

Women's Forum Events

AMSUK WF in Conversation - 29th November 2020

8th March 2020 was when we were last together, excited to be celebrating our first ever International Women's Day Event. It was an informative and enjoyable day, attended by a great number of people. Looking back to that day, given what was to follow, we were fortunate to have had a celebration before the lockdown was announced. Needless to say, our intended events for the rest of the year were put on an extended hold!

Coming together as a committee via ZOOM, we decided that it had been far too long since our last event, we wanted to reconnect with our AMSUK community.

With the Pandemic causing so much distress we thought it a good idea to hear from members of our own communities about their experiences and how they were coping at such a difficult time.

Planning and executing such events, even via ZOOM, calls for a collective effort, which is what we pride ourselves in. Having agreed on our roles for the event, we set about finding members who would be willing to tell us about their experience.

Speakers included a Teacher, a Care Worker and members from our senior groups. We know how important it is for a body mind and soul balance, particularly at this time when we are cooped up and unable to go about our usual activity, so we enlisted a Yoga Teacher too. We also felt that we all needed some positivity in our lives and so we invited a speaker to help us with that.

This is a report of the event:

Rekhaben opened our WF session and briefly talked about COVID-19 and its far reaching impact.

The proceedings began with a **Prarthana** by **Illaben**.

Roshniben, our ever enthusiastic **Women's Forum Chairperson** welcomed and thanked everyone who joined. She explained the purpose of our event.

The afternoon proceeded with an interactive **Yoga** session by **Chitraben** who leads classes at the Gujarati Association in Wolverhampton. Her interest in Yoga took Chitraben to India for training. Along with her expert demonstration, she explained the benefits of practicing Yoga regularly and urged us to do so; for that all important 'body, mind and soul balance'.

Vijaybhai who is **Head of Maths** at a Secondary School in Dudley as well as a Governor at a Primary School spoke about his experience and the difficulties faced by both teachers & pupils. The extra work that went into organising lessons and classes was a big task.

He added, we as a community are fortunate our children are well cared for, some children are not so fortunate. Teachers help with these situations too.

His message was, 'always give one hundred percent to whatever you do, it is hard work but you get through it – communicate with each other and be supportive where needed'.

Not only is Vijaybhai a Key Worker but plays his part within the community as Vice President for Dudley Temple. He thanked his wife for being supportive of all that he does, so that he can do it well.

Varshaben from Wolverhampton related her experiences as a **Care Worker**.

Although her job is much more difficult during the present crisis, she enjoys her role as a Key Worker, caring for residents at a nursing home, 90% of who suffer from Dementia. Her job and that of her co-workers has increased dramatically since the Pandemic. There are new guidelines in place for the safety of both residents and workers. In the face of increased demand, staff shortages are on the rise and that is taking its toll. Handovers are more detailed and take longer. They have to deal with organising 'safe' visits from relatives on a regular basis. She was pleased to say that they have sufficient PPE, which was good to hear. Varshaben is glad that she is able to help others and finds her job very rewarding.

We say, it takes a certain type of person to do the job of a care worker, it requires patience and compassion in abundance.

The same can be said of those caring for a loved one at home. **Pushpaben** from Leicester did just that. She cared for her elderly mother who was suffering from dementia. At this difficult time, Pushpaben spoke of having had a breakdown herself. Whilst going through her own crisis she had counselling sessions which she found immensely helpful. Due to a lack of funding, the sessions were stopped. She was fortunate to have the support of her sister who is herself disabled and for whom Pushpaben is a **Carer**.

During her difficult times, to keep her mind focused, she took up learning Spanish. She currently helps the elderly and others in the community in various ways, including having a weekly Bhajan session. She emphasised the need to stay in touch with one another as best as possible, through this difficult time. Her message was 'stay positive, everything is possible'.

Although generally an outgoing and positive person, **Jashodaben**, a **senior citizen** from Leicester, suffered a great deal during the isolation. She had lost that human touch, felt loneliness, depression, anxiety and generally felt low.

Expressing the effect of loneliness, Jashodaben related an incident of someone coming to her door to drop something off and the excitement she felt at actually being able to communicate with someone. After the person had left, Jashodaben was so overcome with emotion that she actually cried!

By Jashodaben sharing this incident, it brought it home to us that these are emotionally difficult times for many of us.

A brave and positive person, she ended by saying we can and will overcome all of this.

We had a proponent of Hindu philosophy **Shree Sureshbhai Rajpura** from Birmingham whose brief was to explore with us –“Does our belief help us cope with life changing times”. Sureshbhai spoke to us with Hinduism in mind, as he reminded us that carbon dating shows Hinduism to be 23 thousand years old. For a religion to be in existence for all this time is not only remarkable but there must also be a reason it has stood the test of time!

