustee Board for Azad and CEO of Sakha Cabs.

The Azad Foundation works with underprivileged women in acquiring necessary documentation etc for procuring a driving license. It also aids them broadly by working towards pro-poor and pro-women policies along with the government. The Sakha cab service was established in 2008 to augment the dignity of women, especially from marginalized communities. It was not an easy path as she had to train women who were absolutely novices to driving skills, and enable them to earn their livelihood, not just as a financial enterprise, but also as an attempt to enhance the dignity of their existence. The

foundation provides training in driving to young women and makes them proficient in everything from self-defense to changing tyres. The social perception that commercial driving is a job of belonging to the 'male exclusive' domain and convincing the girls' families to let their daughters get trained as chauffeurs were seemingly insurmountable problems. Ms. Meenu is currently changing the lives of over 650 women by empowering them.

The Women on Wheels initiative has received several recognitions and awards for its innovative business model as well as their impact on the lives of poor, unskilled women. Most recently, her efforts were appreciated by the IBM iX every woman in Travel Awards, London 2018 with an International Inspiration Award. Sakha and Azad Foundation were also featured in a reality TV show called "Satyameva Jayate". Their drivers had the opportunity to interact with several national and international personalities like David Cameroon, Mark Rutte, Prince, the British royal family, Sourav Ganguly and Aamir Khan.





## SUSHMA BHADU

*Sarpanch Dhani Miyan Khan village*

Ms. Bhadu had to drop out of school after class seven due to her circumstances, but that did not stop her from shattering all stereotypes and becoming the village head or sarpanch Dhani Miyan Khan Village, Haryana. She belongs to the Bishnoi community, which, like many other communities of northern India encourage women to wear a veil or purdah as a mark of respect towards their elders, and believes that the place of a woman is at home, taking care of her duties. Ms. Sushma Bhadu started a revolution by discarding her veil and inspiring other women of the village to dispose of such restrictive ancient traditions which have no relevance in the modern times.

As a step towards empowering the women in her community, she began a tailoring center and secured funding from an Indian national bank for the same. Sushma ensured that every child of her village, irrespective of their gender, went to school, and that there was a zero dropout rate. Her painstaking efforts bore fruits when the state government invested in a

water boosting system which provided all villagers with access to water.

Under her able guidance, Dhani Miyan Village won the "Nirmal Gram Puraskar" given by the Union government to model villages. Ms. Sushma has also introduced rewards upto Rs 50,000 for whistle blowers to expose families adapting sex determination tests. To encourage girl students from poor families, she has announced scholarships to aid them in their pursuit of higher studies. Haryana is infamous for a poor sex ratio, but contrarily, Sushma's village has more girls than it has boys. Her village has clean paved streets with street lights, and electricity and water connection in every home—something very few Indian villages can boast of. Ms. Sushma continues her efforts towards the welfare of her village and empowering its women.

For her efforts in bettering the lives of women at the grass-root level, she was awarded the Fijabai awards, Shivaji College in 2014-15.





## SHARDA JAIN

*Medical Social Worker*

Dr. Sharda Jain is a gynecologist and surgeon par excellence and a passionate medical social worker. She and her team at Lifecare Centre are dedicated to women Health, patient education. She is founder of prestigious forums like – Delhi Gynaecologist Forum -WOW India. Her “No Home Delivery” campaign and Besti Seviks Training programme lead to Janani Suraksha Yojana and “Asha” scheme of G.O.I. during her tenure as Chairman of women wing of Indian Medical Association (2004-07). She is known in India for her tremendous contribution to women health in last 25 years through these organizations.

She has held illustrious National positions like - Medical Advisor of National Commission for Women (2001-2004),-Chairperson of Women Wing IMA (2004-2007). She is the active force behind many National Movements, be it female foeticide, Movement against Anaemia, Janani Suraksha Yojna, Uniform Rape Victim Examination, Save uterus campaign & Say ‘No’ to Cervical Cancer & many other such campaigns. Her Contribution to Women health & enriching Gynaecologist’s Knowledge & Skills is immense and her services are recognized in

her life time. Her work has been widely recognized by various bodies. Some of her awards include:

- “Southeast Asian Parliament Award” for outstanding work on Anaemia in women & children (2006) and Received prestigious “Lucy Omen Award” for contribution in women & girl child health—2008
- “Jijabai Awards 2015”, Shivaji College, University of Delhi, for her outstanding work on women’s health.
- Lifetime achievement awards by FOGSI & Indian college of Obstetrician & Gynaecologist (2016 , April), Delhi Gynaecologist Forum (2009), L.H.M.C. alumni association – (2011), Delhi ISAR.(March 2016)
- She received “India’s Most Eminent Women Award ‘2015” (for crusader against female foeticide movement in the country) by All India Council of Human Right, Liberties & Social Justice (2015 Dec.); “Excellence Award in Medical Services” by IMA 2016 may.





