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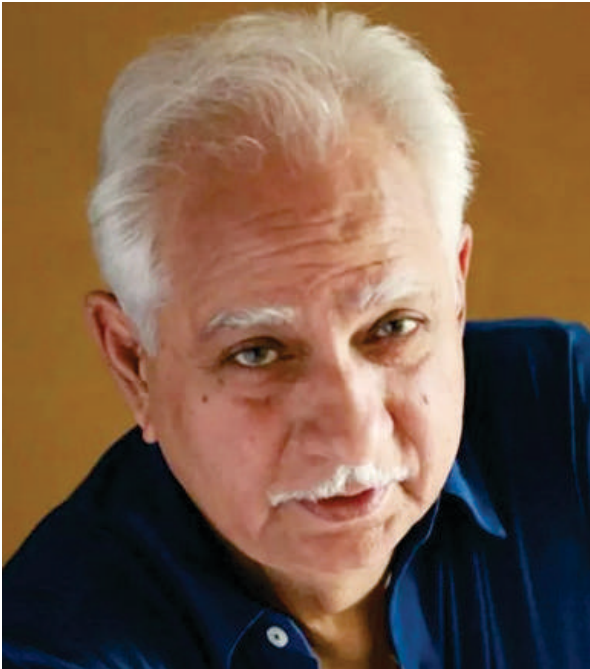
Media Talk Back

Honour her हुनर! Part-2

**Empowering the
Industry:**
Women at the
Forefront of Media



Message from the Chairman



Shri. Ramesh Sippy

Chairman, MESC, Renowned Indian Filmmaker, Director,
Producer & Educationist

I am overjoyed and would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who supported the completion of "Honor Her हुनर," the Media Talkback Magazine. This magazine is dedicated entirely to the subject of women's empowerment, featuring a wealth of experiences shared by influential women from various fields, including artists, entrepreneurs, authors, activists, and more. Our goal is to inspire readers to marvel at whatever they choose to do, as women have always been an essential part of our families and society. Empowering them should be the responsibility of each and every member of our society.

We envision the women of our country as strong, skilled, independent, confident, creative, and bold enough to make independent decisions and stand up for themselves. When a woman realizes her true potential and strengths, she educates herself and chooses herself, uplifting both herself and the women around her. This is what we mean by empowerment.

Message from the CEO

I am incredibly thankful to all of those who supported and aided in the production of the 29th edition of Media Talkback magazine, "Honor Her हुनर", which is dedicated to **Women Empowerment**. The purpose of this magazine is to share experiences and points of view from many extraordinary women both within and outside of Media and Entertainment Industry.

I would also like to give my utmost appreciation to all the renowned women for selecting "Honor Her हुनर" as a platform for sharing their insightful words, life stories, and career paths with us. This magazine is meant to motivate women everywhere to recognize their unique abilities and thrive in their own respective endeavors.



Shri. Mohit Soni

Chief Executive Officer, MESC

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ABOUT MESC

Media and Entertainment Skills Council is a non-profit organization that was formed in 2012. It operates under the guidelines of NSDC (National Skills Development Corporation) who is financial supporter of MESC while FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) is the promoter of MESC. The council is registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. The major objective of the MESC is to generate industry-ready skilled manpower, vocalization of secondary and highersecondary educational levels and also to enhance employability options for the youth through demand driven competency based modular courses. MESC plays an important role not only to open doors for the youth but the long term focus is on the revolution of M&E Education and Industry. The Idea is to fill the gaps among the educated and employable to bring forth a reduction in the dropout rate in the secondary level of education.

The Prime Purpose of MESC

- To conduct skill gap study and develop occupational standards.
- To initiate skills cataloguing for Media and Entertainment Industry.
- To determine skills/competency standards and qualifications and getting them noted as per NSQF.
- To create skills development plan with industry stakeholders, government agencies and NSDC to setup Labour Market Information System (LMIS).
- To ensure the standardization of affiliation, accreditation and assessment process aligned with NSQF guidelines as determined by NSQF.
- To identify and create of certified trainers and assessors across the Country.
- To promote Academies of Excellence.
- To look into the specific skilling needs of ST/SC, differently abled and other minorities.
- To plan and facilitate the execution of Training of Trainers Program along with NSDC and states.
- MESC also makes certain that the people getting training and skilling in accordance with the norms laid down are assured of employment at decent wages.



250000+
Trainings

108
Qualification Pack

12
Sub - Sectors

970+
Schools Offering
MESC Courses

850+
Training Institutions

500000+
Certified under RPL

2000+
Total Certified
Trainers

200+
Affiliated Training
Partners

ABOUT MESIC INTERNATIONAL

MESIC International is dedicated to promoting collaboration between Indian and international trainers for a dynamic exchange of expertise. By upskilling Indian resources through exposure to international standards and practices, the Council grooms talents by leveraging the knowledge of global industry experts. MESIC International is also focused on establishing Centers of Excellence in different countries to promote skill development and industry-aligned training programs. Additionally, the Council explores collaborative research projects on emerging technologies, trends, and innovations in the Media & Entertainment sector.

Expanding Global Skill Ecosystems

- MESIC develops skill ecosystems in partnering countries by focusing on skilling, upskilling, and reskilling. Indian skilled resources are deployed as trainers, master trainers, and project executives to share their expertise.
- MESIC provides consultancy to host countries, ministries, and concerned departments to nurture skill development and the Media & Entertainment (M&E) industry. The Council supports the growth of the M&E industry in host countries through Indian studios, production houses, and the broader Indian M&E industry, while also assisting in organizing industry events.
- MESIC supports M&E studios and production houses in setting up production facilities and offices in partner countries. The Council also helps in developing content tailored for global audiences through partner studios and facilitates the outsourcing of Indian projects (IP) to the global market.
- MESIC provides Skill India Certifications, which are recognized by the Government of India and valued by several universities overseas. These certifications are highly beneficial for students as they enhance credibility and employability in both the Indian and international employment markets. By achieving these certifications, students gain a competitive edge and greater opportunities for career advancement across borders.



MECAT

MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT
CREATIVE APTITUDE TEST

MECAT

MECAT is all about you and your journey in the creative world. It looks at your unique creative and problem-solving abilities, as well as your personality traits, so you can make informed career choices from 10th grade onwards.

Self-Awareness and Growth

MECAT provides students with a deeper understanding of their own strengths, interests, and aptitudes, allowing them to take informed decisions about their educational and career paths.



Discover Your Passion, Chart Your Course, Conquer the Industry

MECAT provides clarity and directions to students by helping them identify their strengths, interests, and potential career paths within the dynamic media and entertainment landscape. It goes beyond traditional academic qualifications and focuses on assessing skills, abilities, and creative thinking required in the industry.





ABOUT LUMINARY LINES!

In the realm of M&E, Luminary Lines, an initiative by MESG, illuminates pathways to innovative solutions and exceptional excellence.



SERVICES

Solutions

Content Design & Development: We create compelling and tailored content to engage your target audience effectively.

Brand Marketing and Promotion: We elevate your brand's presence through strategic and impactful marketing campaigns.

Communication and PR: We build and maintain a positive public image with effective communication and public relations strategies.

Media Buying & Planning: We optimise media placements for maximum reach.

Celebrity Management: We leverage celebrity influence to enhance the brand's visibility and credibility.

Music & Video Production: We produce high-quality music and video content that captivates and inspires the audience.

Consulting

Startup Support: We provide expert guidance to help startups navigate early-stage challenges and growth.

Incubation Startup: We offer resources, mentorship, and a nurturing environment to encourage startup innovation.

Centres Of Excellence: We establish specialised hubs for advanced learning, industry best practices, and innovation.

Alliances and Partnerships: We facilitate strategic alliances and partnerships to drive mutual growth and success.

Media and Promotion

Events & Exposition: We organise impactful events and expositions that showcase and elevate the brand.

Workshops & Masterclasses: We conduct interactive workshops and masterclasses led by industry experts.

Product & Brand Launch: We organise high-impact product and brand launch events.

On-Ground Activation: We create engaging and immersive on-ground activations to connect directly with the audience.

Digital Marketing and Promotions: We implement innovative digital marketing strategies to boost the brand's online presence and engagement.

Award and Accumulate: We hold award ceremonies to celebrate excellence and enhance the brand's prestige.

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN INDIA'S MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

REDEFINING NARRATIVES & BREAKING BOUNDARIES



In the ever-evolving landscape of India's Media & Entertainment (M&E) industry, a powerful force is propelling change—women empowerment. As we look beyond the glitz and glamour, we witness a seismic shift, where women are no longer confined to the periphery but are at the forefront of shaping narratives, breaking barriers, and redefining the very essence of creative expression. According to recent data, the representation of women in key roles in the Indian M&E industry has seen significant growth. Female directors and producers have increased by 15% in the past five years, while the number of women in technical roles such as cinematography and sound engineering has surged by an impressive 20%. These numbers are a testament to the growing recognition of women's talent and expertise in a traditionally male-dominated industry.

“Gone are the days when women were limited to a few predefined roles in the industry. Today, they are the architects of change, driving conversations on critical issues, and reshaping storytelling.”

APARNA SEN
ACCLAIMED FILMMAKER

Women in filmmaking have spearheaded this transformation, crafting stories that resonate with authenticity, giving voice to the hitherto unheard and marginalized narratives. From capturing the struggles of everyday life to celebrating tales of resilience and triumph, these filmmakers have dismantled traditional norms and portrayed women as strong, independent, and multi-dimensional characters.

“The power of storytelling lies in the ability to inspire change, and we, as women, have the responsibility to challenge the status quo and shape a more inclusive narrative”

ZOYA AKHTAR
CELEBRATED FILMMAKER





Behind the scenes, women in technical roles have ushered in a new era of creativity and innovation. Their exceptional work in areas like cinematography, sound design, visual effects, and animation has raised the bar for excellence in the industry. Moreover, women in visual effects and animation have pushed the

boundaries of imagination and creativity, adding enchantment and spectacle to cinematic adventures. Pioneers like Charuvi Agrawal and Pankhuri Agrawal have created digital wonders that transport audiences to fantastical realms and spark a sense of awe. The empowerment of women in technical roles is a testament to the power of perseverance, determination, and the unwavering pursuit of passion. Their remarkable contributions have set a precedent, igniting a ripple effect that paves the way for future generations of women to thrive in the M&E industry.

The human journey is an intricate tapestry woven with threads of resilience, determination, and unwavering hope. In the face of life's formidable challenges, women have consistently demonstrated an innate ability to rise above circumstances and forge paths of inspiration. Their stories illuminate the boundless potential of the human spirit, reminding us that strength often flourishes in the soil of adversity.