We have mantras that when chanted repeatedly, help create a protective shield (Kavach) around us that helps to keep us safe. This is the power of our faith and belief.

He recited some of these for us to make note of and recite regularly. This is not a temporary measure for use during the pandemic only but can and will be our coping mechanism for always.

He urged us as Hindus to learn and understand more about our religion. Our understanding will help us to love and practice Hinduism with pride. Knowing some of the answers will help with the many 'why' questions that we all have. Sureshbhai ended with the message ' think positive and believe in yourself'.

To lift our spirits, **Babubhai Rama** from London, entertained us with some light heartedness. Doing just this, he relayed some joyful stories that many of us related to. His jokes were well received, with many having a hearty laugh! A sure stress reliever.

Babubhai encouraged us to look to nature and let nature be our inspiration. At this time, unable to do what we used to do, the outdoors and nature is our escape – let us appreciate it to our advantage. He urged us to be positive and to try not to let the current situation control our lives.

Our **AMSUK President, Hasmukhbhai** was invited to address us.

He thanked the Women's Forum for the session which he found both, informative and enjoyable. Hasmukhbhai said how wonderful technology is, helping family and friends to keep in touch during this difficult time. He wished WF well and encouraged us to 'keep up the good work'.

The vote of thanks was given by **Roshniben, WF Chairperson**.

Roshniben thanked everyone sincerely, for supporting this WF session. She thanked the WF Committee for their hard work in putting this informative event together. The invited speakers were thanked for their time and for sharing their experiences with, giving us a valuable insight into their daily lives.

The Event ended with the rendition of India's **Rashtriya Geet**, by **Gitaben**.

The powerful National Anthem reminds us of our common heritage and helps instil in us, a sense of community and unity.

It is important that we as a community hear of and understand what many are faced with during these unprecedented times. In the true spirit of community, we can all play our part and support each other through the tough times that we are confronted with.

Bollywood Night - 12th December 2020

We were fortunate enough to hold a second Women's Forum Event via ZOOM.

This time it was a glamorous, fun filled Bollywood Night with Marina and Melody Express.

As our Women's Forum Chair, Roshniben said in her opening address, research has shown that music influences central physiological variables like blood pressure, heart rate, respiration, EEG measurements, body temperature and galvanic skin response.

Music plays a great part in our everyday life; it impacts brain function and human behaviour. It helps reduce stress, pain and possibly symptoms of depression. It can aid in improving cognitive and motor skills too.

With music being able to recharge us in this way and bearing in mind the need to de-stress at this difficult time, AMSUK Women's Forum decided to organise this Bollywood Night.

The event was open to all AMSUK members, families and friends. We felt it would bring that much needed 'feel good' factor to our community. The melodious singers and the fabulous music did just that for us, as we rocked the night away.

Thank you to all who joined us. It was wonderful to see you, albeit virtually. It was particularly lovely to see many take to the 'Dance Floor' enjoying yourselves. It must be mentioned that the event gave us the perfect opportunity to 'dress up' and enjoy a great 'night in'!

We are ever grateful to the AMSUK President Hasmukhbhai and Secretary Ashokbhai, and all the AMSUK Committee for their encouragement and for being ever supportive of our events.

Mental Health Awareness Session - 26th January 2021

AMSUK WF were invited to be a part of a Hindu & Jain Group collaboration on Mental Health awareness. The event took place via ZOOM where there were in excess of 500 participants – giving an indication of how important the subject is to people.

We had experts talk about anxiety, depression, the importance of good nutrition and exercise for mental health, as well as laughter therapy. The role of counselling was also highlighted. We heard about the importance of reaching out and talking about issues as well as being able to listen to those who reach out to us, in some way. There were two case studies - a mother who had suffered a bereavement and a mother herself coping with cancer whilst raising a young child. They expressed their grief and spoke about their coping mechanism.

The talks were followed by an interesting and informative Q&A session. Our WF Secretary, Duxaben was also invited to participate in this.

We are fortunate to have been a part of this valuable Mental Health Awareness session. It highlights the importance of a subject which is still largely taboo in our society. We have a duty to dispel the stigma attached to Mental Health and understand the need for openness and acceptance that this exists in all walks of life. As a community, the wellbeing of our members is everyone's responsibility. To this end, we must look out for and do what we can for those who are silently crying out for help. Our support is vital.

We thank you all for supporting one another and for supporting what we do. Your involvement makes our events worthwhile and all the more enjoyable.

“There is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish.”