## SUBHASH MENDHAPURKAR

*Founder and Director, SUTRA- Society for Social Upliftment through Rural Action*

Mr. Subhash Mendhapurkar is the Founder and Director of SUTRA (Society for Social Uplift Through Rural Action), an NGO that has worked for decades for the socio-economic upliftment of illiterate women in the foothills of the Himalayas particularly in Shimla and Solan district. He hails from the Solapur district of Maharashtra and is an alumnus of Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

Mr. Mendhapurkar has been active in the fields of women self-reliance, micro-finance, rural healthcare, self-governance, eco management and water management. He has worked actively for the upliftment of economic status of women in these regions by emphasizing on the development of forest area as well. The forest department had been planting pine trees to prevent soil erosion, which was of no help to local women who wanted fruit trees and grass for their cattle. His efforts made the mountain lands more useful for the locals. He also introduced

the concept of water harvesting to help women manage water resources better. In 1980s, he started working for the cause of single women under the programme name "Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan" in the hills. "Denied care and affection, and always illiterate, these women did not know how to improve their condition", he had said once, describing his campaign. His efforts have helped enhance the dwindling sex ratio in these regions. He has worked extensively on several fronts such as education, health and social status of women.

Mr. Mendhapurkar was awarded the Jijabai awards in 2014-15 in recognition of his life-long pursuit of improving the lives of underprivileged and impoverished women. He has also been the recipient of various awards and accolades including National Sarda Equal Opportunities Award, Man of the year award-2008 and Peace award-2005.





## UPASANA MAKATI

*Founder, Editor, Publisher White Print - Lifestyle magazine in Braille for the visually challenged*

Upasana Makati is the founder, editor, publisher and owner of White Print – India's first lifestyle magazine for the visually impaired in Braille English. Launched in May, 2013, she started White Print to build a readership of enthusiastic individuals who would look beyond the realms of mere news as reading material. At a time where the visually impaired were relying heavily on talk back softwares

and their Braille literacy was confined only to the spaces of their mind, White Print ushered in a new light.

Ms. Makati was awarded with the Jijabai Awards in 2014-15 in recognition of her work towards providing visually impaired individuals with the scope of enjoying literature, instead of being restricted to access of only study material.



*"Above all, be the heroine of your life, not the victim."*

***-Nora Ephron***



# Jijabai Awards

## 2013-14



**Chief Guest, Najma Heptulla, Governor of Manipur**



*"I raise up my voice – not so I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard...we cannot succeed when half of us are held back."*

***-Malala Yousafzai***





## LAXMI GAUTAM

*Angel of Vrindavan, Founder of NGO “Kanak dhara foundation”  
(Working for the welfare of widows)*

India has the largest recorded number of widows in the world—33 million (10 per cent of the female population, compared to only 3 per cent of men). In Vrindavan alone, an estimated 10,000 widows struggle to survive. Younger widows are forced into prostitution and older ones are left to beg and chant for alms from pilgrims and tourists.

Dr Laxmi Gautam, the ‘Angel of Vrindavan’, is a Professor of History at Institute Of Oriental Philosophy, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University, Uttar Pradesh. She takes care of these widows, provides them with a warm meal, blankets, takes care of their medical needs and provides them the much-needed emotional care. Over the years Dr. Gautam, through her NGO ‘Kanak Dhara Foundation’ has helped bury

bodies of hundreds of widows who no one wants to claim. Her home is like an ashram, where helpless and destitute women are looked after like family members. This has been Lakshmi’s life for over two decades.

For her efforts to bring justice to the widows who are considered social discard, Shivaji College awarded her with ‘Jijabai Achiever’s Award’ in 2014. Since then she has been recipient of several awards like - ‘Nari Shakti Puraskar’ of Ministry of child and Women development by the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, on the International Women’s Day 2015 and Women Transforming India Award 2016 by Niti Ayog in partnership with My Gov. and United Nation on International Women’s Day 2016.





## USHA CHOUDHARY

*‘Child marriage is severe, Don’t make them shed a tear’*

According to a report published by UNICEF, 60% of women aged 20-24 today were married before the age of 18. Despite child marriage act being implemented since 2006, it is a harsh reality that spread across the country like an epidemic. Tragically, this leads to a high rate of suicide among women. A study from 2012 tells that 56% of suicides among females were happening among the age group from 15-29, which is also the prime age group for child marriage.

Usha Choudhary is a social activist who has dedicated her life to fight against this evil of the society. Her parents decided to get her married when she was 14. She went against it and broke her engagement with a lot of struggle. This incident shaped her life to work for the upliftment of women so that they can fight for their rights. She has been working for 17 years to stop 450 child marriages in Rajasthan and has done outstanding work on Girl

Child Rights and Violence Against Women. In 2004, Ms. Choudhary co-founded the organisation Vikalp Sansthan, to work with young and dynamic volunteers in Rajasthan to campaign against the evils of child marriage, domestic violence and discrimination against women. Rajasthan is specially plagued with this epidemic because of its caste system which decides who gets the power. The group of young volunteers tirelessly knock the doors of each house in the village and perform plays to educate the people about the evil of child marriage and encourage them to educate their girl child. Her ideas are profound and were aptly proposed by her as:

‘It is important to empower girls and women but, at the same time, it is mandatory to sensitize men and boys. Then only they can grow to respect each other’.

For her impact on the society, Shivaji College has awarded Usha Chaudhary with ‘Jijabai Achiever’s Award’ in 2014.