In every corner of the world, women have accomplished extraordinary feats, turning trials into triumphs and setbacks into stepping stones. These narratives stand as timeless testaments to the power of perseverance, embodying the essence of human tenacity. From overcoming personal hardships to igniting social change, these women showcase the remarkable capacity of human beings to not only endure, but to flourish against all odds. In their stories, we find a wellspring of motivation, a profound reminder that challenges are not roadblocks, but invitations to uncover hidden reservoirs of courage and unlock the door to unparalleled achievement.

“ I am a firm believer that the creative process knows no gender. Women bring a unique perspective and creativity that enhances the art of filmmaking ”

AMRITA PRITAM
Indian Novelist, Essayist & Poet

Moreover, journalism has witnessed a transformation with female reporters and anchors at the helm, fearlessly driving conversations on critical issues that shape the nation's discourse. Armed with integrity, objectivity, and an unwavering commitment to truth, they confront challenges head-on, breaking through barriers and redefining the face of Indian media. These trailblazing women understand the power of their voice and the responsibility that comes with it. They are not mere spectators but agents of change, using their platform to shed light on social injustices, advocate for marginalized communities, and hold those in power accountable. Through their dedicated reporting, they bridge the gap between the privileged and the marginalized, shining a spotlight on untold stories and amplifying voices that were once unheard.

“ *Our words have the power to change minds, challenge norms, and inspire action. As women journalists, we embrace this responsibility with a sense of duty and dedication.* ”

BARKHA DUTT
Renowned Journalist



As we celebrate the strides made in women empowerment in India's M&E industry, we recognize that the road ahead is one of continuous progress and transformation. It is a road where stories are yet to be told, boundaries are meant to be broken, and the world of entertainment becomes a canvas for diversity, equality, and inclusivity. Let us, as a collective, embrace the power of women's empowerment in the M&E industry, for it is a force that will not only redefine the industry but also inspire generations and empower women everywhere to dream, to aspire, and to soar to greater heights, leaving an indelible legacy for posterity. Together, we usher in a new era where creativity knows no gender, and the spirit of empowerment becomes the driving force behind India's media and entertainment industry.



**EMPOWERING ESSENCE:
CELEBRATING THE STRENGTH
OF WOMANHOOD**

In the illustrious world of Indian cinema, there is a captivating story that often remains untold—the history of women filmmakers who have made remarkable contributions behind the screen. While the spotlight frequently shines on the male directors, actors, and producers, it is essential to acknowledge and celebrate the remarkable achievements of women who have played a pivotal role in shaping the Indian film industry. Indian women have fearlessly broken barriers and embraced their passion for filmmaking. From the early days of Indian cinema to the present era, countless women have triumphed against adversity, establishing themselves as trailblazers and inspiring future generations.

During the formative years of Indian cinema, notable names such as Fatma Begum and Devika Rani emerged as pioneers in a male-dominated industry. Fatma Begum, often considered India's first woman filmmaker, directed and produced "Bulbul-e-Paristan" in 1926, defying societal expectations and leaving an indelible mark on the industry. Devika Rani, a multifaceted artist, not only acted but also became the first female head of a film studio—Bombay Talkies—in 1943. As the years passed, women continued to make their presence felt behind the camera. In the 1970s, filmmakers like Aparna Sen and Sai Paranjpye showcased their artistic prowess, presenting stories that resonated deeply with audiences. Aparna Sen, renowned for her poignant narratives, directed films like "36 Chowringhee Lane" and "Mr. and Mrs. Iyer," receiving critical acclaim both nationally and internationally. Similarly, Sai Paranjpye's films such as "Sparsh" and "Chashme Buddoor" demonstrated her distinct directorial style, blending humor and social commentary seamlessly.

The new millennium witnessed a surge in female filmmakers in India, bringing fresh perspectives and narratives to the forefront. Filmmakers like Zoya Akhtar, Gauri Shinde, and Meghna Gulzar have made significant contributions, leaving an indelible mark on the Indian film industry. Zoya Akhtar's films, such as "Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara" and "Gully Boy," broke conventional storytelling molds, capturing the essence of contemporary Indian society. Gauri Shinde's debut film, "English Vinglish," touched hearts and initiated conversations on gender roles and self-empowerment. Meghna Gulzar, known for her thought-provoking films like "Talvar" and "Raazi," fearlessly tackles socially relevant subjects, challenging societal norms with every project.

These women, along with countless others, have shattered glass ceilings and paved the way for future generations of female filmmakers in India. Their resilience, creativity, and determination have transformed the landscape of Indian cinema, proving that talent knows no gender. As we celebrate the contributions of women filmmakers in Indian cinema, let us acknowledge their invaluable role in bringing diverse stories to life and inspiring generations of filmmakers to come. They have not only left an indelible mark on the industry but have also shattered stereotypes, encouraging aspiring women to embrace their passions and rewrite the narrative of Indian cinema.



Indian cinema has a rich history of women filmmakers who have made significant contributions behind the screen. While the film industry has traditionally been male-dominated, several talented and pioneering women have overcome societal barriers to pursue their passion for filmmaking.





CELEBRATING THE VISIONARIES BEHIND THE CAMERA

In the resplendent realm of India's media and entertainment industry, a constellation of trailblazing women illuminates the path with their exceptional talents and unyielding determination. While the spotlight often dances upon actors and directors, it is the indomitable spirit of women working tirelessly behind the camera that breathes life into our favorite films, television shows, and media content. In this celebration of empowerment, we recognize and honor the visionary women whose creativity and passion transcend boundaries and elevate the art of storytelling.

Kiran Rao, the unsung cinematic maestro, is not just known for being the partner of Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan; she is a filmmaker and producer in her own right. Through her brilliance, she has brought forth masterpieces like "Dhobi Ghat" and "Secret Superstar," captivating hearts and minds with narratives that touch the soul. Her films resonate deeply, sparking conversations and planting seeds of change within society.

Deepa Bhatia, the enchantress of film editing, wields her artistic brush to paint vibrant narratives that evoke emotions and leave an indelible impact. Through her masterful touch, she has enriched films like "Taare Zameen Par," "Kapoor & Sons," and "Talaash," guiding audiences on transformative journeys that linger in their hearts.

In the realm of independent filmmaking, Rima Das emerges as a beacon of empowerment, her work "Village Rockstars" resonating on global stages. A multi-faceted artist, she defies convention, handling roles in cinematography, editing, and production. Her journey serves as an empowering testament to the boundless possibilities of creative expression.

Shubha Mudgal, the divine songstress, graces the world of film with her musical brilliance. An embodiment of versatility, she not only mesmerizes with her classical vocals but also weaves soul-stirring compositions for films like "Zubeidaa" and "Pinjar." Her melodies become the heartbeat of storytelling, breathing life into characters and experiences.

Priya Seth, the magician of production design, conjures immersive worlds that enrapture audiences. Her transformative work in movies like "Udta Punjab" and "Raazi" transports viewers to atmospheric realms, amplifying the storytelling's emotional resonance. Through her artistic vision, she underscores the power of visualization in conveying narratives.

These extraordinary women are pioneers, carving pathways for countless others to tread with passion and purpose. They embody the essence of empowerment, transcending stereotypes, and breaking barriers with each stroke of their brilliance. Their contributions shape the very fabric of India's media and entertainment industry, forging a path for aspiring women to pursue their dreams unapologetically. Let us come together and celebrate these illuminating pathfinders, for their stories inspire us to embrace the limitless potential within ourselves. In recognizing their invaluable contributions, we honor the divine feminine force that resides within each of us, urging us to rise and shine as radiant beacons of empowerment. With their unwavering resolve, these remarkable women affirm that creativity knows no bounds and that women have the power to reshape the narrative of our society, igniting a revolution of empowerment and respect for generations to come.



REDEFINING BEAUTY STANDARDS IN THE INDIAN MAKEUP INDUSTRY

In recent years, the Indian makeup industry has undergone a remarkable transformation, challenging conventional beauty standards and embracing diversity like never before. With a rich cultural heritage and a diverse population, India's makeup industry is embracing the power of inclusivity, redefining beauty standards, and empowering individuals to celebrate their unique identities. This paradigm shift has not only impacted the industry itself but has also resonated with consumers across the country. Let us delve into the inspiring journey of how the Indian makeup industry is rewriting the rules and championing a more inclusive definition of beauty.



Embracing Diversity

The traditional notions of beauty in India were often limited to fair skin, specific facial features, and conforming to societal norms. However, the makeup industry has now recognized the need for inclusivity and representation of all skin tones, body types, and gender identities. Influential makeup brands, talented artists, and social media influencers have played a pivotal role in amplifying this change. They have highlighted the beauty of darker skin tones, celebrated unique features, and emphasized the importance of self-acceptance. By doing so, they have inspired millions to embrace their natural beauty and feel confident in their own skin.

Breaking Stereotypes

The Indian makeup industry is challenging long-standing stereotypes and preconceived notions associated with beauty. For instance, it is no longer uncommon to see women with unconventional professions or non-conforming gender identities as the face of makeup campaigns. These bold choices in representation are shifting the narrative and encouraging individuals to break free from societal expectations. By showcasing diverse individuals in advertisements, editorials, and social media campaigns, the industry is championing a message of acceptance, encouraging people to be comfortable with their unique attributes and choices.

Celebrating Cultural Heritage:

India is a treasure trove of diverse cultures, each with its own unique beauty practices and traditions. The makeup industry in India has embraced this cultural richness by incorporating traditional techniques and indigenous ingredients into their products. From Ayurvedic skincare to incorporating regional makeup styles, brands are celebrating and promoting the country's rich heritage. This not only brings pride to Indians but also educates consumers about the significance of these age-old beauty rituals.

Empowering Individuals:

Beyond celebrating diversity, the Indian makeup industry is also empowering individuals by encouraging self-expression and creativity. Makeup is now viewed as a tool of self-care, a form of art, and a means to boost confidence. The industry has created safe spaces for people to experiment with different looks, challenge beauty norms, and express their individuality. Furthermore, several initiatives have been launched to provide makeup education and training to aspiring artists, regardless of their background, gender, or socio-economic status. This democratization of beauty education has opened doors for individuals to pursue their dreams and build successful careers in the makeup industry.

The Road Ahead:

While significant progress has been made, the journey towards redefining beauty standards in the Indian makeup industry is an ongoing process. The industry must continue to push boundaries, amplify underrepresented voices, and foster a culture of inclusivity and acceptance. Brands should prioritize ethical practices, sustainability, and diverse representation to create a lasting impact. Consumers, too, play a crucial role by supporting brands that align with their values and demanding greater diversity and inclusivity in the products and campaigns they engage with.

