

International Women's Day 2026 Virtual Series: A Confluence of Legacy, Innovation, and Future Pathways – A Report

Introduction

The Indian Ceramic Society (InCerS) successfully organized a five-day virtual series from 2 to 7 March, 2026 in celebration of International Women's Day, centered on the theme "*Her Strength. Her Impact. Her Journey Beyond Self.*" The series comprised five thematic online sessions, each bringing together distinguished academicians, researchers, industry professionals, and student members from across the country and abroad, the series created a vibrant platform for reflection, knowledge exchange, and forward-looking dialogue. The concluding session, "*The Confluence*," represented not merely the closure of a programme but the coming together of ideas, experiences, and aspirations into a shared vision for the future of ceramics. This year's International Women's Day Virtual Series was conceptualized and steered under the dynamic leadership of Ms Sanghamitra Bharati, Council Member (South Zone), Indian Ceramic Society.

Day 1 (March 2, 2026) – Pioneerera

The inaugural day, *Pioneerera*, was coordinated by Ms Piyali Chakrabartty (Office Executive, Indian Ceramic Society), while the thematic context was set by Ms Sanghamitra Bharati (GM-Process Control, JSW Steel Ltd). In her opening remarks, Ms Bharati emphasized that the journey of women in science

extends beyond individual achievement to enabling opportunities and pathways for others. Conceptualized as a tribute to the pioneering women who laid the foundations of ceramic science in India, the session highlighted how present advancements are deeply rooted in their perseverance and vision.

Dr Suman Kumari Mishra (Former Director, CSIR-CGRI, Kolkata) delivered a reflective and forward-looking address, blending personal experience with institutional insight. She drew attention to the declining representation of women from graduation to leadership levels, while emphasizing



Women Pioneers

that excellence, integrity, and competence ultimately command recognition. She encouraged young researchers to actively engage in discussions, build professional networks, and explore emerging research domains such as advanced ceramics and sustainable materials.

Dr M. Lalithambika (Retd Deputy Director, CSIR-NIIST and Research Coordinator, Integrated Rural Tech Centre, Mundur, Kerala), drawing from her distinguished career, reinforced the importance of resilience, inner conviction, and self-belief in overcoming structural and societal challenges.

Together, the session established a strong foundation by connecting legacy with aspiration and inspiring the next generation of scientists.

Day 2 (March 4, 2026) – Globelle

The second day, *Globelle*, was coordinated by Dr Santa Kolay (Senior Manager (R&D), RHI Magnesita), with the



thematic context set by Dr S. T. Aruna (Senior Principal Scientist, CSIR-NAL & Vice Chairperson, InCerS Karnataka Chapter). In her introductory remarks, Dr Aruna underscored the importance of global collaboration and

interdisciplinary approaches in advancing ceramic science and engineering.

The session was conducted in collaboration with the American Ceramic Society and the European Ceramic Society, whose role in nominating and facilitating distinguished international speakers significantly strengthened the global dimension of the programme.

This session featured three eminent international speakers. Dr Astri Bjørnetun Haugen (Associate Professor, Technical University of Denmark; representative of the European Ceramic Society) presented her lecture on "Additive Manufacturing of Lead-Free Piezoelectric Ceramics," discussing advanced fabrication techniques such as direct



Global Experts

ink writing and photopolymerization, along with the importance of microstructural control in enhancing performance.

Dr María Canillas Pérez (Associate Professor, The Technical University of Madrid, Spain; representative of the European Ceramic Society) delivered a talk on “Ceramics and Laser Processing for Medical Applications,” highlighting the use of laser-based techniques in biomedical innovations, including bioactive implants, tissue engineering, and 3D bioprinting.

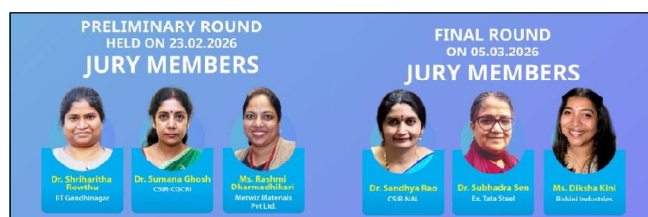
Dr Dong Lili Liu (Associate Professor, University of Oxford; representative of the American Ceramic Society) presented on “Deformation and Fracture of Advanced Energy Materials Under Extreme Conditions,” focusing on the mechanical behaviour and reliability of ceramics in demanding environments such as nuclear and aerospace systems.

Collectively, the session showcased global leadership by women in ceramics and emphasized innovation across diverse and interdisciplinary domains.

Day 3 (March 5, 2026) – Innovesta

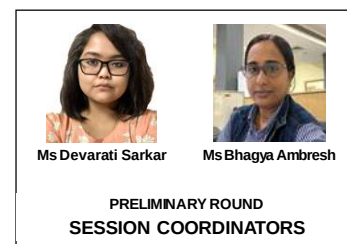
The third day, *Innovesta*, was coordinated and moderated by Ms Paramita Sarkar (Senior General Manager (Quality and Process Control), Vesuvius India Ltd) and Ms Khushi Kumari (Junior Engineer, Tata Steel Ltd). The thematic context was set by Ms Riya Ghosh (Technical Sales Manager, Elkem South Asia Pvt Ltd & Treasurer, InCerS Kolkata Chapter), who in her introductory remarks highlighted the importance of empowering young women researchers by providing platforms that encourage innovation, confidence, and technical excellence.