## JO MCGOWAN CHOPRA AND MANJU SINGHANIA

*Founders Karuna Vihar and Latika Roy Foundation*

Jo McGowan Chopra and Manju Singhania, are the two friends who started Karuna Vihar, a school for children with special needs in 1996. Karuna Vihar caters help to children having Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities. An American by birth and a writer by profession, Jo McGowan Chopra lived in India for the past 35 years with her Indian husband. Ms. Chopra is a Co-founder and Director of the Latika Roy Foundation, a NGO which supports children with disabilities and their families. Ms Manju Singhania has over two decades of experience in the field of education and special education.

Jo has two children and the idea of setting up a school for children with special needs emanated when Jo's adopted daughter Moy Moy, suffered from cerebral palsy. Jo got to know about Moy Moy's condition when she was four years old. But there were no good institutions and schools in the area that cater to the needs of such children, and it was then that she conceived the idea of starting Karuna Vihar, which aims to make learning and instruction accessible and

perceptible for those children who encounter difficulty in comprehending their surroundings. Manju Singhania joined the initiative in 1999 as a Vice-Principal and took charge as the Principal in the year 2000. They started with just two students and today, they have more than 1,500 students. The fee for the services is charged on the basis of family income, and foundations run primarily on donations. They also have eight other amazing projects which reinforce the primary intent like the Early Intervention Centre (EIC), Karuna Vihar Child Development Centre (KVCDC), Karuna Vihar Centre for Vocational training (KVCVT), Latika Vihar, Gubbara and Resource Centre. It is also teaches the students life skills and vocational trainings that allows them to be gainfully employed and self-sufficient.

Jo McGowan Chopra and Manju Singhania were awarded the Jijabai Awards in 2014 for their outstanding work in helping children with special needs. They were also awarded the CNN IBN Real Hero Awards in 2012.





**“ I AM NOT A VICTIM  
A SURVIVOR.  
THE MAN WHO ATTACKED ME  
WILL COVER HIS FACE, I WON'T. ”**

**– LAXMI AGARWAL  
(ACID ATTACK SURVIVOR)**

## **LAXMI AGARWAL**

*“He changed my face, not my heart  
He threw acid on my face, not my dreams”- Laxmi Agarwal*

The woman with an undefeatable spirit, a woman who survived and lived to tell her story, to fight against the horror of acid attacks, Ms. Laxmi Agarwal. She was brutally attacked by a suitor, Nadeem Khan, 32 when she was merely 15 years of age. He was pursuing her for a long time and the girl was not agreeing to his advances. As a punishment, he chose to throw acid on her face with an attempt to burn her face, her body and her soul. But the fighter in her never gave up and 15 years and multiple surgeries later has a daughter of her own, has been successful in getting a total ban on the sale of acid by the Supreme court in 2013 and runs several social causes for the plea of such survivors.

She was awarded for her courage to speak up for Human rights by former First Lady Michelle Obama with the ‘International Women of Courage award’. She partnered with Alok Dixit and Ashish Shukla as a campaigner for ‘Stop Acid Attacks’ and was in a

relationship with the former as well. Both of them have a daughter, Pihu who she is bringing up single handedly. She has founded an NGO, Chhanv Foundation that aims to bring back the lost urge to live and life of victims of acid attacks. Her attacker was given imprisonment for 10 years and he still asked the judge shamelessly that he would want to marry Laxmi. The latter refused, as her body had changed and not her heart! She faced a lot of criticism from the society about her appearance but the person who stood by her, was her father. He made her realize that nothing is impossible in this world. Her story is being made into a movie ‘Chhapaak’ by Meghna Gulzar with her being played by Deepika Padukone. It’s a small look into her hardships and the commendable work she has done throughout.

She is truly a superwoman who will bring change in our society and to honor her efforts, Shivaji College awarded her with ‘Jijabai Achiever’s Award’ in 2014.





## SABBAH HAJI

*Founder & Director of Haji Public School, Breswana, J&K*

Ms. Sabbah Haji, is a Director at Haji Public School, a not-for-profit school established in 2009, located in Breswana, her ancestral village in the mountains of Doda district in Jammu and Kashmir. At an altitude of over 7500 feet, Breswana is a remote village with no motorable access to the rest of the state. Ms. Haji born in 1982 and raised in Dubai. In 1997 her family shifted to Bangalore, where she completed her 12th grade and Later in 2002 completed her Bachelors in Commerce from Christ College. Ms. Haji was Staff Accountant (Audit Trainee) in KPMG, Bangalore (2003-2004) and between 2005-08 she was editor, proofreader, writer, team lead, liaison and content manager in various entertainment and media organisations.

In 2008, Sabbah watched how the Amarnath struggle in Jammu & Kashmir unfolds. After this she decided to quit her job in Bengaluru and moved back to her ancestral village where nearly two generations of villagers had no education. This was a defining moment for Sabbah and she determined to help them by setting up a school. Haji Public School – an institution established by Haji Amina Charity Trust (operative in Doda city) began operations on May 4, 2009, with only two teachers and 30 students in a under-construction building. Sabbah and her mother

Tasneem Haji manages the administrative work of the school. The establishment of a school in the village gradually transformed the outlook and attitude of its residents. They now understand that participating in skill-based programs and activities daily contributes positively to their psychological growth.

