

INSTITUTIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS OF KHEJURI COLLEGE

Khejuri College is an institution of Higher Education located in a remote rural region of Purba Medinipur. The College, initially raised by the philanthropic contributions of local people, strives to serve as an edifice of higher education for the students from the coastal rural areas of the district, especially those from marginalized background. The five spheres of institutional distinctiveness are: i) Empowerment of Marginalized Communities, ii) Women Empowerment, iii) Extension Activities in Local Community, iv) Spreading Environmental Awareness and Communal Harmony, and v) Centre for Innovation and Capacity Building.

Empowerment of Marginalized Communities: More than sixty percent of students of the college belong to SC and OBC communities and many belong to impoverished households. Taking into consideration their need, the college wants to provide education which would be accessible to the people of the community. It upgrades its infrastructural capabilities in order to deliver outcome-based education and bring about upward mobility amongst local residents. Many students are constrained by economic and social factors, barring them travelling long distance from their residence. The College is committed to deliver affordable education to the local populace at a proximal location to their homes. Being aided by the State Government, it offers Programmes in Humanities and Science at relatively affordable fees.

This persistent effort has borne fruit in the recent years. Analysis of the past five years reveals the predominant participation of students from SC and OBC communities in the College.

Women Empowerment: A similar trend is decipherable in the enrollment of female students in the College. Over the last five years (Academic Session:2018-19 to 2022-23), the percentage of female students have increased consistently. A slight dip is decipherable during the Covid Pandemic but the trend has been reinstated in the Post-Covid scenario.

The participation of female students in their pursuance of higher education is encouraged through scholarships by the State Government. This is also sustained by the Girls' Hostel so that they are not denied the opportunity to study due to distance from home. College has arranged for Girls' Common Room which is provided with a Sanitary Napkin Vending Machine and Incinerator. An attached Washroom is also available. The College abides by a strict no-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment and the Internal Complaints Committee is active. The College recognizes that mere academic pursuit is not enough; it is important to encourage a spirit of Gender Equity among first generation learners through the organization of seminars, webinars, special talks and commemoration of important days like International Women's Day, Raksha Bandhan etc.

Extension Activities in Local Community: Participation of students from marginalized sections in social activities and dissemination of awareness about health, hygiene, social values and civic responsibilities are ensured by the College through various programmes and events. These activities are promoted through the three units of NSS and NCC Units:

- Organisation of Health Check-up Camp including Eye Check up, Thalassemia Detection and Blood Group Detection Camp
- Organisation of Blood Donation Camp
- Organisation of Sensitization Programmes on Dengue, Malaria and other Seasonal Diseases
- Spreading of Awareness about Environmental Issues and Ecological Preservation
- Organising Relief Campaigns during natural disasters like Yaas, Amplan cyclones and Covid-19 Pandemic.
- Spreading of Awareness about Health and Hygiene among members of local community

Spreading Environmental Awareness and Communal Harmony: The College engages in spreading environmental awareness, responsibility and the development of love for nature among people of the local community. This is achieved by providing an opportunity to local school students for real-life exposure to science laboratories as well as through observation of flora and fauna. Similar drives are also taken to infuse interest in space through organisation of “Sky Observation Workshop”. This helps in building a bridge between school and college education.

Khejuri was a part of the Hijli Kingdom in the seventeenth century. It had been ruled by Taj Khan, Masnad-i-Ala, associated with the Chistiyya order. Being one of the early centres of colonialism, the region experienced consequences of such encounters. The Portuguese developed a settlement in this area in the seventeenth century. Later, the British established a port in the region. They established the first Post Office of India at Khejuri. At Khejuri Port, most of the large ocean-going ships used to drop anchor. It was from Khejuri that Raja Rammohan Roy and Prince Dwarkanath Tagore set sail for Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the region has a rich, multilayered history. The College aims at maintaining this delicate fabric of harmony in the local community. As the premier higher educational institution of the region, Khejuri College recognizes its role in taking initiatives to provide an inclusive environment within and beyond College campus. The activities initiated are as follows-

- i) ‘Raksha Bandhan’ is observed every year which gives the message of strong bonding among all students, teachers, staff and local community members.
- ii) Various cultural programmes uphold a spirit of camaraderie amongst staff and students from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.
- iii) Tuphan Gaji fair is a local fair which has been an iconic testament to socio-religious harmony since years. Students of the College visit the fair, guided by teachers.

Centre for Innovation and Capacity Building: The College maintains intimate contact with local organisations, like Khejuri Saihitya Parishad, Khejuri Heritage Committee and Khejuri Itihas Samity. It coordinates with local administrative bodies to spread electoral literacy and to disseminate Government welfare initiatives. The College recognizes that in order to channelize the best abilities of the students, it is important to connect them to their roots. Thus, the Innovation and Incubation Centre of the College makes the students aware of the rich, syncretic heritage of Khejuri and encourages them to develop skills rooted in indigenous cultural practices. Not only are Value Added Courses on topics like Smart Agriculture organized but also several Capacity Building Initiatives are

undertaken. Through an arrangement with Aksharekha Foundation, an NGO, the College has introduced Training for Self-employment in Bridal Make Up, Mehendi and Handmade Jewellery. Through its sustained efforts, the College thus distinguishes itself as relevant to its immediate socio-cultural ambience.