The Indian makeup industry is experiencing a profound transformation, challenging traditional beauty standards and paving the way for a more inclusive and empowering future.

“Wear your makeup as a badge of honor – a symbol of your strength, resilience, and unapologetic self-love. The power of makeup is not in its ability to change you, but in its capacity to enhance and accentuate the incredible person you already are.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF REPRESENTATION: SHAPING A MORE INCLUSIVE GAMING LANDSCAPE

In a predominantly male-dominated industry, the emergence of powerhouse female gamers is of paramount importance. Their presence not only challenges preconceived notions but also offers a more diverse and authentic gaming experience. The significance of representation lies in inspiring young girls and women to pursue their gaming passions fearlessly, paving the way for a generation of gamers who know no gender boundaries.

As the gaming society evolves, fostering inclusivity becomes a shared responsibility. Gaming communities, developers, and platforms play a crucial role in creating spaces that encourage and support female gamers. By nurturing an environment free from toxicity and discrimination, where all gamers can thrive regardless of gender, we lay the foundation for a united community that embraces diversity.

Empowerment comes through skills, opportunities, and mentorship. Initiatives and organizations dedicated to promoting Indian female gamers provide training, workshops, and competitive platforms to enhance their gaming abilities. Through mentorship programs, experienced gamers can guide and inspire budding talents, nurturing a supportive ecosystem that fosters growth and advancement.

After decades of pushing for acceptance as a mainstream sport, India's gaming sector broke apart from other internet games such as poker, which is prohibited in some regions that wish to tighten down on gambling, last year. Through worldwide tournaments and rich commercial sponsorships, competitive gamers seek the same fame and money as cricket and tennis players. However, male players have reaped the majority of the benefits. According to the Esports Federation of India, women may earn around US\$1,200 in a tournament, but open competitions, which are dominated by male teams, give 100 times the prize money.

As we celebrate India's powerhouse female gamers, we recognize their profound impact on the gaming community and society at large. Their journey is a testament to the infinite potential of women in gaming and an inspiration for generations to come. Let us unite in celebrating their triumphs, advocating for inclusivity, and championing a gaming landscape that reflects the vibrant diversity of talent and creativity within India's female gaming community. Together, we embark on a transformative journey that reshapes the future of gaming and heralds a new era of empowerment, camaraderie, and limitless possibilities.





THE RISE OF PODCAST QUEENS

In recent years, the podcast sector in India has seen a spectacular spike in popularity, with an increasing number of listeners listening in to diverse and entertaining audio material. This surge in podcast consumption has also resulted in an increase of female hosts, who are reshaping the Indian audio content market. These podcast queens are making their mark in the business and drawing a passionate audience thanks to their distinct viewpoints, fascinating storytelling, and smart dialogues.

The expanding presence of Indian female podcasters reflects the increased need for varied and inclusive content that appeals to a diverse variety of listeners. These hosts provide a forum for minority voices to be heard by bringing unique viewpoints, sharing uplifting tales, and tackling controversial issues.

As the podcasting scene in India continues to evolve, it is expected that more women hosts will emerge, introducing innovative formats, exploring uncharted subjects, and connecting with audiences in new and exciting ways. The rise of podcast queens in India is a testament to the power of women's voices and their ability to revolutionize the audio content landscape, shaping the future of podcasting in the country.

From insightful discussions on mental health to breaking down barriers in traditionally male-dominated industries, these women are using their platforms to ignite conversations that matter. Their stories are a testament to the courage it takes to amplify one's voice, often in the face of societal norms and expectations. As they share their journeys, challenges, and triumphs, they remind us that the path to success is often paved with resilience and the willingness to defy conventional boundaries.



An Indian woman podcaster who has made a significant impact is Aditi Mittal. Known for her witty and unabashed style, Aditi hosts the popular podcast "The TDF Podcast" (formerly known as "The Ladies Room"). With her candid conversations and humor, she fearlessly discusses a wide range of topics, including feminism, mental health, relationships, and more. Aditi's podcast has garnered a devoted audience and has helped pave the way for other women podcasters to explore bold and thought-provoking subjects.

“ *Behind the mic, women podcasters become architects of change, building bridges of understanding.* ”

Prajakta Koli, popularly known as Mostly Sane, hosts a podcast titled "Just A Girl Who Decided to Go for It." With her infectious energy and relatable storytelling, Prajakta shares personal anecdotes, life lessons, and inspiring conversations. The podcast touches upon various aspects of life, including self-discovery, mental health, relationships, and career aspirations, resonating with her dedicated fan base.

Prajakta Koli

Zarina Poonawalla hosts "The Empowering Series," a podcast dedicated to inspiring and empowering women. Through conversations with successful women from various fields, Zarina discusses their journeys, challenges, and achievements, providing practical advice and guidance to listeners pursuing their own aspirations. The podcast covers entrepreneurship, leadership, personal growth, and overcoming obstacles.

Zarina Poonawalla

Sneha Menon Desai hosts "The SOS Show," which stands for "Sharing Our Struggles." This podcast offers a platform for individuals to share their personal stories of struggle, resilience, and triumph. Sneha invites women guests who have overcome challenges, fought societal stereotypes, and achieved success in various domains. The conversations focus on resilience, mental health, self-belief, and the importance of supporting one another.

Sneha Menon Desai

She is a prominent voice in the podcasting landscape, known for her show "Sonologue." Chhavi is a multi-talented storyteller, radio producer, and voice artist based in Mumbai. With "Sonologue," Chhavi has created a platform that celebrates the art of storytelling in all its forms. Her podcast features a diverse range of narratives, from personal stories and interviews to fictional tales. Chhavi's soothing voice and thoughtful approach make each episode an immersive experience, touching on topics that span from travel and culture to social issues and personal reflections. She is also deeply involved in promoting podcasting as a medium in India. She has conducted workshops, collaborated with various organizations, and shared her expertise to help others find their voices in the podcasting world.

Chhavi Sachdev

Twinkle Khanna, a renowned actress, author, and columnist, hosts the podcast "Tweak India." With her trademark wit and humor, Twinkle explores a range of topics such as parenting, relationships, health, and personal growth. Through engaging interviews with experts and celebrities, she offers a unique perspective on modern living, empowering listeners with practical advice and thought-provoking insights.

Twinkle Khanna



WOMEN IN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM: UNCOVERING TRUTHS



A daring kind of women sits at the vanguard of journalism, where truth is the holy grail, fearlessly travelling into new territory to expose hidden truths and throw light on society's darkest corners. These groundbreaking women in investigative journalism demonstrate the power of perseverance, drive, and a dedication to exposing the truth, no matter what hurdles they encounter.

Women journalists have transformed the media environment via their persistence and investigative skills. Their work has resulted in ground-breaking exposés, the deconstruction of corrupt institutions, and the challenge of existing power structures. Their stories sparked public indignation, sparked changes, and sparked dialogues that fueled change.

One such remarkable example is Rana Ayyub, an award-winning journalist known for her fearless investigative work. Through her undercover investigation titled "Gujarat Files," she exposed alleged human rights violations and corruption during the 2002 Gujarat riots. Despite facing threats and harassment, Rana persisted in her pursuit of truth, shining a spotlight on the powerful and holding them accountable for their actions.

Investigative journalism is a difficult work, and women journalists confront special hurdles in their pursuit of the truth. They face opposition, threats, and attempts to quiet their voices. Nonetheless, they press on, motivated by a strong sense of responsibility and a confidence in the transformational potential of their work.

Women investigative journalists are tenacious in their quest of truth. Their in-depth investigations uncover corruption, financial mismanagement, and power abuse. They guarantee that individuals who use their positions for personal benefit are exposed and brought to justice by holding the powerful accountable.

Women investigative journalists are distinguished by their commitment to uplifting the marginalised. Their experiences shed focus on the problems of marginalised populations, giving voice to the voiceless and igniting debate about social inequities. Women investigative journalists challenge the existing quo, defend justice, and inspire a new generation of journalists to believe in the potential of truth-seeking journalism. They leave an everlasting influence on media and society, moulding a more open, responsible, and just world as they continue to uncover mysteries, expose wrongdoing, and amplify unheard voices.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)

This is a nationwide campaign aimed at addressing the declining child sex ratio and promoting the education of girls. It focuses on preventing female foeticide, improving the welfare of girls, and encouraging their education.

Mahila E-Haat

This is an online marketing platform that aims to provide a platform for women entrepreneurs to showcase and sell their products and services.

One-Stop Centres (OSC)

These centers provide support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in urban and rural areas. They offer medical, legal, psychological, and counseling services, along with assistance in lodging complaints.

Women Helpline (181)

It is a 24x7 helpline number to provide assistance and support to women facing violence or in distress.

Working Women Hostels

The government operates several hostels across states to provide safe and affordable accommodation for working women, especially those coming from other places for employment or education.

Support to Training & Employment Program for Women (STEP)

This program focuses on enhancing skills and employment opportunities for women by providing them with vocational training.

These are just a few examples of the various initiatives undertaken by the Central Government of India to promote women empowerment. Each state government may also have additional schemes and programs tailored to the specific needs and challenges of women in their respective regions.



Ujjwala Yojana

Though not exclusively for women, this scheme aims to empower women by providing free LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to households below the poverty line, reducing their dependence on traditional cooking fuels like wood or coal, which can have adverse health effects, especially for women.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

This scheme provides financial assistance to pregnant and lactating women to ensure proper nutrition and healthcare during their pregnancy and after childbirth.

National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)

While not exclusively focused on women, NRLM emphasizes the economic empowerment of rural women by promoting self-help groups (SHGs) and providing them with access to financial services and livelihood opportunities.



Mahila E-haat





**RENOWNED
WOMEN SHARING
THEIR JOURNEY**

KIRAN JUNEJA

Actress/Painter/Writer/Director/Producer/Anchor/MD
Ramesh Sippy Academy of Cinema and Entertainment (RSACE)

For several decades, Kiran Juneja has been a prominent Indian film and television actress. Her acting career began in the 1980s, with notable appearances in Bollywood films such as "Mashaal" (1984), "Kanoon Kya Karega" (1984), "Jhoothi" (1985), and "Vardi" (1989), as well as popular television series like "Khandaan" (1985) and "Hasratein" (1996). Continuing her success into the 2000s, Juneja appeared in prominent film roles in "Devdas" (2002), "Hum Tumhare Hain Sanam" (2002), and "Koi... Mil Gaya" (2003), and TV shows such as "Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki" (2000), "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi" (2001), and "Kumkum" (2002). Juneja's talent has been recognized with accolades, including the Best Supporting Actress award at the 2016 Indian Television Academy Awards for her performance in the TV show "Sumit Sambhal Lega." Additionally, she is a trained classical dancer, and her talent has been showcased in several stage productions.