The school now has more than 500 students along with more than 20 permanent local staff, including a team of National and International teaching volunteers. Sabbah continues to manage her responsibilities be it administrative, training, supervising, liaising, raising funds and representing the school at various platforms (conferences, social media, TED events, etc.). For her zeal to not only improve the state of education, but to change the mind set of the locals in the remote village of Breswana, J&K Women Development Cell, Shivaji College recognised her work with 'Jijabai Achiever's Award' in 2014. She has been bestowed with J&K State Award for Social Reforms and Empowerment in 2017 for her tremendous efforts in the field of education. Sabbah Haji has proven beyond measure that advancement and success can reach any place irrespective of its status.





## SHOBHA LAL

### *Women Empowerment and Economic Upliftment*

She has been working in the field of rural women empowerment and economic upliftment for the past three decades.

In this long ongoing journey of woman and development she organised countless awareness camps for rural woman irrespective of any govt. or NGO support.

She made these camps interactive by means of sharing success stories of women across the world, informed them about the latest surveys and news

related to women development and the schemes launched for their benefit (old age pension, widow pension, kanyadan scheme, girl scholarship, ladli scheme, insurance scheme, girl education, special scheme for SC/ST & Minorities). She used her music & poetry skills to make these sessions lively, involved them with indoor games, role plays, drawing, dance etc. which enabled me to change the mind set of thousands of rural women who were trapped in pardha system and animal husbandry, making aware of their own strengths and capabilities.





## VIMLA KAUL

*Founder of Guldasta- School for the underprivileged*

‘God didn’t add another day in your life because you needed it, he gives you more time because some one out there needs your help’. This has been the motto of the 83-year old Vimla Kaul who has dedicated her superannuated life to teaching underprivileged children and training young girls into independent entrepreneurs.

For Ms. Kaul sitting at home and looking only after her grand children was never an option. In 1993 when they moved to Delhi, as a Rotarian they visited the Madanpur Khadar Village, which was an hour away from Delhi. This inspired Vimla to do something for the villagers. She started by teaching tailoring to few women in the village to make them financially independent. She noticed that the children were just whiling away their precious time and youth in the streets. Initially she started a school ‘Guldasta’ for four to eight-year-olds in 1996 with ten children at the chaupal of the village. She faced a lot of opposition from the villagers and was forced to shift the location of her school to the MCD grounds in Sarita Vihar. She

even hired a village girl who had learnt tailoring under her as a teacher. By 1997 she was teaching almost 70 kids. For 16 years she ran her school in parks where the only deterrent was the rains when they were forced to shut the school. It is later that the Malviya Nagar Trust contacted her to help and that’s when she shifted her open air school to a building of four rooms. She also formed an NGO, Vasundhari Society for Social Action to take care of the school Guldasta. The NGO runs tailoring classes, basic computer course, elementary beautician course, henna application course and dance classes for children and women of Madanpur Khaddar, and even organises regular health camps for the villagers.

Vimla Kaul, at the age of 84, has been working tirelessly for past 20 years imparting free education to children and building the future of the country. For her untiring efforts, Shivaji College had awarded her with Jijabai Achiever’s Award in 2014.



*"You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation."*

***-Brigham Young***



# Jijabai Awards

## 2012-13



**Chief Guest, Mamta Sharma, Chair Person, NCW**



*“We do not need magic to transform our world. We carry all of the power we need inside ourselves already.”*

***-J.K. Rowling***





## REETA SAXENA

***Founder, Prateek Special School, Institute for children with special needs a unit of Anudaan SOCIETY***

Mrs. Reeta Saxena was long disturbed with the almost inhuman way in which children with special needs were treated. In order to bring about a change in their lives, she pursued her education in understanding and handling of mental disability. She founded the Prateek Special School, a unit of Anudaan Society, a non-profit secular organization established in January 2004. It was founded with the vision of share care and self-dependency for our disabled children, and attempts to bring them into the mainstream society. The school had its humble beginnings in Jaat Chaupal Nangloi, which later shifted Mubarakpur Dabas, where they built a school well equipped with the amenities necessary to teach

children special needs. The school is dedicated to training children and adolescents with behaviour problems and multiple disabilities, like Autism, Slow learners, Aspergers syndrome, attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), Mental Retardation, Down syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Hearing and Speech.

Mrs. Reeta Saxena was awarded the Jijabai Awards, 2013, in recognition of her efforts towards bettering the lives of neglected and special needs children. She has received the Women's role model award 2014, given by Muskaan Trust. She has also been recognized and awarded by various other organizations and trusts.





## LAXMI NAGRATH

*DGM, Operations, Air India*

Capt. Lakshmi Nagrath is one of the pioneer women commercial pilots who commanded aircrafts. She is the first Indian air hostess to graduate to the cockpit and subsequently flew jet aircrafts. Her status of becoming a trainer captain from an air hostess is also the first in country's aviation history.

Career as a commercial pilot, has long been dominated by males. Air India consciously tried to change this scenario and promote women as pilots,

rather than only air hostesses. Capt. Laxmi was a part of Air India's initiative to commemorate International Women's Day in 2017, and led the Dreamliner from Delhi to Melbourne with an all female crew.

