

## A talk on Gender Equality for a Sustainable Future by Prof. V. Madhurima

Chandraprabha Saikiani Centre for Women Studies(CSCWS), Tezpur University celebrated the occasion of women's day through a week long program promoting the theme for 2022 Women's Day : #BreaktheBias "Gender Equality for a Sustainable Future". The women's week commenced from 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and continued till 16th March, 2022. 47 participants attended the talk. The Centre conducts seminars, competitions, memorial lectures to celebrate the entire week as Women's Week. This year the week long programme was conducted in line with Women in Science and Technology in India. The Ministry of Women and Child Development under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav issues a memorandum to felicitate senior and junior women scientists for their contributions in the field of science. Keeping that in view, the Centre felicitated three women scientists of India, Dr. Nirmali Gogoi, Department of Environmental Studies, Tezpur University. Prof. V. Madhurima, Department of Physics, Central University of Tamil Nadu and Prof. Rohini. M Godbole, Department of Physics, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. On the Day 4 of the Women's Week programme, i.e. on 11th March 2022, a webinar was conducted on the topic 'Organizational Culture and Climate in Promotion of Science'. The resource person for the seminar was Prof. V. Madhurima, Central University of Tamil Nadu.

She was addressed and felicitated online by Dr. Madhurima Goswami, Head, CSCWS. With honor and respect a memento was gifted to the speaker Prof. V Madhurima. Followed by the preliminaries, the speaker began her analytical and enlightening talk on 'Organizational Culture and Climate in Promotion of Science'. Her talk continued for an hour followed by an interaction session with the participants of the programme. The beneficiaries of the programme included students of the university, research scholars as well as faculties of various departments. The Centre for Women Studies has also taken up the DST sponsored project GATI (Gender Advancement for transforming Institutions) which lied in sync with the memorandum issued by Ministry of Education to felicitate female scientists. In that context, The GATI GSAT (Gender Self-Assessment Team) were the immediate beneficiaries of the programme since the talk by Prof V. Madhurima helped them in developing a broader insight about the deeply embedded gender issues related to women in science.

Prof. Madhurima began the webinar through an introduction of the general issues faced by women in science. This included issues like the leaky pipeline, biases, gender stereotyping and lack of role models and intersectionality. It has been observed that the number of women in the field of STEM gradually decreases as they try to move up the ladder of occupational hierarchy from PhD to post-doc, from Assistant Professors to Professors. It is like a leaky pipeline where the water is gradually leaking and trickling away at every passing staging, hardly remaining at the end. According to a study by the Ontario University named Ontario's Leaking Pipeline of Women in Engineering Education, shows the ratio of female and male students to be 50:50 at grade 10 science students which sharply decreases to 19:81 when it comes to graduates from an engineering program and the engineering faculty in the ratio 14:86. The women enter into the education system but by the time they reach the level of being professors and take up leadership roles, the institutional structure is less favorable. The leaky pipeline has now been picturized as a braided river by UNESCO where the river is continuously changing course with multiple sources of water to the system as well as multiple sources of erosion. However, it never stops and keeps moving forward. Similarly, women do not drop off from the work-force, they relocate their work elsewhere, most likely, based on what seems conducive for her. This is because women relocate themselves in other jobs and don't just drop-off. A woman faces several biases when it comes to workplace most of them being in fact invisible; like men who work alone are credited as 'independent thinkers' whereas women are labelled as a "non-team player". Researches show that both men and women take criticism negatively when it comes from a woman and were doubly disinterested to work for a company led by a woman. At the institutional level, taking orders from a woman is less welcoming. Likewise, talking of other stereotypical understanding Prof. Madhurima cites a general example of how at the very idea of being at the reception or serving at a conference or seminar is given to the girls and incidentally neither the one who commands or the one who takes the command seems to mind. Gender stereotypes combined with a male dominated culture also gives rise to micro aggressions. Geography also plays an important part when it comes to gender as it has influence over factors like cultural differences, access to resources, geography- time zone, rural and urban areas and access to funding.

The speaker then spoke on how Women in STEM matter and why inclusion of women in the STEM disciplines is important. An inclusive approach would make a huge difference as they bring more diversity. Tu Youyou , Chinese Nobel Prize Winner who discovered artemisinin,

an anti-malarial compound, drawing from traditional medicine is an example here because that traditional knowledge was given to her because she was a woman.

The gender gap in India is increasing with passing years. In 2020, India has slipped to the position of 112th from 108th in 2018 according to the Gender Gap Index. All over the world, women are at a higher risk of unemployment than men at 19%. Some of the institutional practices to bring gender equity include equal opportunities across gender spectrum, address issues of bias and harassment, concern more women in decision making roles, believe all people can contribute to STEM and implement mainstream policies of gender equity. Feedback coaches, bias training, reference letters for women from previous employers, diversity officer, value equity work are few measures that can be taken. We can help by calling out any out any biases we see, speak up on behalf of someone or report. To conclude the pandemic has shown us how flexi-timings in case of work from home is feasible provided there is equal accountability, lesser paperwork with less institutional monitoring, flexi-credits and better access to different genders and differently abled persons.

The webinar ended with a vote of thanks by Dr. Madhurima Goswami, Head, Chandraprabha Saikiani Centre for Women Studies.