



**Indian Chamber of Commerce**

**Press Release**

***JAAGRUTI***

***“Empowering Women to Facilitate Human Development”***

***A Conference and Exhibition on “Life Style Products”***

**Kolkata, 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2016: Women are competent, stable and have potential to maintain their roles in every sphere of life but they need to be enlightened of their capabilities, Mr. Sadhan Pande, Hon’ble Minister-in-Charge, Self Help Group & Self Employment Department; Government of West Bengal.**

**For society to progress and prosper, women should be given importance for who they are and what they are, Ms. Juhi Chawla, Renowned Actress, Model and Film Producer.**

In the conference titled **“Jaagruti– Empowering Women to Facilitate Human Development”** organized by the **Indian Chamber of Commerce** in Kolkata today, **Mr. Sadhan Pande, Hon’ble Minister-in-Charge, Self Help Group & Self Employment Department; Government of West Bengal** stated that women are capable of multi-tasking and managing work in every sphere. Once given a responsibility, she knows how efficiently to fulfill her duties. But many women lack the knowledge with regard to what their potential is and how they can use it. For this an efficient mechanism is required on part of the government to enlighten them and provide them support both in terms of aid as well as awareness. Nevertheless, he remained optimistic of the progress happening now. He mentioned of the urban area “bastis” where earlier due to lack of funds and also lack of knowledge of procuring funds, women and children engaged in unproductive work; but with the help of the SHG funding and government awareness programs, they are now finding a steady source of income and are also able to channelize their skills in the correct direction of productivity.

**Ms Juhi Chawla, Renowned Actress, Model and Film Producer**, stated that it is the men who are creating a conflicting scenario about their attitude towards women. On one hand it is the men who are responsible for writing lyrics of certain provocative songs in Bollywood that are filmed on women. On the other hand these men only worship women in various avatars of Durga, Kali and other goddesses. She focused that the most important power is vested in the hands of women– the power to create a new life– which invariably makes her empowered. Thus women is the embodiment of power and peace; she does not need empowerment; she has been empowered from heaven; what she needs is respect. Ms Chawla said that women are not inferior, irrespective of whether she is a housewife or a working woman. In fact masculine and feminine are not conflicting but complementing energies that make up the truth of life; the conflict only lies in our minds that need to be enlightened. She said that just as commerce and industry are important, so is art and culture. Similarly, both the masculine and feminine aspects of life should be given equal importance.

**Mr. A. S. Rahman, Chief of Kolkata Office, UNICEF India** stated that UNICEF has worked in over 180 countries and has found out that for any system to function properly, it is imperative that women are involved. He said that society cannot move forward if half of its population is not involved. Mr. Rahman focused that to bring true empowerment among women, the process should begin from a young age, so that they become confident and responsible citizens going ahead; this will be “Jaagruti” in the true sense of the term.

**Ms Agnimitra Paul, Noted Fashion Designer** opined that men are endowed with three Ms, namely muscle power, mobility and money while women with three Hs– heart, healing power and humanity. To realize the dream of a better, prosperous and developed India, women should realize the combination of these three Ms and Hs. While women are getting educated and doing extremely well in every field, at times succumbing to impediments like dowry, child marriage etc. raises question to their education. She said empowerment should come from within and that women should make it their responsibility to empower other women.

**Mr. Aditya V Agarwal, President, Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC)** stated that not just providing equality to women but also educating men about women’s rights is extremely important for women empowerment and societal development. According to him, female participation is a major driver for economic growth. In this context he praised the initiatives at the government level like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, National Mission for Empowerment of Women, setting up of Rashtriya Mahila Kosh etc.

**Ms Chaitali Das, Charter President, Rotary Club of Calcutta Millennium & Managing trustee of Rakshak Foundation, India** said that not just law enforcement but willingness from within is required for empowerment. She was of the opinion that perfect synergy between the NGOs and government is required to spread awareness and make schemes accessible. She also focused on the importance of financial literacy, vocational training and skill development.

**Ms Ratna Vishwanathan, CEO, Micro Finance Institutions Network (MFIN)** said that 99% of the clients in microfinance in India are women. Microfinance has understood the troubles faced by rural women in availing formal banking facilities and thus has come up with a feet-on-street model. She stated that 3.5 crore women clients have been empowered till now; the others need to be given that extra edge and motivation to make them realize their potential.

Other dignitaries who graced the conference included **Ms. Niharika Baxla, Child Development Officer, Yuwa; Ms. Sanchita Mitra, National Coordinator, Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) Bharat; Ms. Saswati Roy Pattnaik, Secretary and Chief Functionary, Swadhina; Ms. Smriti Sarkar, President, Swadhina; Ms. Shaina NC, Celebrity Fashion Designer, Politician, and Social Worker; Ms. Sathya Saran, Leading Journalist, Editor Of The Popular Women's Magazine ‘Me’; and Ms Abhilasha Sethia, President, Ladies Study Group.**

The conference ended with a special presentation– **“Baat Niklegi Too Phir..”**– A multimedia presentation with stories and film clips by **Ms. Sathya Saran** based on the **Biography of Ghazal Maestro, Late Jagjit Singh.**

**For further information please contact:**

Sreeraj Mitra / Saurav Mukherjee / Kaushik Chatterjee  
Sagittarius Communications  
Ph: [9007307884](tel:9007307884) / [8697719310](tel:8697719310) / 9830006528