For contributing to gender equality, Capt. Lakshmi Nagrath was awarded the Jijabai awards in 2013. Her achievements have also been featured in the Limca Book of Records.





## JAGMATI SANGWAN

*National Vice President, AIDWA*

Jagmati Sangwan is well known for her volleyball skills and also for her strong activism against honour killing and Haryana's Khap Panchayats. She was a national level volleyball player who was a part of the Indian team which won a bronze at the Asian Volleyball championships. She has completed two separate post graduate degrees in Rural Psychology and Physical Education respectively. She has also obtained her PhD in Physical education.

She has served as the Vice president and General Secretary of the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), which is an independent left oriented women's organisation that is committed to achieving democracy, equality and women's emancipation. She has also served as central committee member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), but was later expelled from the party after

she opposed their alliance with the Indian National Congress, due to differences in ideology. Jagmati Sangwan took a voluntary retirement from her position as Director, Women's study centre, MDU, Rohtak, to enable her devote all her time towards uplifting the lives of women by empowering them.

Her fight against male-inflicted conservatism and oppression of women has risen to a full-fledged war against honour killing and the atrocities of the Khap Panchayat. She is confident that laws against honour killing will be in place soon. In recognition of her efforts to empower women at the grassroots level, she was awarded the Jijabai Awards in 2013. She was a nominee for the award category "Daughters of the soil) social", at the Women of Worth event held by L'Oreal, in association with NDTV.





## ROUBLE NAGI

*Founder Chairperson, RNAF Foundation*

Rouble Nagi is an extremely successful Indian artist who founded the Rouble Nagi Art Foundation (RNAF), an active NGO in India that conducts art workshop for children throughout India. She has held over 150 exhibitions worldwide, and has painted over 800 murals. Ms. Nagi is also a member of the Indian Design Council (IDC).

She started her social work with Project Dharavi, when she interacted with the dwellers of one of the world's largest slums. Her slum painting initiative of Misaal Mumbai, the first of its kind in India, led to the painting of more than 24000 houses, along with weather proofing of the roofs, sanitation and conducting of workshops on the important of hygiene and sanitation. The project is not just about painting people's homes, but also making their lives happier.

The project also seeks to employ people, thus giving them a sense of ownership over the art created by them in their own community, while also improving the condition of their houses. Her foundation works with over 2.5 Lakh children by conducting art workshops throughout the country, and also runs 62 Balwadis to encourage underprivileged children to obtain education. Her aim is to see India 100 percent literate.

She received the Jijabai Awards in 2013 in recognition for her work to improve the lives of underprivileged. She has also been the recipient of the Women of Wonder "Achievers Awards 2018" in recognition for her outstanding work in social welfare as well as a proficient, highly acclaimed artist.





## **NALINI GANGADHARAN**

*Founder Chairperson,  
CAP foundation*

Founder and Executive Chair of CAP Foundation, Dr. Nalini Gangadharan encourages group of dedicated team of professionals and business mentors in India and sub-Saharan Africa to give end-to-end livelihood solutions that connect learning and livelihoods for marginalized and at-risk groups of young people. She has adopted many innovative and path-breaking initiatives targeting and benefitting young people at risk and their futures.

## **PRIYA PATIL**

*Director, Shramik Vidyapeeth*

Ms. Patil has been conferred the prestigious AHILYABAI HOLKAR AWARD for excellent contribution of JSS in the field of women empowerment, by the department of Women and Child Welfare, Government of Maharashtra. She is also recipient of Award of Excellence for outstanding contribution in Entrepreneurship Development for woman.





*"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."  
-Eleanor Roosevelt*



# Jijabai Awards

## 2010-11



Chief Guest, Prof. Vibha Chaturvedi, DU



*“Whether women are better than men I cannot say -- but I  
can say they are certainly no worse.”*

***-Golda Meir***



## URVASHI BUTALIA

*Publisher, Kali*

Born in 1952, Urvashi Butalia is a writer, historian and co-founder Along of Kali (1984) - a magazine for women which is regarded as India's first exclusively feminist publishing house. The independent publishing house publishes fiction and academic books, "on, for, by and about women in South Asia". In 2003, following the closure of Kali for women, she founded Zubaan books. She is also author of the award-winning books like *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* and *Speaking Peace: Women's Voices from Kashmir*. Her writings on gender, communalism, fundamentalism and media have appeared in several newspapers and magazines publications including *The Guardian*, *The New Internationalist*, *The Statesman*, *The Times of India*, *Outlook* and *India*

Today. She has been a regular columnist for *Tehelka* as well as Indian printer and publisher.

Urvashi Butalia was felicitated with Jijabai Achiever's awards in 2010 in recognition of her efforts and contribution in the field of literature and publishing. She is the recipient of several national and international awards. She has been endowed one of India's highest civilian honour, the Padma Shri, in 2011 for her immense contribution in literature and Education. Recently in 2017, the German Federal Republic bestowed Butalia the Goethe Medal, an official distinction that "honors individuals who have displayed outstanding competence of the German language as well as in international cultural exchange."