You have contributed to Indian film and TV industry with diverse roles. How has your journey been so far?

My journey so far has been quite smooth, as I've gradually grown in the industry; even more so because of my husband playing such a significant part in it. Today, I'm still very much involved, I do a film here and there, I write scripts, run a production house and have a school. It sometimes feels like I wear too many hats and sometimes I wonder where it's all going to lead, but it's exciting and fun at the same time!

How did your journey begin into acting?

When I was younger, I had no idea what I'd end up doing; that all began when I was in my first year of college and college mates asked me if I'd like to do modeling. It was an initiative from the college to organize a fashion show for the yearly function. Then someone related to one of the girls saw me there and asked her if she'd model for their advertising company. So essentially, it was the opportunity that chose me! And since then, with pocket money incentives, there were many export houses who approached me for modeling gigs; this helped me travel to Bombay for their fashion shows and meet contacts from agencies like Lintas or Nivia and so on. As more work came in, it became necessary for me to stay there indefinitely - and that's how my journey as one of the top models at that time had begun!



What inspired you to choose acting as a career in the Media and Entertainment Industry?

In my youth, I was uncertain about my future career path. As fate would have it, acting found me rather than the other way around. It all started during my first year of college when I was asked to model for a fashion show. I caught the eye of a relative of one of my friends who was the head of an advertising company called 'InterPub'. This led to my first modelling gig with the 'Two in one' cassette company, followed by more work with an export house in Delhi. Despite my father's wishes for me to focus on my studies, I continued to model while attending college. After graduation, I was approached by a popular boutique brand in Delhi to model for a fashion show in Mumbai, which led to networking opportunities and more modelling work with agencies such as Lintas and Nivia. As my career as a model took off, I eventually transitioned into acting when the television industry began to emerge. I was approached by Rajshri Productions for a TV serial called "Paying Guest" and later landed a role in "Waah Janab" opposite Shekhar Suman. From there, I worked on various other serials like "Mahabharat" and "Buniyaad". Looking back, I can say that I did not choose this path, but rather it chose me. I followed the opportunities presented to me, and my journey eventually led me to marry Mr. Ramesh Sippy.

What has been your biggest accomplishment during your working career as a woman?

Throughout my career, I have consistently displayed a strong commitment to my work. One particular instance that comes to mind was during a movie shoot in Ahmedabad where the producer was working with a very tight budget. Despite shooting continuously for 72 hours without any breaks and feeling exhausted due to our upcoming return flights, I remained dedicated to completing the project on time. Despite feeling drowsy, I persevered by consuming caffeinated beverages to keep myself alert. My unwavering work ethic and punctuality have been hallmarks of my professional life, and I am confident that my performance speaks for itself. This is what I have accomplished in my career.

What is your opinion on “Women Empowerment”?

In my view, the need for women to be empowered indicates that we have yet to achieve adequate empowerment. There is still a considerable distance to go before we attain complete women empowerment.

According to you, what qualities should a woman acquire to gain long-term success in the Media & Entertainment Industry?

Success in this industry cannot be achieved through a set of strict rules as what works for one person may not work for another. In my opinion, various factors such as circumstances, situations, timing, and networking with the right people can significantly impact one's success. Destiny also plays a significant role in our lives as it may bring someone into our lives who can provide us with a significant breakthrough or become a crucial connection. Opportunities may arise by being at the right place, such as a party or dinner, where you may encounter someone who can be instrumental in your success. Additionally, one's talent can also be noticed by someone who can provide them with the right opportunities, similar to my own experience where I was recognized by someone while performing in a college play.

What message would you like to give to all the women aspiring to make careers in the Media & Entertainment Industry?

I believe that in order to make it in this industry, it is crucial to possess tenacity and maintain a strong focus on pursuing your dreams. Giving up easily is not an option for anyone who aspires to be a part of this field. It is common for people to become demoralized after being rejected a few times, but it's important to remember that what may not be appealing to one person may be highly valued by another. This is true whether you're an actor or a singer, so it's essential to concentrate on showcasing your talent in your own unique style and not let setbacks discourage you. In my experience, those who have succeeded in this industry are the ones who have persisted in the face of rejection. They may have failed, felt discouraged, and lost sleep, but they refused to give up and kept pushing forward. So, when you encounter failure and stumble, make a commitment to yourself to rise up and never give up.

What do you think has changed for women over the years in the Entertainment Industry?

In my opinion, the essence of life and time is to make progress. Although there have been positive changes in the situation of women, there is still a long way to go in achieving women's empowerment. However, I believe that we are on the right path, even though progress may seem slow. We can succeed like the turtle in the story by being persistent and steady. While I have observed more women becoming empowered, it's crucial to maintain balance in our lives. Empowerment should not only focus on fighting for our rights but also knowing when and how to use it. We should be mindful of our empowerment's timing and utilization. Regarding women in the entertainment industry, there was a time when they made significant progress, and female-oriented movies such as "Mother India" were being produced. However, later on, men took over the industry to such an extent that no popular or established actress was willing to work with another established actress. Now, I have observed that television content is more focused on women as the majority of them are homemakers who stay at home. TV content primarily revolves around women's issues such as "Saas Bahu" serials, as women form a large portion of the viewership. However, the case with films is different, as the content is predominantly male-centric, with a small percentage of female-centric films. On OTT platforms, I have noticed only a limited amount of content that centers around women's subjects. Therefore, I feel that television has empowered women by providing them with acting roles, showcasing their talent, and playing diverse roles, whether negative, positive, or grey. This is the change I have observed over the years for women in the entertainment industry.



Himani Shivpuri, a renowned figure in the Indian Cinema and TV Industry, is not only an incredible actress with more than three decades of experience but also a familiar face to millennials and Gen-Z. She has gained popularity for her roles in Bollywood films such as Hum Aapke Hai Kaun, Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, Pardes, Koyla, Dilwale Dulhania Le Jaenge,

HIMANI SHIVPURI

Indian Film & Television Actress

Hamari Pakki Hai, Hmaari Betiyon ka Vivah, Sasural Simar ka, Mrs. Kaushik ki Panch Bahuein, and her current role in Happu ki Ultan Paltan.

Main Prem Ki Diwani Hoon, Hum Saath Saath Hai, Anjaam, Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham, and more. Her television journey has also been diverse and interesting, featuring popular soaps such as Ghar Ek Sapna, Ek Ladki Anjaani Si, Dollar Bahu, Baat

The years of contribution given by you to the Indian Cinema by playing the diversity of characters is really praiseworthy, which one has been your favorite character?

Well, for me it is very tough to say which character is my favorite. It's like asking a mother who has about 200 children. I have done more than 200 films; more than 50 TV shows and many-many Theatres plays. So, it's like asking how which kid is your favorite, because for me each and every kid is a favorite. But yes, some roles hold special place, especially the earlier films that I done like Hum Aapke Hai Kaun, Kuch Kuch Hota, DDLJ, and many more. I have loved each and every role that I have played, so it's very tough for to choose one of them, I have loved the all the characters I have played.

During your initial days of acting, what has been your experience as a Woman?

In my initial acting days I have thoroughly enjoyed because I have started my acting career from theater. It was a constant struggle to learn something to grow, when we were in the National School of Drama, the training period and then being part of repertory company, watching these great actors and then gradually from the side roles to doing lead characters. Each and every role was challenging and to do it was struggle. So, it was a great learning, I was learning all the time when I used to go and watch the plays of other actors, of what they did on the stage, especially the actors like Manohar Singh, and many other. Qazi Sahab used to tell us to watch, Art, Painting, Listen to Classical Music, etc. Even in Mandi House which is a hub of all the cultural activities, and whenever I could have spare time, I used to watch Ravi Shankar, Zakir Hussain, beautiful flute players, etc. I remember once I was in Madras and I was Hari Prasad Chourasia Ji, who was a great Flautist. Watching these great plays, reading these great plays, it was a wonderful part of the growth. And of course, not everything was Hunkey-Dory, there have been happy moments in those days, there have been sad moments too, but I thoroughly enjoyed each and every moment.

As a woman do you think it is difficult to maintain the stability in the M&E Industry?

Well, I think it's difficult for anyone to maintain stability in Media and Entertainment Industry and it is not only limited to a woman. It was extremely tough for as well since I was a single working mother, singly working to find my bearings in town where I didn't know anybody. And I didn't have a Godfather or anyone except wishes, the good wishes of my parents, my teachers and God's benevolence. I think that helped me and my son was a very inspiring factor, you know, a reason for me to live on and work more and do good work.

What do you think is the best way to achieve success for a woman and that too in a sector like M&E?

I think it's very important for women to lift each other, help each other, and just listen to the each other, it makes a whole lot of difference. Because, I think it's only women that understand another woman. Because another woman is woman like you, who was struggling, who is struggling to look after the house, do her career, etc. So, we have to help each other and listen to each other. I feel that's very important.

What message would you like to give all the women aspiring to be an actor like you?

The only message I can give to aspiring actors is that see, no doubt there is glamour in our profession. But you know, the other side of the coin is its sheer hard work and lots of patience. There are no shortcuts. So, you should be prepared for the worst, and the good will come. Don't try to find the easy way because there is no easy way. You have to be sincere; you have to be hardworking, and you have to have the confidence in yourself and nothing can stop you and on top of that, most importantly is that you have to have passion and love for your art, which is the most important thing.

Since women are considered the caretakers of the family, did you face any challenges in your acting career?

Certainly, there are numerous challenges that come with being a caretaker. I recall when I was newly married, and my husband and I were involved in theater. We rented a place on the third floor in Mayur Vihar, Jamnagar. It was very hot, and I was pregnant at the time. I didn't have a gas stove, only a kerosene stove, and I was sweating profusely while cooking. My landlord approached me and requested that I install a fan in the kitchen. For my husband, this was a typical situation, and he would say, "So what, all the women do this." He was correct in his observation, as most working women in Bombay and elsewhere cook for their families before heading out to work. I too used to do the same - clean the house, cook everything, and then leave for work. However, as my economic situation improved, I was able to hire people to help with household chores. It is challenging, particularly when you have a child and feel guilty about leaving them to go to work. Nonetheless, it is crucial to give quality time, which is vital. Women are experts in delegating tasks, and that helps.

How will you instruct an actress to be successful, like you have been, in the M&E Industry?

. In my opinion, there is no set formula for succeeding in the M&E industry. Unlike other fields, it's not about studying a specific subject, acing exams, or doing anything else to get ahead. Success in our industry depends on a variety of factors, making it difficult for me to pinpoint what is needed for a woman to achieve it. Every woman finds their own path to success. I believe there is no shortcut to hard work and sincerity, and this approach has also paid off for me. Therefore, I highly recommend it to other women, along with having confidence in oneself.



