

JIJABAI AWARDEES 2019-20



SMARITA SENGUPTA

Founder and CEO of Destiny Foundation and Reflection



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. 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 mobilized 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.

ANITA GUPTA

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

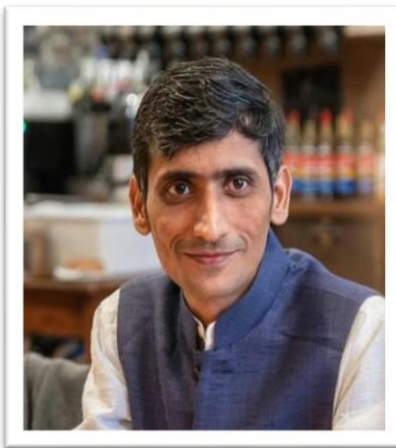


Anita Gupta has paved a path towards the empowerment of women by training them to gainfully employ themselves. Her efforts towards battling patriarchy and oppression of women, has helped thousands of rural women. She has co-founded the Bhojpur Mahila Kala Kendra with the help of her brother Santosh Kumar. The mission behind this foundation is to empower women in every way possible and train them to be financially independent.

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. 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

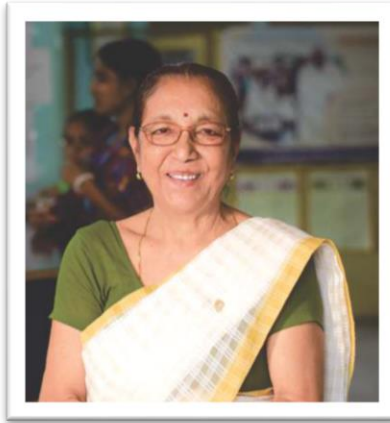


Shafiqur Rahman Khan has been instrumental in identifying and establishing the cause against the societal evil of Bride Trafficking through intense research and activism on ground. He founded ‘Empower People’ to work for rescue and rehabilitation of girls and women trafficked for the purpose of marriage.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

Till date, Empower People has rescued and rehabilitated approximately 4,250 trafficked women and girls, took up 88 cases of honor killings, and taken up 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 has 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 microfinance institution- Konoklota Mahila Urban Cooperative Bank (KMUCB) in 1998, 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. 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 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.

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.

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 Navoathan 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.