## ASHA AGARWAL

*Sportsperson, Female Marathon Runner*

Born on 26 September 1962, Asha Agarwal is a former Indian sports person who has received many accolades for her brilliant performance in marathon. She is the first Indian Woman to win Gold Medal in International Marathon and is a recipient of Arjuna Award. The marathon is a long-distance race of 42.195 kilometres, completed by running, walking, or a run/walk strategy and it has been a male-dominated domain because of the immense physical strength and stamina required. Asha Agarwal won the Hong Kong marathon on January 27, 1985, she also won the gold at the Asian Track and Field meet

in Jakarta in September 1985, setting a record of 2 hours 48 minutes and 51 seconds, which still stands. She went on to win the Freedom Race in Delhi in 1989, Trinidad Marathon in 1986 and has run eight out of 26 marathons below 2 hours 50 minutes. She still run and promotes people to run for attaining health benefits and counter the stress.

Asha Agarwal has been bestowed Jijabai Achiever's awards for her enormous contribution in the field of sports in 2010.





## SUDERSHAN PATHAK

*Sports Administrator, Social worker*

Dr. Sudershan Pathak is serving as the secretary to the executive Committee of Delhi University Women's Association (DUWA). She has also served as the Deputy Director, Department of Games, Delhi University for about a decade. Dr. Pathak has been the venue administrator for the commonwealth games, as well as chairperson, Delhi social welfare board. She has herself been an international player and was the first lady secretary for the Indian contingent of the ninth Asian games 1982. She has been the manager, Indian team for hockey team for

the world cup and seventh women Asia cup 2009-2010. She is also a board member of STOP (Stop Trafficking and Oppression of Children & Women)

She has received many honors including the Bharat Nirman award for contribution in social sciences and the "bolt award" north Delhi state, to name a few. She has been conferred upon Jijabai Achiever's award for the year 2010 for her tremendous contribution in the development and motivation of Indian women in sports, hockey in particular.





## GEETANJALI LAL

*Kathak Dancer Director, Devi Durga kathak Sansthan*

Geetanjali Lal has been trained in Kathak dance by the great stalwarts like Roshan Kumari, Gopi Krishana, Mohan Rao Kalyanpurker and her husband Shri Devi Lal. Geetanjali has been performing for the last four decades at major national and international dance festivals. She has received accolades for her brilliant solo exposition of Jaipur gharana and her choreographic works. She had earned critical acclaim as a lead dancer of Kathak Kendra in the choreographic works of Pandit Birju Maharaj. Based in Delhi, she worked as a senior guru with the National Institute of Kathak, where she has trained a number of students. She has also worked as the director of Kathak Kendra. She is currently serving as the director of Devi Durga Kathak Sansthan, New Delhi. She has also been invited to programs of Doordarshan and Indian council for culture relations, New Delhi. She has choreographed many kathak dance ballets based on “Chitrangada”, “Chandalika”,

Riturang by Rabindranath Tagore and “Meghdoot” by Kavi Kalidas. She has also choreographed the works of Sur das, Kabir, Raskhan, Vidyapati and Meera etc. She has conducted many kathak workshops in India and abroad.

Geetanjali Lal has been awarded the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi award in the year 2007. Geetanjali has been bestowed Jijabai Achiever’s award for the year 2010 for her contribution in the classical dance field. She has also been awarded the title of “Nritya Sharada”, “Natya Kala Shree”, “Bharat Gaurav”, “Kala Shiromani”, “Kalpana Chawala award” and “Indira Gandhi Priyadarshani award”. In 2017, she was invited by the Embassy of India, Copenhagen to mark India’s 70 years of India’s independence. Apart from from being a famed kathak dancer, she is also an actress, having acted in a kashmiri feature film “shayar-e-kashmir mehjoor” in a lead role.





## ISHI KHOSLA

*Nutritionist, Author Founder, Celiac Society for Delhi*

Isha Khosla is a practicing clinical nutritionist, writer, columnist, researcher, author and an entrepreneur. She was the Head of the Nutrition Department at the Escorts Heart Institute and Research Center, New Delhi, for several years, where she dealt with nutrition for cardiac patients, diabetes and obesity. As part of her commitment towards community nutrition and public health, Ishi Khosla founded 'The Celiac society for Delhi' in 2006, the first of its kind in India, to spread awareness about celiac disease, a condition caused by wheat intolerance. The India Today group has listed her among the 25 most powerful women in the country. To scale up her

practice and reach out to a global audience Ms. Khosla has founded a unique score based nutrition App called [theweightmonitor.com](http://theweightmonitor.com). She also conducts workshops on nutrition education at schools, colleges and corporate offices.

She has been conferred several awards and recognitions in her field including Jijabai Achiever's award in 2010 and "Women's Achiever's Award" in the Field of Nutrition, by The Imperial & Cancer Patient Aids Association. She has authored three books: 'The Cholesterol Facts' (1990), 'Is Wheat Killing You?' (2011), (it is the first book in India on celiac disease) and, 'The Diet Doctor' (2013).





## RAJNI SEKHRI SIBAL

*Secretary, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairy Government of India*

Rajni Shekhri Sibal is the first lady to top the Civil Services Examination of India, in 1986.