RAJESHWARI SACHDEV

Indian Film & Television Actress

Rajeshwari Sachdev is a highly acclaimed actress, renowned for her outstanding performance in Shyam Benegal's film *Sardari Begum*, which earned her the National Award for Best Supporting Actress. With a prolific career spanning across several decades, she has appeared in a plethora of movies, including *Bazaar-e-Husn*, *Issaq*, *Welcome to Sajjanpur*, *Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose*, *English Babu Desi Mem*, *Kila*, and *Tales of Kamasutra*, among others. Additionally, she has also showcased her acting prowess in various television shows, such as *Laut Aao Trisha*, *Samvidhaan*, *Balika Vadhu*, *Dil Hi Toh Hai*, *Peshwa Bajirao*, *Ji Bhenji*, and more.

You have done numerous Films and Television Shows. How would you like to describe your journey?

Exciting. Joyful, I love what I do so I like to be excited about my job. So far, it's been rewarding.

What has been your greatest achievement as an actress?

That I continue to be interested and honest and earnest.

What do you enjoy the most by working in the Media & Entertainment Industry for so many years?

We are a bunch of passionate people! Most of us. Passionate about who we are, what we stand for, our beliefs and we keep going on and together and we believe in our stories and somewhere through all the grim and glamour of our life, we share and give you stories of optimism and the courage to go on. I believe we make people happy and nothing gives us more joy.

What message do you have for all the woman aspiring to work in the Media and Entertainment Industry?

If you want to be an actor or director or create in the technical departments, come with required skills. It's a work place like any other. But you got to be mad about it! It still does not have 'industry' status and its privileges so come armed in the knowledge that there will be insecurities. But if this is what you love to do and it gives you joy to sing and dance and live a new dream every day. this place is for you!

What would like to say about “Women Empowerment”?

I am all for stories for women and about women. We still need to have a mindset for women at work. A work culture where we don't have to try fit in, for me the equality is about co-existence and empowering each other with our individual strengths. no special treatment but an understanding for each other's space. A work place that caters to women's requirements. So, we can have more women in all departments of our industry.



JAYA BHATTACHARYA

INDIAN ACTRESS

Jaya Bhattacharya is a well-known name in the Television Industry, having been an integral part of it since its inception. She has gained immense popularity for her roles in various daily soaps, including Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi, MadhuBala, Karam Apna Apna, Kesar, Virasaat, Ganga, Amber Dhara, Kaisa Ye Pyar Hai, Banoo Me Teri Dulhan, Thapki Pyar ki, Silsila Badalte Rishto Ka, among others. In addition to this, she has also showcased her acting skills in several movies, such as Devdas, Lajja, Kyo ki Mai Jhuth Nahi Bolta, Ek Vivah Aisa Bhi, and many more.

When did you start your acting career?

The most beautiful part about my life is that firstly I did not choose acting, it just happened to come my way and the parts let me from Lucknow to Mumbai where I am settled since the last 1995. Therefore, I started my acting career 1991 back in Lucknow.

What message do you have for all your fans and followers?

The message that I would like to give is that people feel it is very easy to be a part of this industry but allow me to let everybody know that it is not so easy. Also achieving success and keeping that success flowing are too very different things, it's much more difficult apart to keep that success by continuously working on yourself, your performances and actually being in competition with yourself rather than competing with somebody else that's my way of looking at it and surviving for so long in this industry.

How has your journey been so far by being a well-known Television actress for so many years?

It's been a great journey in terms that I have had the privilege of working with stalwarts who choose me to work under them basically and I am fortunate for these opportunities from which learnt so much. I had no training about acting, I was training to be a classical vocalist in Kathak dancer so when I started acting, I sat and watched films of Meena Kumari ji who happened to be my favorite and also Smita Patil ji and that's how I sort of educated my own self in the very beginning. Not to mention the stalwarts of Indian cinema and television who were patient enough to guide a novice and thankfully I came with no preconceived notions so I was ready to accept whatever was being taught to me I did not come with the thought I know it all and I am a star. And I feel that because I did not have any of those, this is why I survived for so long.

You have been a part of TV industry since the initial days when there was very less content available on Television. What do you think has now changed in the TV industry?

The earlier television series like Buniyad, Humlog, etc. were all started, even to the point of Koshish: Ek Asha a series that I did, after that when the daily soap scenario started things have changed drastically. 'Yes, there is a lot of content available and yes, a lot of people have got work thankfully but content on television nowadays, I see a lot of regressive aspects involved.

My analysis is that even though a very different progressive subject is pick up and a brilliant start happens somehow the road just totally deviates maybe because being the so-called idiot Box and people watching it while doing their own respective work at home and not paying much attention to what is being catered to them and having the thought that okay the same kind of staff is being doled out to them.

But yes, in the other platforms like OTT platforms, there is variety because we choose to watch what we want to and a lot of youngsters are using these apps has much more variety of content.

Do you think it's hard to earn success in the Media and Entertainment Industry as a Woman?

It is becoming easier to earn success as the new content is now accepted and freshers are welcomed nowadays. Even if they don't come from a rich family and do not have any mentors with them. There was a time when the same old product that has been working since years, continued to work as new and progressive thoughts were not accepted that easily yet by the audience.

Specially one who had no so-called mentor or came from a family which was rich enough to support her. I was fortunate to have gotten work continuously from which I lived my life and also sent money home with great Pride. You could say that I learnt acting on the job.

DOLLY THAKORE

**Indian Actress,
Veteran Theatre Actress, Casting Director,
News Reader at Doordarshan.**

Dolly Thakore is a renowned Newscaster and Television Host, having received training in TV and radio from BBC London. She has conducted interviews with notable figures from India and around the world, and was a News presenter for Mumbai Doordarshan at 8:00 pm on TV. While she has had a successful career in television, she has primarily dedicated herself to the stage, performing in plays by renowned playwrights such as Tennessee Williams' Streetcar Named Desire, Arthur Miller's All My Sons, Harold Pinter's The Birthday Party, and Edward Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf. Dolly Thakore has also acted in movies like Page 3 and White Noise. In addition, she has worked on several Indian and international co-productions including Far Pavilions, Kim, Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, Jinnah, and Such a Long Journey. Furthermore, she was a part of the cast of the 2006 Indian Television series "Kya Hoga Nimmo Ka."

You have been a very eminent part of the Media and Entertainment Industry since you have worked as a theatre actress, a news speaker, an actress, a casting director, etc. Please tell us about your journey?

Well, In the recent three years I was not able to really communicate with anyone, which includes two years of covid and for one year I've had a hip surgery. Just a day before yesterday I have been given a go ahead by my doctor and since then I have been going out. My day starts at 9:00 in the morning, since then I have been going everywhere. But the wonderful thing about that is that there are people who have come up to me and really those three years of not communicating, three years seemed like 30. Also, I am a great hugger, I love hugging people and letting them know that energy is passed on from one person to another. I love to see beautiful young people and getting to know what is happening in the world of Media.

But yes, in the other platforms like OTT platforms, there is variety because we choose to watch what we want to and a lot of youngsters are using these apps has much more variety of content.



What made you choose career in the Media & Entertainment Industry?

Well, it was exactly 75 years ago because the first time I was five years old when I first time stepped on stage. There is a story that I have been told quite often, it was either a republic or an Independence Day, therefore my father had to be at the Airport. Now the ladies had to do something, so they that organized a religious program. Since I was the oldest of the air force children in those days, I was chosen to play the role of Krishna. I was dressed up in Saree and blue color was painted all over my body, the moment when I took my first step and my saree opened up and some ladies rushed onto the stage to tie up the opened saree, and the audience started giving applaude to that performance. The noise of that applaude that went up in that moment is still ringing in my ears. This is what started me being in front of the Camera, into the camera and motivated me to have a career in the Entertainment Industry. And then right through my School, College, University and working career I have been taking part in debates and elocutions, etc. I have had very important people as a part of my audience, I did a play for Indira Gandhi as well. So, by the time I was 16 years old I have had great experiences which gives you confidence to then go on the next step. I have debated with people like Montek Singh Ahluwalia, who was an economist of our time and people like Habibullah. These are the people I have grown up with so they are my contemporaries, therefore I remember them all.

It has been so many years that you have been working in the Media and Entertainment Industry.

What has been your greatest learning out of your working career?

I think smile is a big winner. I have learned that It's amazing when you smile at people and it's a kind of emotion that you receive and the right kind of acceptance that you get. I think it has been a great gain for me. Also, I am not scared to take any challenges that I haven't learnt. I have never done science and finance but I don't feel terrible about it, because if you look at the world today, the world is filled with scientists and accountants. I think that just because you are not an economist or a scientist, you are any way inferior than anybody. I can share an experience wherein I was a part of the Vagina Monologue; I am a part of this monologue from last 20 Years now. I do the monologue in English and Hindi and it's such a fulfilling experience. The fact about it is that it is completely women based and we talk about everything. We have women there from 25 years old to 80 years old and we talk and discuss everything. Also, I have learned and advice the same to other people to enunciate every word you say properly. The clearer you speak; the better other person will be able to understand.

With so much years of work experience, and getting travelling exposure within & outside India for work purposes, what is that one thing that you have found common in every woman?

I must say, I've been very lucky that all the women I've interacted with have all been, I wouldn't say ambitious, but wanting to get ahead. They weren't there making capacities. And yes, there was a period of time when we went through, or we are now 22, and 23 years old, or their parents were fixing up marriages. But a lot of my women have done very well. And they're all professionals. Most of them have been professionals, journalists, or writers or poets. And so, it's that atmosphere of intellectualism of striving to be better. I'm not just saying, oh, my husband gave me a car, So I'm very happy. I don't think any of us dependent on Husbands for that. The world is changing, look at the woman today, look where she's gone. I mean, we've got woman standing next to Biden, who's the vice president. The Indian woman has gone and they're all my contemporaries in my life. And everywhere in every country, it's a woman who's the vice president, or the president or the Prime Minister. I think it's education, the biggest thing is education. Fortunately, in some parts of our country, education has not been given the same kind of stress the importance that it should be, but I can the best of generation numbers that we have the population, poverty that exists, right. You don't have to be government educated or an English-speaking person. But today, when you open the papers, and you see where women have reached every corner of the country. I think it's so wonderful to be a woman that I pity the men.

What has been your biggest accomplishment if we talk about the versatility of roles, you have done so far in your career?

