



INDIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Press Release

Kolkata, 10th March, 2018: An ode to Womanhood

Kolkata, 10th March, 2018: “As a mother, women should be taught that they are not supreme. Women don’t want to be supreme but to be treated equally in the society– Ms Alokanda Roy, Choreographer, Danseuse and Social Initiator”

“Recognition gives strength. Proper recognition to artisans and weavers will provide them the necessary strength to get empowered – Ms Bibi Russell, Founder, Bibi Productions, Fashion for Development”

The conference titled “**An ode to Womanhood**”, jointly organized by the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Audi, Kolkata, witnessed the felicitation of women achievers– **Ms. Bibi Russell**, Founder, Bibi Productions, Fashion for Development, **Ms Madhu Neotia**, Director, Bhagirathi Neotia Woman and Child Care Centre, **Ms Shamlu Dudeja**, Kantha Revivalist, Founder of SHE Enterprise & Author of Books on Mathematics, **Ms Urmi Basu**, Founder, New Light, **Ms Bula Choudhury**, Swimmer, Padmashree & Arjuna Awardee, and **Ms Alokanda Roy**, Choreographer, Danseuse and Social Initiator, on account of their extraordinary accomplishments in the respective fields.

This was followed by a rich interactive session on Women Empowerment, where **Ms Bibi Russell, Founder, Bibi Productions, Fashion for Development** shared her experience on being felicitated by the Queen of England and how her journey had been on leaving a full-time prospering modeling career and coming back to Bangladesh to work with the weavers and artisans toward fashion development. She felt that Bengali culture is united all over the world. Also, she thanked India for lending friendship and support to Bangladesh at various times of history. She mentioned how she was being encouraged by the erstwhile UNESCO director general, Mr. Federico Mayor Zaragoza and also the queen of Spain. Ms Russell is of the opinion that recognition gives strength. Although indigenous work is much appreciated in the western nations, it rarely finds recognition in Asia. Thus the need of the hour is to give recognition to the local artisans, weavers, and women in particular, so that it encourages them to work and be empowered.

Ms Shamlu Dudeja, Kantha Revivalist, Founder of SHE Enterprise & Author of Books on Mathematics, spoke of her inspiration from her childhood spent in Karachi. When it comes to empowerment, she had been largely influenced by her parents, with her father guiding her to work with numbers while her mother providing her the gift to have an eye on detail. She discussed how her sheer will to empower village female workers working with kantha stitch, turned her workings into a brand. She still feels that more and more people domestically as well as globally

should recognize kantha and buy kantha, not necessarily from her, to encourage the artistry and empower the village women.

Ms Urmi Basu, Founder, New Light, stated that women are the worst sufferers of all wars and conflicts. They have the power to create peace without which the future generation will fail to succeed. She stated that it is imbibed within women to change circumstances. Thus they should not shy away from raising voice against any oppression. She felt that people who think that the social problem is huge and thus refrain from contributing to the society, need to reduce their aperture of vision and think of some crucial problem happening closer to them. Starting from this grass root level will encourage them to come forward and contribute to the society. On her words of advice to potential NGOs, she stated that there is no shortcut to development. Thus, no organization should register themselves unless they are completely convinced that the organization would not shut off before the need of the project. Further, she asked the NGOs to knock big corporate for sponsorship as they have prominent CSR activities. She concluded that a murmur for a long time becomes a conversation and reaches out to people. So, one should not stop believing and be persistent and patient in their endeavors.

Ms Bula Choudhury, Swimmer, Padmashree & Arjuna Awardee, stated the main problem that the Indian swimmers face is lack of proper infrastructure. Also, she felt not many female swimmers are coming forward. States like West Bengal, Tripura and so on have a lot of potential but lack of funding and infrastructure are limiting them to succeed.

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