She has served as Additional Secretary (Disaster Management) in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. She was actively involved in the policy formulation for International Cooperation and Disaster Management as well as the coordination of response and relief in the event of a disaster in the country. She has successfully handled the response and relief efforts during various calamities, like the floods in Kerala, Titli, Gaja, Pabuk and Pethai cyclones in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry; droughts in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujrat as well as landslides, floods and cloud bursts in Manipur, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Karnataka. Rajni held the additional charge of Executive Director National Institute of Disaster Management and has also represented the country in workshops and conferences, both in India and abroad, in the field of disaster management. This

Indian Administrative Service officer is presently working as Secretary, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India.

Rajni has helped reveal the Haryana teacher recruitment scam with the help of 4 meters of cloth! She was asked to participate in the scam for 5% of the bribe money collected, but she refused. Thereafter, she was promptly transferred, but she had the presence of mind to seal the almirah containing the files of the teachers with 4 meters of cloth and had several officers to sign it to prevent tampering of the files.

She was bestowed the Jijabai Achiever's award in 2010 for her exemplary commitment, courage and administrative skills. She has authored the book 'Are You Prepared for a Disaster', which was written with the help of the deep insights she gained during her experience in policy making and management of natural and man-made disasters occurring in India.



# **A walk down the memory lane**

*Messages from our previous conveners*



*“Do not live someone else’s life and someone else’s idea  
of what womanhood is. Womanhood is you.”*

**-Viola Davis**





**Shama Mitra Chenoy**  
**(2018-19)**

The 2018-2019 committee of the Women Development Cell of Shivaji College engaged itself the year round with the herculean task of creating awareness towards parity of all genders in society. Our focus was our students, as many boys as girls, just stepping out of their teenage years and full of infectious enthusiasm. We brought up issues of gender disparity and discrimination through theatrical and dance- drama performances, quiz, talks, debates and discussions to win their deep interest in the subject so that the message reaches home. It was with great alacrity that the faculty worked to select the JIJABAI awardees to be celebrated and felicitated in the course of an international seminar on GENDER PARITY: Issues and Challenges that was organised in January 2019. It was humbling to know that many people in our country have dedicated their lives to work at the grassroots level for women's empowerment. Bringing out the book SAMTULYA from philosophical to existential equality was equally challenging. There was much brainstorming on topics that were to be included and quite a task to make sure that all contributions were made with a sense of rigour and within the scheduled time. Much to our chagrin we found funding bodies were not so enthusiastic about our programmes. Some dismissed it outright as feminist propoganda while others said the themes of our seminar sessions did not all conform to the heads under which they gave grants. One government institution extended part sponsorship after some degree of convincing. The principal and the team tried very hard but in vain to get a sponsor for the JIJABAI Awards. We spent the year with butterflies in our stomach, goose bumps, intense, long hours of work drinking sugary coffee and lassi at times, binging on hot samosas in between ghar ka khana, heartburn, acidity, knee- back issues, cold and cough but ended it with considerable camaraderie and bonhomie. The increasing population of empowered women and sensitive, understanding men is a minor victory for us and a giant leap for humankind.

*"A woman with the voice is by definition a strong woman But  
the search to find that voice may be remarkably difficult"*

*- Melinda Gates*





**Anshu Chopra**  
**(2013-14, 2016-17, 2017-18)**

Walking and reliving the memories and experiences of my past as the convener of WDC makes me very nostalgic and emotional. Emotions and memories begin to flow, as I go down the memory lane. While expressing my feelings and thoughts I found it difficult to stay focused on what was the most significant memory that I would want to convey and share.

It is indeed my pleasure and privilege to be part of WDC for the past few years under the guidance of our principal ma'am Dr Shashi Nijhawan. I fondly remember the passion and zeal with which Dr Nijhawan introduced Jijabai Awards to felicitate the women achievers who braved all odds and worked at the grass-root level for women empowerment. 'Jijabai Achivers' Awards' under the leadership of our principal, has come a long way since its inception in 2010. In recent years, men too have found their way into the illustrious list of Jijabai Awardees.

During my stint as convener, WDC came up with the novel idea of documenting the stories of Jijabai Awardees along with success stories of few extraordinary individuals who with their outlook, perseverance and hard work have challenged mediocre mindsets that limits women's freedom. Thus came the idea of publishing and releasing a coffee table book each year during the Jijabai Award Ceremony. The first Coffee Table Book "Anujivami: I Survive", published in the year 2013, is an anthology of real life accounts of strong women, who have left a distinctive mark on society, by their unique contributions. Later we also released Udayan: A New Beginning". It was a reflection on metamorphic life journeys of nine ordinary individuals, who promoted gender equality in a way that has transformed the rigid and patriarchal definitions of masculinity. In the year 2018 WDC released "The Change Makers", that talks about the life journey of nine exceptional women with iconic vision, who endured adversity, fought misfortune, restructured themselves and transformed the core of society for good.

During my tenure, WDC organized series of events like Organ Donation Campaign, Gender Fair, panel discussions, flash mobs, theatre, film screenings and workshops to sensitize the students towards gender equality. These events gave students the platform to talk about gender issues and understand the deeply embedded roles and stereotypes and to sensitively consider their own actions in daily lives.