Talking about all the phases that happened in my life I have loved, I loved being a part of the Television. I also went to London and worked with the BBC when I was 20 or 21 years old. Things like accurateness, detail and, timing came from there, though I was not a news reader but I was taking part in programs like 'Look, Listen and Speak', "Make yourself at Home", with immigrants from India and Pakistan and Sri Lanka. So, all this gave me the confidence and it's amazing, I never had to stretch my hand already and it all just fell in my lap. So that's my advice to all the young people is do what you want. Right take the opportunities that come your way don't think you can't do it doesn't matter if you fail the first time. There is one more example that I can think of, I took part in a college elocution competition and I had to speak on the topic "Rebellion of 1857". Now this topic was new to me but it was war of Independence, that's such a huge topic. Now I was supposed to say this line that 'Fat of Cows and Pigs' and instead I said 'Cows have fats and pigs', because the line should go like this 'The soldiers objected that their bullets were greased with the fat of Cows and Pigs, and I didn't realize my mistake. But did that stop me from facing an audience again. I mean yes it happened; I was also embarrassed for a moment. So, my advice to people is don't you are perfect and you will have to be accepted by everybody all the time.

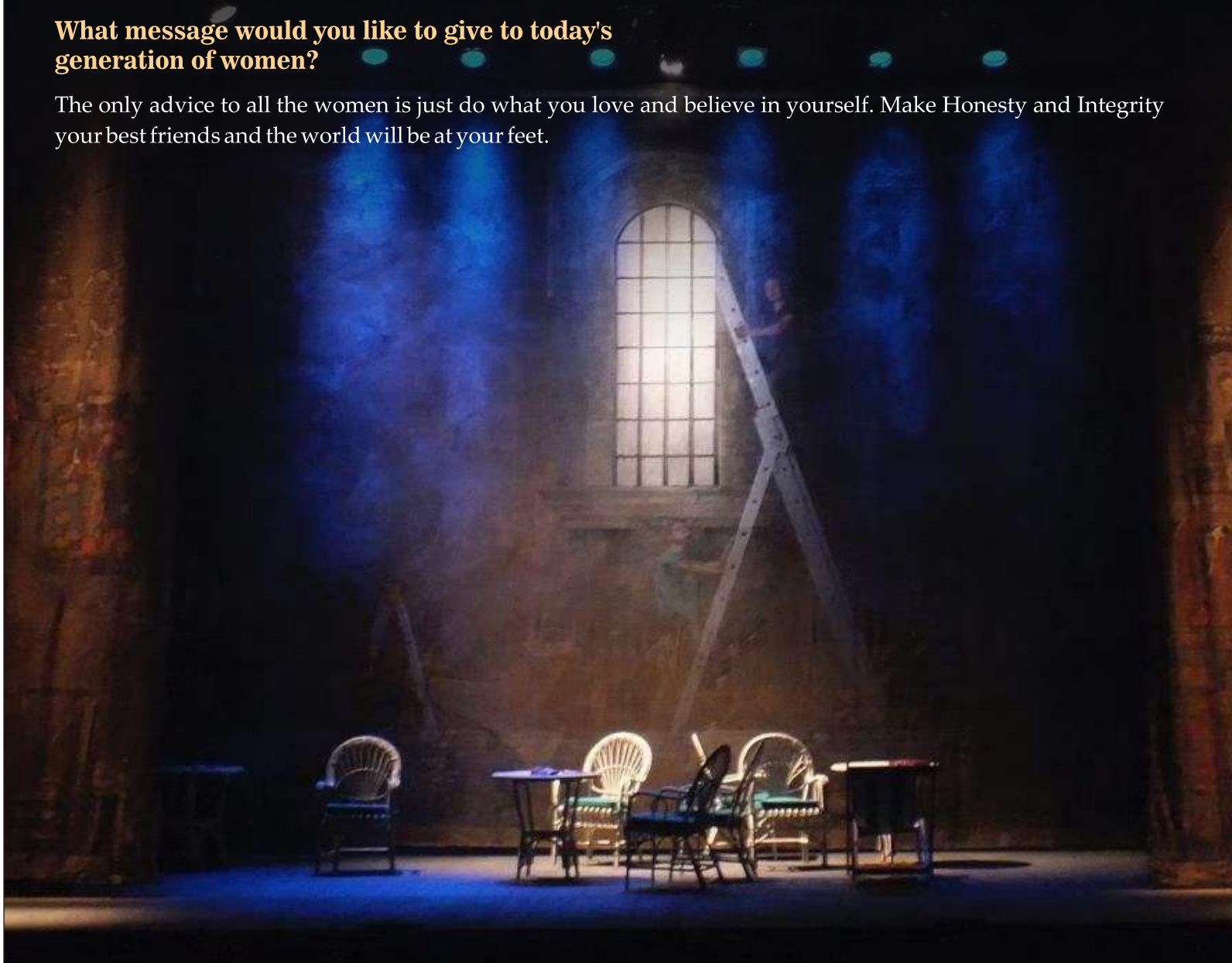
What according to you is the one thing that hinders a woman for not being able to choose herself or her ambitious self?

Well, I would say when women are not able to choose themselves are the ones who are not able to break away the traditional thinking that they had been living in. But those women who are able to break this traditional barrier, they are the ones who either get support from their family, friends, or from the working environments. They become the ones who stood up and propel themselves into great heights. The world is changing now and I see a working woman now, she is no more willing to give salary to her drunk husband, which is very common in our country, especially the states where I come from. And the women are so hardworking, so ambitious that they have gone ahead. I have seen women coming back from work to their home, then folding their sarees and start sweeping the floors and you wouldn't be able to tell that if she is a working woman or a domestic worker. I think Media has a lot to do in this; with the help of Media these traditional barriers can be removed. I think the recognition is now coming to everyone and the Media and Entertainment Industry has a lot to do with this.

My life has changed immensely after getting the recognition, a lot of times Taxi Drivers wouldn't take money from when they recognized me as a News Reader for Doordarshan, also I can think of an instance wherein few kids came close to my car and knocking on my car window loudly speaking out the name of TV Soap I have acted in "Kya Hoga Nimmo Ka" So, I think recognition has a lot to do in this, and our Media and Entertainment Industry has very well evolved, I mean there was a time we only knew Waheeda Rehman or Madhubala, but look at the Film world today. I am also very happy that we have an OTT Industry that exists today, yesterday only I was called at the premier of Movie Taj, and loved everything about Taj from the performance to production values. I am very thrilled to be in this world today and seeing it where it's going.

What message would you like to give to today's generation of women?

The only advice to all the women is just do what you love and believe in yourself. Make Honesty and Integrity your best friends and the world will be at your feet.



AARUSHI NISHANK

Actress, Producer, Political Activist, Kathak Dancer

Aarushi Nishank, the daughter of former Chief Minister of Uttarakhand and current Minister of Education, Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, is a versatile personality who has made a mark in various fields. She is an accomplished Kathak dancer with international recognition, and has also dedicated her efforts to social activism, film production, and environmentalism. Aarushi has actively chaired International Women Empowerment Programs and is the co-founder and chairperson of the "Sparsh Ganga Campaign" movement.

You have worked as an Actor, a Film Producer, an entrepreneur and also you are an incredible Kathak Dancer. How has your journey been so far while exploring these different roles?

. I am a person who really enjoy different tastes, different colors, and different walks of life. Because I feel this variety is alive and I have worked into multiple domains and which is quite different from each other. And I feel I am a person who wants to play the role at the best and I feel quite content and complete, because as a Kathak Dancer I have practiced a lot and I have tried to bring newness to my profession and keeping that in mind I have created lot of compositions, I have created Ganga Avtaran, which I have taken to more than 15 countries, I created Sachda and I have a lot of experiment in whatever profession I have been involved in. As a producer and as an actor also I feel that it's always very important that you will bring some freshness to your content and to your performance and this is what I have tried all of my life and I think my mantra has always been Carson. Carson is actually a Japanese philosophy which means continuous improvement. That's what gives me kick and keep me moving.



What have you enjoyed the most by working in the Media & Entertainment Industry?

One thing I really enjoyed about working in the Media and Entertainment industry is that that you have a power to influence people and influence their life. You never know how you are influencing someone's life or how the message you are trying to give from your performance can deeply touch someone. You can even change someone's life by being in this profession. Even Lord Hanuman was not aware of the immense power he had before burning 'Lanka Devi', he was made aware of his powers by Lord Rama which turned out to be a wakeup call for Lord Hanuman. I think in a similar way if we, while being a part of the Media and Entertainment Industry, can turn out to be a wakeup call for someone. We can give a wakeup call to someone by giving them a strong message through our work and I think this can fulfill our motto to be on this Earth.

As a woman, what has been your greatest learning while working in the Entertainment Industry?

I think the time is changing and I have seen a good change if I talk about the female centric films. It wasn't been asked before that much, now time is changing and we are seeing lot of female centric films where a female is a hero though content is always hero, but a woman is the hero taking this content further. So, I'm very happy to see this era where woman has been treated equal, where a woman is equally treated as a man, though still, we have a lot of pay gaps, and little opportunity gaps as well. Because the one thing I'm not happy about is that the hero will be hero even though he comes into his late 40s or 50s. But we as heroines, still we feel like if she's coming into her late 30s, and we don't see it's a good fit. So, I think there are a few things need to change. And I'm sure seeing the scenario, it will change soon.

What is your biggest accomplishment?

I don't know my biggest accomplishment I feel it's still yet to come. But small things makes me happy. I'm just happy that God has given me opportunity to do something. And given us the strength that we are, you know, really trying our best to give our audience a beautiful content and as an artist to entertain my audience very well. So yeah, I'm happy

How was your experience when you were being chaired in the International Women Empowerment Program in Dubai in 2018 and in Delhi in 2019?

I chaired IWEP and for that I have been featured in 'Forbes Middle East' as well. That's the biggest achievement for me because you being Indian and getting featured into a 'Forbes Middle East'. That's, that's a big deal. And I think each woman who are accomplishing something who's achieving something, empowering other women also. So, I always say if a man stand for himself, that's only for himself but if a woman stand then she would stand for whole womanhood for all the women out there. So, I think this is the motive I have been working on and if any case I can touch human life and can empower them or can give them a little more push, I will be very happy.

What is your definition of Women Empowerment?

Oh, it can be a very objective question because for every woman living into a different scenario and different region, it can be different for everyone. Maybe for a girl or a woman staying in a state like Haryana and fearlessly going to School or out somewhere can be women empowerment. I think it changes but for me the moment we will start saying that "A woman cannot be an enemy for another woman" we will achieve "Women Empowerment." I strongly feel that there are three important aspects to Woman Empowerment, firstly- she should be financially independent, secondly, she should have a choice of saying 'No' as an answer, and thirdly she should be given good quality Education. So, according to me if these three aspects can be taken care of while talking in context of 'Women Empowerment', we are somewhere near to achieve the 'Women Empowerment'.

