

FOREWORD

This booklet discusses a spectrum of issues faced by our women colleagues in scientific institutions. I believe that this will be a valuable resource against gender-specific biases facing us on an almost daily basis. I congratulate IndiaBioscience in conceiving and compiling the collection and consider it my privilege to write this foreword.

As I write these words, I recall an incident from my days in school. I was a fairly mediocre student, and one particular year a girl in the class stood first. She was a good friend, and I, therefore, went around telling everybody how happy I was to see her do well. Much to my surprise, I was chided by friends and elders. How could I languish behind when a girl stands first in class? To make matters worse, I was actually appearing to be happy about this. At that age, I did not quite understand why nobody ever had a problem with the other boys standing first. This kept me disturbed for several months and was perhaps my first encounter with gender bias. I bring this up here to make the point that gender-related discrimination starts much before women or men become scientists. Therefore, in addition to the workplaces across our country, a mindset change is essential when parents guide their children. The values imbibed in those early years will stay forever.

A vibrant and successful scientific enterprise requires equal and enthusiastic participation across genders. It is our duty to facilitate such participation, and speak up when we perceive partiality. This is already happening, because I now see a willingness to discuss gender-specific issues across fora. I hope for a future where women express themselves freely and fearlessly, and society supports them in doing so. This will not come easy, but then, aren't good things worth fighting for?

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