This session represented the final round of the student competition, in which the primary participants – female student members of InCerS – were initially nominated by seven Student Chapters, with each chapter selecting three candidates through an internal screening process. The competition followed a structured two-stage selection process. The preliminary round, conducted online on February 23, 2026, involved presentations evaluated by a panel comprising Dr Sriharitha Rowthu (IIT, Gandhinagar), Dr Sumana Ghosh (CSIR-CGCRI, Kolkata), and Ms Rashmi Dharmadhikari (Metwiz Materials Pvt Ltd, Mumbai), based



Jury panel – preliminary and final round of ‘Innovesta’

on originality, feasibility, and impact. The round was coordinated and moderated by Ms Devarati Sarkar (MarCom Lead, Tega McNally Minerals Ltd) and Ms Bhagya Ambresh (Assistant Manager, JSW Steel Ltd).



Based on this assessment, five finalists were selected for the final round held during the Women’s Day celebration week. The final presentations demonstrated strong technical depth and alignment with contemporary challenges such as sustainability, refractory performance, and advanced ceramic applications.

The final round was evaluated by an eminent jury comprising Dr Subhadra Sen (Former Tata Steel; Refractory R&D Expert), Dr Sandhya Rao (CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories; Smart Materials Specialist), and Ms Rashmi Dharmadhikari (Entrepreneur, Metwiz Materials Pvt Ltd, Mumbai; Materials Technology Leader), who engaged participants in detailed technical discussions focusing on industrial scalability, cost economics, and long-term feasibility.

The session not only highlighted the capabilities and confidence of emerging researchers but also reinforced the Society’s commitment to nurturing future leaders and strengthening the academia-industry interface.

Day 4 (March 6, 2026) – Bridgify

The fourth day, *Bridgify*, was moderated by Ms Deepsikha Brahma (Manager, Refractories Planning, Tata Steel Ltd), while the thematic context was set by Prof. S. Manisha Vidyavathy (Professor, Anna University, Chennai & Secretary, InCerS Tamilnadu Chapter). She highlighted the need to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and industrial application by fostering collaboration, practical exposure, and curriculum alignment with industry needs.



This session was organized as a panel discussion featuring distinguished experts from academia, research organizations and industry, including Dr Chithra Selvaraj (Float Line Manager, Saint Gobain India Pvt Ltd), Dr R. Uma Rani (Scientist, URSC, ISRO), Dr Sunipa Bhattacharyya



Panelists – academia and industry experts

(Associate Professor, NIT Rourkela), Ms Asha Sampath (Founder, Brand Horizon) and Ms S. Lakshmi Prabha (Associate Vice President, Technical & Quality, CUMI).

The discussion brought forward diverse perspectives on the evolving relationship between academia, industry, and startups. Key themes included the importance of internships, joint research initiatives, multidisciplinary skill development, and the role of startups in translating research into practical applications. The session underscored the concept of co-creation as essential for innovation and sustainable technological advancement.

The format included moderated interactions among the panelists, followed by audience engagement through questions and discussions.

Day 5 (March 7, 2026) – The Confluence

The concluding day, *The Confluence*, was anchored by Dr Sucharita Manna (Assistant Executive Secretary, Indian Ceramic Society), who welcomed the participants and reflected on the series as a convergence of legacy, global collaboration, student innovation, and institutional synergy.

A key highlight was the address by Ms Gokila Devi (Deputy Manager, Industrial Ceramics Division, CUMI), who shared the perspective of a young professional. She emphasized the importance of continuous learning, experimentation, and resilience while also highlighting the need for greater representation of women in shop-floor roles and stronger mentorship frameworks.

Dr Atanu Ranjan Pal, President of the Indian Ceramic Society, shared his reflections on the outcomes of the series and reiterated the Society's role in knowledge dissemination and fostering industry-academia collaboration. He also emphasized the importance of increasing the representation of women in leadership roles within the Society.

An interactive segment provided a platform for the participants to openly share their perspectives on key issues facing the ceramic sector. Concerns were raised regarding limited investment in research and development activities in India, and the pressing need to significantly strengthen infrastructure and support systems for students. The importance of improving recognition and equitable representation of women in the ceramic industry, particularly in leadership and decision-making roles, was strongly emphasized.

The announcement of Innovesta winners added a celebratory dimension to the session. The results were announced by Dr Sitendu Mandal, Honorary Secretary of the Indian Ceramic Society, which were as follows:

- First: Shumaila Rizwan (GCECT, Kolkata)
- Second: Rahini Ghosh (GCECT, Kolkata)
- Third: Priscilla R (Anna University, Chennai)



Shumaila Rizwan



Rahini Ghosh



Priscilla R.

Innovesta Winners

The session concluded with expressions of sincere gratitude to all individuals and organizations who contributed to the success of the series. Special acknowledgement was extended to Mr Shankha Chatterjee (Honorary Treasurer, Indian Ceramic Society) for his mentorship and to Ms Sanghamitra Bharati for her leadership in coordinating the programme. The contributions of the organizing team, international collaborators, speakers, panelists, jury members, and participants ensured the success and impact of the event.

Conclusion

The International Women's Day 2026 Virtual Series by the Indian Ceramic Society emerged as a thoughtfully curated and impactful initiative that seamlessly integrated the legacy of pioneers, the strength of global collaboration, the promise of young innovators, and the necessity of institutional synergy. The series not only celebrated the achievements of women in ceramics but also articulated a clear and forward-looking pathway for the community – one rooted in inclusivity, driven by innovation, and strengthened through collaboration. The spirit of "*Her Strength. Her Impact. Her Journey Beyond Self.*" continues beyond the event, inspiring sustained engagement and collective progress in shaping the future of ceramics.



Organizing Team