According to you, what societal changes are needed in our society in terms of Women Empowerment?

The one thing that really bothers me when a girl gets raped or mistreated is that people say this quite often that it all happened due to the small size of her clothes, or reason was because she was out at the unusual timings during the nighttime, or she was outside of the house without any male member. I feel it is terrible mindset that exist in our society, which really has to be subdued in our society. Other than educating women, we should also educate men to treat women with kindness and respect and not determine her character through the size of her clothes.

SALONIE KHANNA PATEL

Actress & Model

Salonie Khanna Patel is an Indian Actress and a Model. She is majorly working in the Television Industry. She has featured in the popular web-series such as The Raikar Case (2020), Potluck (2021), and Campus Diaries (2022). She has also done Punjabi Song "Chakwein Suit" and also featured in many TV commercials as well including Sunsilk, OLX, etc.



As a female actor, what has been your experience by working in the M&E Industry?

I think the time is changing and I have seen a good change if I talk about the female centric films. It wasn't been asked before that much, now time is changing and we are seeing lot of female centric films where a female is a hero though content is always hero, but a woman is the hero taking this content further. So, I'm very happy to see this era where woman has been treated equal, where a woman is equally treated as a man, though still, we have a lot of pay gaps, and little opportunity gaps as well.

Because the one thing I'm not happy about is that the hero will be hero even though he comes into his late 40s or 50s. But we as heroines, still we feel like if she's coming into her late 30s, and we don't see it's a good fit. So, I think there are a few things need to change. And I'm sure seeing the scenario, it will change soon.

What has inspired you to join the Media and Entertainment Industry?

Actually I am an engineer, I did my engineering and I worked in Tata Consultancy Services for two years. After working in the corporate space for two years, I realized that maybe this is not something I want to do for the rest of my life. Hence the exploration of what I wanted to do begun, and when I was actually beginning to explore what is it that I want to do long term then modeling sort of fell into my lap. I was open to do anything at that time, because I wanted to explore different things before, I actually settled on something. So, I took it up and that transition was hard. Because when you come from a corporate space, you know that there is stability, there is certainty, and now you're stepping into uncertainty of various kinds. I also had to move cities eventually, and shift my base from Delhi to Bombay. So, the transition was not easy, there was so much learning and it there was so much novelty in it, also I am somebody who craves novelty all the time. I think that's why the transition, though very hard, was very transformative, and I had a great time while changing careers.

What do you enjoy the most about Media and Entertainment Industry?

There is a lot that I like about the Media and Entertainment industry, I think the movies and what I have worked in theater, and the stories that we tell actually has the power to change a lot of minds. The impact that it can have on people can sometimes be so strong that it helps them look at life differently, or change a perspective that they were not able to change with all the education that they had. I think that it is a great fact that it can actually take you into a different world. We all are dealing with life problems and other things, and sometimes watching something or getting engaged with something can actually take us away from that into a whole different world and you sort of forget what is your actual problems, that are happening in life and that escape even for a little bit sometimes can be very useful and help you deal with your situations better. So, I think the media entertainment industry is beautiful space that has power to change minds. It's very liberating, and just the creativity that is involved in making these stories, right from conceiving them as a thought to writing them and to then finally being able to execute them. The whole process is just so beautiful, and when you become a part of that process, you see how much you know how empowering that can be and how beautiful that can be.

How do you empower yourself & women around you?

The fact that I am independent, owning, and can take care of myself as well as my household. I'm not dependent on anybody to take care of me, I think that is very, empowering, and my work has been able to provide that for me. So, I feel very empowered in that sense. And my constant will, and motivation is to tell young women and young girls that you're, and especially the ones who are getting the education, that what happens a lot of times around me is that they get empowered in the sense that they get the education and they are told that they have to stand on two feet, and they have to take care of their own selves, but then comes an age when they are told that, okay, now you have to get married, and now your husband will take care of you or you don't have to worry, you can do what you want for yourself. But, it's the husband's responsibility to take care of you. And I don't believe in that thought. I believe that we study so hard, and we grew up to be able to do what we want to do. And we have to continue to do that. So, I think I constantly remind the young girls or when I go to sex education, when I meet their children that to be able to feel fully empowered is to be able to take care of yourself. And not be especially financially and not be so dependent on anybody. Of course, emotional dependency is important. We are human beings, we will we crave for a company, we live in a society. So, I'm not saying that not being dependent means you don't care about anybody or you live alone, no not at all, I think balance is very important. But feeling a sense of feeling empowered comes when you are responsible for yourself and you know that you can take care of yourself and maybe even the people around you.

You have worked in Ads, Music Videos, Web-series, you have also featured many brands on your social media platform, we have also learned that soon we will see you in movies, do you think that the M&E Industry is more liberating to women nowadays?

Like I said earlier, my knowledge of the Media and Entertainment industry was very limited before I actually entered the field. So, I don't know how it was before. And there are a lot of things that you hear about it, when you're not from it, we hear a lot of scary things about the media and entertainment industry. But I just have to say that it has been very welcoming. I have not ever felt scared or felt anything negative since I've entered. I think people have been very helping people have been very supportive. And definitely I think it's very liberating for women, women express themselves fully. Somehow in the media and entertainment industry, the people I've come across, they're more open minded. There is a lot of discussion and conversation on things that I used to consider a Taboo in the society. I think these conversations are actually very important for growth. I think media and entertainment industry offers that. So definitely I find that it's very liberating.

As a woman what fulfills you & keeps you motivated?

I think just finding the right balance now that so I'm married, and there are responsibilities at home. And I think what's very fulfilling is that I have been able to maintain a balance between managing my household responsibilities and being able to work. And it just makes you feel that you have so much strength and power to be able to do that. So, I think that is really nice. And what keeps me motivated is just the love for the work that I do. What I'm doing right now, which is, I'm acting, and I'm also doing, apart from acting, I also do sex education for kids, and which creates a lot of impact. I feel both these things are something that I deeply care about, and I absolutely enjoy doing. So, it's just, the motivation is constantly there. Because when you really love something, it doesn't really feel like work or it doesn't feel forced. So just being just being blessed enough and privileged enough to be able to do what I love. I know that everybody doesn't have that. Sometimes the responsibilities are so overbearing that you can't really pursue what you really want to do, and I know a lot of people who can't do that, but I've been very lucky to be able to pivot and do what I love, succeed somewhat in it, as well as have a healthy home, where the responsibilities are taken care of, I have a lovely husband who shares these responsibilities with me. So, I think both these things are both these things work hand in hand, and I'm just really lucky.



What Message Do You Have for All The Females aspiring To Become an Actor?

The only message that I have for people who are aspiring to be actors is that acting is not about looking good, and just behaving or looking or knowing how to dance. You're becoming an actor, so acting is the most important aspect of it. And hence, you have to train yourself and you have to learn this skill. There are a lot of natural actors who also have to hone their skill. So, I think education, even in the field of acting is very important. Please don't forget that you have to equip yourself with the right tools to be able to become a good actor. So, don't think that there is no studying involved or it's going to be easy. Having said that, please believe in yourself, there are a lot of opportunities, especially nowadays. And there's a lookout for different kinds of actors, you don't have to look a certain way or be a certain way to be an actor, that has nothing to do with your acting skills. And there's now a demand for various diverse looking, and looking in people. So, I think that that aspect of the industry has opened up so believe in yourself, train yourself, and don't give up. There's a lot of uncertainty that comes with it. But if you love it, then you will remember that you've signed up for this uncertainty and this is everything, ups and downs are a phase. All of it will work out eventually in the end if you just keep at it. So just keep at it.



VINTA NANDA

Writer, Producer, & Director

Vinta Nanda is an Indian television writer, producer, and director with a career spanning over two decades in the media and entertainment industry. She is widely recognized for her work as the creator and writer of the popular Indian television series "Tara", which was considered a game-changer in Indian television. She also produced and directed the hit series "Daraar". In addition to her work in television, she has also written for and directed several films, including "White Noise" and "Kamzor Kadi Kaun"

news, music etc.

I co-produced, co-wrote and directed the film White Noise, with Rahul Bose and Koel Purie in the lead roles, in 2004, which set me on this path that I'm on today. The immersive experience of making a film was addictive. But opportunities are few and far between. Even in the so-called alternative and art space. I write and create urban stories and everything I've done so far is deeply feminist and progressive.

From the year 2000 onwards, the television industry started sliding into the Saas Bahu space. The decision makers at the time imagined that to cater to wider audiences, outside of the metros and tier 1 cities, they need to pander to them. Many of us tried to make them see that throwing open windows to a bold, new world and bringing about an awakening is better kind of storytelling to pitch into, but a capitalist universe that is constantly chasing only profits, always looks for the easier way out.

With the series Miilee (2006), which I produced, I was over with everything to do with producing. Thereafter I was and remain to be happy freelancing as a creative person. Lately, my writing for screen has taken a backseat too, because I'm busy with a book I'm working on, and editing The Daily Eye. So, for the next few years, directing films and/or web series will be the only choice of work.

I returned to making documentary films after I closed my production company and when I had some money to do so, and to creating edutainment content that was empowering for people, and women in particular. I've been floating around and drifting, trying my hand at so many things during each of the waiting periods between one project and the next. I'm slowly becoming a good photographer. And, motion graphics, animation and digital designing have become obsessions lately. I'm learning each day and aim to excel at the arts in the coming years.

What made you choose career as a film director and film producer?

I was always inclined towards the creative fields. When young, it was a great high for me to organise events in the classroom, neighbourhood, at home. Gathering people to put together shows, whether on the terrace of friends home or mine, or at school, was thrilling for me. I didn't find my studies as engrossing as photography or storytelling. So, passing with decent grades would be the aim, and excelling at everything to do with extracurricular activities was the chosen goal.

After graduating, I drifted into theatre with Nadira Babbar's group Ekjute and worked more backstage than in front. I assisted Nadiraji for a while, but then earning to survive in Bombay became a priority, so I started assisting directors. I was an AD to Shekhar Kapur, Raman Kumar, Ramesh Talwar, Manjul Sinha, Mainak Trivedi for a few years – always happy to skip from one department to another.

Nothing other than writing and directing made me happy. I took to producing because in the times of the late 1980s, and early 1990s, there were fewer opportunities and even lesser for young women like me. So, producing my own work, short films, documentaries became my normal. Then came the satellite television revolution and I graduated to producing, writing and often directing television series.

How has your journey been so far by working in the Media and Entertainment Industry for so many years?

