

Report on International Women's Day 2026

Theme: "Give to Gain"

Organised by

ICC and Women's Cell, NSOU

Title: Women in the Chipko Movement: Exploring a New Dimension

Date: 11 March, 2026

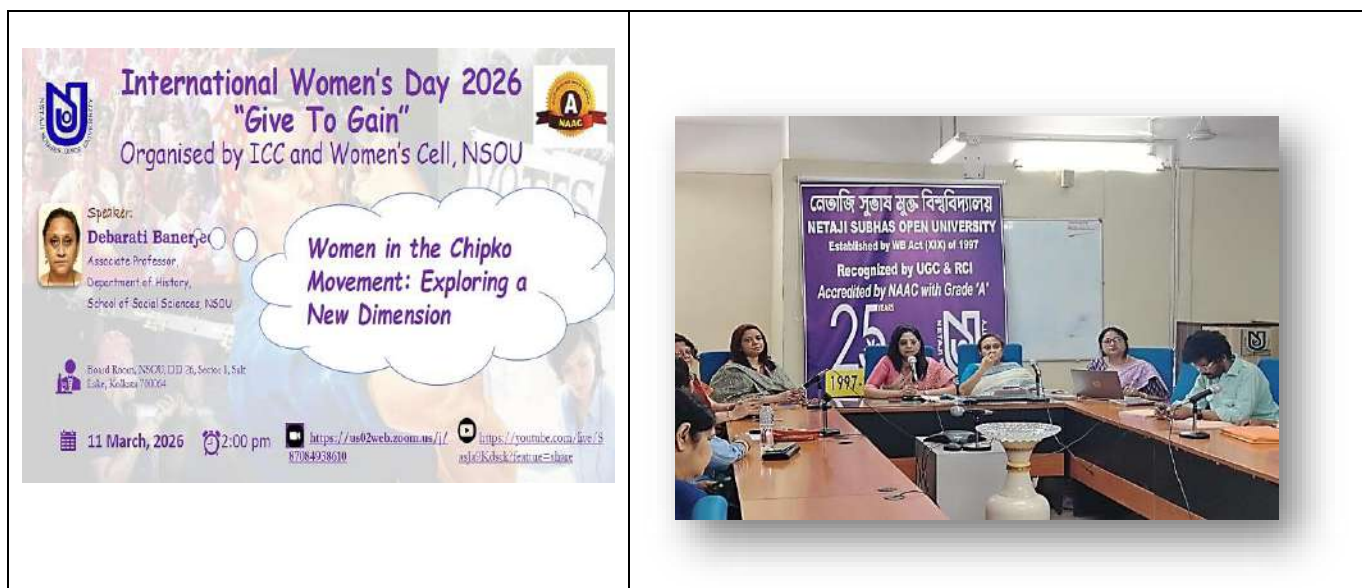
Time: 2 pm

Venue: Board Room, NSOU Headquarters

Mode: Blended

Programme Objectives:

Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU) marked International Women's Day 2026 with a thought-provoking program organised by the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) and the Women's Cell. The event featured the inspiring theme "Give to Gain," emphasising the value of collective contribution, empowerment, and solidarity in advancing gender equality. The programme was organised to ensure that the learners, faculty and officers were provided a new perspective of women's movement in India.



The programme was held on **11 March 2026 at 2:00 pm** in the Board Room of NSOU, DD 26, Sector 1, Salt Lake, Kolkata. It was also available virtually via Zoom and YouTube Live. The total number of participants on the blended platform was 37.

Programme:

The event started with a welcome address by the chair, Prof. Ritu Mathur Mitra, the Presiding Officer, ICC and Women Cell, Netaji Subhas Open University. She set the tone for the event by highlighting the significance of the Internal Complaint Committee and the Women's Cell in the workplace.

The day's lecture was delivered by **Debarati Banerjee**, Associate Professor in the Department of History at the School of Social Sciences, NSOU. Mrs Ananya Mitra, Registrar, Netaji Subhas Open University, facilitates the speaker Debarati Banerjee.



In her presentation, titled “*Women in the Chipko Movement: Exploring a New Dimension*”, **Debarati Banerjee** shed light on the pivotal role women played in one of India's most iconic environmental movements.

Professor Debarati Banerjee based her lecture on examining the role of women in the Chipko movement and tracing the origins of women's participation in its history, she also examined the nature of women's participation in the movement to situate their position within the movement in relation to their male counterparts. She noted that Sarvodaya organisations played a significant role in mobilising women. In that sense, the Chipko movement extended Gandhian strategies of non-violent protests in the nationalist movement in which there was a large- scale women's participation but not in positions of leadership or decision-making.

Professor Banerjee grounded her arguments both in documented sources and in personal oral narratives collected from Chipko activists during her long field engagement in the Himalayan region. Drawing on these voices, she critically examined the widely circulated popular ecofeminist interpretation of the movement and argued for a broader, intersectional understanding of women's as well as the male participation, taking into account the reality of time and space that is the existing contemporary ground realities. She spoke of the differences in the methods in Chipko



agitation and the nature of women’s participation in the different regions within Uttarakhand, Chamoli-Paudi Garhwal, Tehri-Garhwal, and Kumaon. To her, the Chipko movement was more than a conflict between men, the destroyers of nature and women, the protectors of nature. It was a multi -dimensional, multilayered movement rooted in a historical context.

Dr Barnali Roy Choudhury, Convener, ICC and Women Cell, Netaji Subhas Open University, offered a vote of thanks to the audience, highlighting the theme “Give to Gain” and emphasising the need to bridge the gap between legal rights and their enforcement. She discussed critical issues such as women's safety, equal pay, and access to justice in India, noting that the 2026 theme underscores the significance of generosity and support in advancing women's equality. The emphasis is on utilising resources and knowledge to create opportunities for women and girls, benefiting society as a whole.

Participation and Engagement

The hybrid format of the event allowed for inclusive participation. Attendees engaged actively through discussions and reflections, both in-person and online. The presence of students, faculty, and external participants enriched the dialogue, making it a truly collaborative celebration.

The use of digital platforms such as Zoom and YouTube Live expanded the program's reach, ensuring that voices from diverse backgrounds could join the conversation on women’s empowerment and environmental justice.

Programme Outcomes:

The International Women’s Day 2026 celebration at NSOU was not only a commemoration but also a call to action. By revisiting the Chipko Movement through a gendered lens, the event made an attempt to situate the position of the women in the Chipko movement vis- a-vis that of the men, based on documented evidence (published and unpublished) and personal narratives of the activists.

The theme “*Give to Gain*” served as a reminder that progress is achieved when communities recognise and value the women's contributions in an unbiased manner. The program successfully blended history, activism, and contemporary relevance, leaving participants inspired to continue the journey toward equality and justice.

The report is prepared by Dr Barnali Roy Choudhury, Convener, ICC and Women's Cell & Dr Srabanti Chaodhuri, Member, ICC and Women's Cell.