What is most rewarding for me, as the convener was the contributions and endless efforts being put up by our Gender Champions and student volunteers. They not only helped in organizing the events, participated in series of workshops and panel discussions but also gave innumerable support in identifying and compiling stories of real life heroes for the coffee table book. I can proudly say that these students are ready to face the world with their widened horizon and sensitized minds.

*"Freeing yourself was one thing, claiming ownership of that freed self  
was another."*





**Darshan Malik**  
*(2011-12, 2012-13)*

Empowerment of women has been a central concern and endeavor in countries across the world through many phases of human history. In recent centuries this issue has become more urgent than ever before, as self-consciousness about inequality—this self-consciousness itself can be seen as an index of empowerment—has driven societies to address this matter with renewed vigor. Gender inequality, however, is so old and deeply entrenched in all aspects of society, it is a system so sophisticated and resilient, that it evolves and adapts with changes in social structures, remaining ever more elusive and adamant. For this reason, it needs to be confronted simultaneously at numerous fronts. Enlightened and progressive societies strive tirelessly to effect changes towards this end through reforms in law and governance, through people's movements, through media agencies, through scientific and technological innovations, through education and awareness, through increase in social and economic infrastructure.

I am enthralled when I look back and marvel at the tremendous hard work and dedication put in by the WDC team for making our endeavours fruitful. The overall response from the college was also overwhelming, as everyone went out of their way to help us. It was very first time that the WDC of any college of the University of Delhi was organizing an International Conference. So our anxiety to make it a success was tremendous. The “1st International Conference on Empowerment of Women in Developing World” aimed at bringing together voices to elucidate the nature of various efforts at empowering women, as well as the relative success and limitations of these measures. At the same time, women's role in peace-building exercise was dealt with a special focus. The conference also aimed to explore the role of women in handling disasters both manmade and natural. We collaborated with ‘Women's Studies and Development Centre’, University of Delhi; NIDM, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India; Women's Federation for World Peace and Women's Initiative of Peace in South Asia. The tremendous response from the participants, with presentation of more than 200 papers, was a source of great motivation for the entire WDC team.

Being a part of the Women's Development Cell gave me an opportunity to better appreciate the struggles of women in the developing world. With the help of the various experts in the panels, various remedial suggestions were made that can help improve the conditions of the Indian woman.

*“If women are expected to do the same work as men, we must teach them the same things.”*

- Plato





**Nistha Srivastava**  
**(2014-15, 2015-16)**

In a day and age when talking about issues related to womenfolk has become quite common, I never realised the challenges entailed in shouldering the responsibilities of Convenor, WDC. This position led me to understand gender issues in a more holistic fashion. When one of my resource persons said that it was encouraging to see that the audience in the event had a near equal representation of male and female students, we, as a committee knew that we were on the right track.

Locating unsung heroes doing good work on ground zero for conferment of the Jijabai Awards, transformed from being a labour of duty to becoming a labour of love, for the entire committee. I still remember how respected Principal ma'am would come up with names from the most unknown platforms to guide us in locating the jewels who truly deserved the honours. It was as if she lived that dream with us.

The support that all in the college extended in helping the organisation of the mega annual WDC events and Jijabai Award ceremony, added substance to the aspirations of the committee. The publications were a conglomeration of perspectives of both- faculty members and students. In a nutshell, on behalf of the committee, a great learning and exciting experience, to be cherished for long.

*"The education and empowerment of women throughout the world cannot fail to result in a more caring, tolerant, just and peaceful life for all."*





**Rashmi Wardhan**  
**(2009-10, 2010-11)**

The strength, empowerment, patience all might be integral part of a woman but many of women are not conscious about it because of various socio-cultural reasons. These women need inspiration and help to show their hidden strength on time. For that reason various social activists and groups are working to make life better for these deprived women by raising awareness of their rights and discussing various problems on multiple platforms. Women development cell is one of these groups, constantly engaged for the cause.

During my tenure as convener of WDC, it was realized that many people are working at their local level to help the destitute women and facing lots of difficulties. These workers also need encouragement and support in their endeavour. The idea was born during one of the meetings, to facilitate these workers who are trying to make change in society perception and working for betterment of women. The WDC committee had put forward this award idea to the Principal Dr. Shashi Nijhawan, who was thinking on the same lines, liked it and immediately accepted our proposal. She encouraged us to carry forward the idea and find suitable name for the award. The WDC members of that period decided to facilitate ground level workers in the National conference, which was organized in 2010-11.

Since childhood, I have read many stories about Shivaji, the Maratha warrior and his inspiring strong mother Ma Jijabai. No other name could be better suitable for this award than Jijabai, so unanimously the name was put forward and accepted by all immediately. This very sapling of Jijabai award has now bloomed as one of the prestigious awards of the country thanks to the hard work of our Principal and following WDC committees. I feel immense pleasure to see the rising level of Jijabai award and salute to all women for their courage, patience, and strength on the completion of a decade of the of Jijabai awards.

*"Though we have the courage to raise our daughters more like our sons,  
we've rarely had the courage to raise our sons like our daughters."*

*—Gloria Steinem*



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*“We need women at all levels, including the top, to change the dynamic, reshape the conversation, to make sure women's voices are heard and heeded, not overlooked and ignored.”*  
**-Sheryl Sandberg**













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