I was very successful with my television shows - Tara, V3 Plus, Shatranj, Sheila, Kasbah, Raahat, Raahein, Agnichakra, Aur Phir Ek Din, Deewane Toh Deewane Hain, Sansaar, Miilee and others. But soon I realised I was spending more time running a production company and less time being creative. The tug of war between the two wasn't easy to deal with, because the obvious choice for me was to be at the creative table. This made me fail miserably at managing and the finances. I took up the offer to head programming at Zee Network at the time they were expanding from one channel to sixteen and spent two years leading all genres and languages of television content – from fiction, non-fiction,

What fulfils you as a woman and gives you strength?

I've been through many ups and downs. The ups, I've noted, weaken me, and the downs give me strength. As women, especially those from my generation, we have got so habituated to dealing with challenges, so used to being at the margins and having to fight it out for a seat at the table, that we have become specialists at negotiating road blocks and misogyny at almost every step of the way. Somehow, each success is a huge achievement and every failure makes me stronger. Being able to tell stories in my own way, in the way that I have visualised them, and making them happen, instead of having to twist my ideas and personality to suit the beaten track, is fulfilling.

What also gives me a great deal of strength, especially now that I've grown up and know myself much better than I did before, is feeling comfortable with the person that I am, and not having the unnecessary desire anymore to fit into situations, places and among people that I'm clearly out of sync with.

How do you think the Media & Entertainment Industry is different in terms of other Industries in context to Women?

I don't think it is any better or worse than other industries. Patriarchy and misogyny is pervasive and it spreads itself across all walks of life. There's a big difference between what is visible and what is not. And, at the backstage, every industry is the same – it is dark, dimly lit in comparison to the front end. Representation of women is low everywhere - from politics to business. Until we don't achieve equal numbers and until the interest of 50% of the population of the world, i.e. women, is not considered at the time of taking decisions, things will not change.

How do you empower yourself and women around you?

I do what I have to do. And, what I need to. I set goals and I achieve them, irrespective of the barriers that come along the way. Over the years I've learnt to say things with clarity and I don't hesitate to express what is on my mind. Men, largely, are still not used to a woman speaking her mind and demanding equality. Quite a few of them still feel intimidated by strong and decisive women. I realise that many people think that a confident woman is aggressive, uncompromising and, even, unprofessional. I say to the guys who are uncomfortable around me, to deal with it. I'm not afraid of losing a job. Earlier, when I was much younger, the fear of losing a job used to make me become silent, or make me compromise with my creativity.

I tell my female friends, especially the young colleagues, to be unafraid. There's always something else waiting out there to happen for you. They in turn also give me strength and confidence to believe in myself. So there's so much give and take among women today, without fear or favour, which I'm discovering and enjoying these days.

Would you like to tell us about ACEE The Third Eye?

The Asian Centre for Entertainment Education was established specifically for The Third Eye program, which I co-founded, for implementing a project in partnership with Hollywood, Health and Society, Norman Lear Center at USC Annenberg. The project was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and we were mandated to build an edutainment wireframe for the film and television industry.

I worked as the director of The Third Eye program for five years, from 2012 to 2018, and it was a terrific experience to engage with grassroots organisations, specialists, activists, institutions and foundations on the one side, and the creative communities of the media and entertainment industries on the other, to find ways and build pathways for empowering and progressive storytelling. This involved a lot of work including intense research, which was exciting as well as an important learning curve for me.

I learnt a lot, and I think I evolved more in this particular phase of my life than any other. The second grant we had received ended in 2018 and I had a choice between getting back to making films or pushing myself ahead and applying for another grant. I was at crossroads when Gayatri Gill and Siddharth Kumar Tewary of One Life Studios approached me to make a feature length documentary film on feminism in India and explore how and where the #MeToo movement intersected with it. I accepted the offer, thinking I'll return to ACEE after completing the film in about one year's time. But, the first COVID lockdown was declared barely a week after I wrapped shooting. I had to shut down ACEE some months later because of the uncertainty that prevailed then. But I have no regrets - the tag line of my film White Noise reads, 'each happiness has a life' and I quite believe in it.

So, now, as we speak, I have an important film called #SHOUT, which we are marketing and taking to festivals, and I am planning and pitching to make my next film/web series titled, 'The first chapter from the life of a crazy woman'. I'm also writing a book, and The Daily Eye is growing day-by-day – it takes away whatever time remains.

The good thing is that all the friends I made during the running of The Third Eye program, the massive network across the world I was fortunate to be a part of, regards my views, accepts and embraces me as a creative and social activist, and has become a huge resource. It adds great value to the work I do.

What message would you like to give out to all the Women seeking a career in the Media & Entertainment Industry?

Be creative, confident, uncompromising and stand for yourself, stand by your work. Believe in your creativity, and don't be afraid of what others think or say about you.



What inspired you to choose career in the Animation Industry?

I stumbled upon animation by chance. I was always interested in art & cartooning. I had enrolled in a cartooning program that was led by Mario Miranda in my college days. On the last 2 sessions of the program, Mr. Ram Mohan came in as a guest lecturer to take students through the process of animation, to talk about his feature project (Ramayana) with Japan – Ramayana (WIP stage) & to promote his new education venture. He showed us snippets of Ramayana and shared celluloid sheets of the bubble gummer ad film that they had worked on. Those celluloid sheets, was what inspired me to choose Animation as a career. It was the process of animation that fascinated me.

According to you how promising it is for a female to choose career in the Media and Entertainment sector?

The scenario was very different in the early days. Back then there were only a handful of women in animation. Because animation was a slow process and required a person to be meticulous and patient, one would assume this is an ideal profession for women. However, since women have other responsibilities especially after marriage, it becomes extremely difficult for a woman to balance both worlds. Things have changed over the years. I notice that there are many more women in the space of animation and gaming. This is also due to advancement of technology & tools (including open source) which are accessible to all. It's easier to work from home now, multitask and execute quality work. In the media and entertainment space, there are several options for women to choose from. This allows for flexibility and opportunities to women that weren't available earlier.

In your work, what do you enjoy doing the most, working as an Ad Film supervisor or as an Animation Director?

I enjoy artistic exploration and experimenting with new techniques. Thus, the education of animation fascinates me most! I see myself as a lifelong student. As the saying goes 'You teach best what you need to learn most!'



TEHZEEB KHURANA

Creative Director- Climb Media Pvt. Ltd.

Tehzeeb Khurana is a celebrated Animation Director with several industry recognitions and Lifetime Achievements, such as ASIFA. She is the founder of Toon Club, an award-winning organization devoted to instructing children and young adults in the Art of Animation. Films created by kids at Toon Club have received 28 International awards and recognition under her creative guidance. Her innovative efforts have led to animation being incorporated into the curriculum of some of Mumbai's leading schools.

According to you what can be the hinderance for a woman to choose Animation as a Career?

Youngsters (not just women) have far more career options than what we had back in the day.

However, the Indian mindset has to change towards arts (all forms of art). Most Indian students (even after all the career choices they have) choose conventional professions, like engineering, medical, CA etc. As these seem the most financially lucrative & give them a sense of job security.

We know many students who first complete their engineering and then decide what they want to pursue. Engineering is like a fallback option for them.

This is a challenge & a hindrance when it comes to media & entertainment sector. We need to work together to change the mindset.

As Disney rightly says, it takes 16 years to be an animator. Animation is an amalgamation of various disciplines: you need to be artist, actor, storyteller and also understand art of movement, principles of animation, sculpting, human anatomy, physics, music, sound etc. It's best that students start early.

It's important to educate people and young students on the opportunities that a career in animation/gaming has. Also, a clear roadmap on what it takes to be an accomplished animation filmmaker.

Do you think that there is a lack skilled female workforce in the animation sector?

Majority of the workforce (not just women) in our country who have had some form of formal training or education are not well-versed with every aspect of animation filmmaking. This workforce requires regular upskilling. The gaps in the education need to be filled with masterclasses and workshops. Educational institutes in our country need to tweak their programs on a regular basis to make our students, industry ready.

Women are hardworking, dedicated & meticulous in their approach to work. Women tend to work harder & more passionately only to be acknowledged for their talent and dedication. The work scenario needs to be a little flexible to allow women to work efficiently while juggling other personal responsibilities. A little encouragement, empathy, support and nudge will help them excel in whatever they pursue.

Based on your experience, what qualities should a female must have to be successful in the media and entertainment sector?

Not specific to women only, anyone in media and entertainment sector needs to have a strong foundation in art, education in media (animation, gaming, film), have storytelling skills, needs to be willing to work hard and passionately, be patient and meticulous, have a keen sense of perfection & attention to detail.

Patience and attention to detail are qualities that most women inherently possess. Thus, I see no reason why women can't be successful in this sector.

How did you get the idea for Toon Club & has it empowered you as woman?

Being a mother taught me how to be a teacher and work with kids in a way so that they learnt and had fun at the same time. My mother was a teacher as well. Some credit goes to her too. The idea came to me when my son was 5 years old. I introduced him to a flipbook. He picked up the concept very easily and quickly made his initial animations.

This is when I started developing a curriculum. A curriculum to introduce concepts on animation, animation history and visual storytelling specifically to kids. It took me 3 months to research and develop the initial 12 session introductory program. I continued building on this curriculum, as kids demanded more after the first 12 sessions. Over the past 20 years, this curriculum has been refined, grown and become far more structured and comprehensive.

As a woman, how has the journey been so far for you in this sector?

Blessed! I have been lucky to have encouraging parents who let me pursue whatever I chose. A husband who always nudged me to push my boundaries & helped me overcome my inhibitions. A son who sparked my imagination. Supportive in-laws who were proud of what I achieved.

No complaints. Just gratitude.



LAXMI AGGARWAL

TV Host & Social Activist

She is a TV presenter and also working as a social reformer. She is the founder of "Laxmi Foundation." She has been a victim of Acid attack when she was 15 years of age, at such a tender age she suffered extreme trauma and pain caused due to the attack. She stood firm and showed the courage to face the world by coming out in the public without covering her face. She is a campaigner for rights of acid attack victims, she has been honored with International Women Empowerment Award from Ministry of Women and Child development. She has also received "International Women of Courage Award" from Michelle Obama. The movie Chhapaak which stars Deepika Padukone, is based on her life.

You are a true legend, a superwoman and definitely an inspiration for all the women. We would love to know about your journey.

I have been a victim of acid attack and the attack happened back in 2005 when I was 15 years old. The culprit was a Man of 32 years of age who proposed me for marriage to which I refused. Then few days before the attack on 19th April, he again sent me a message that he wanted to marry me to which he asked for a quick response. But as always, I didn't give him any response. Then on the day of attack which was on 22nd April, I saw the culprit came with his younger brother and his girlfriend. I remember I was crossing the road then suddenly the girl who came with the culprit and his brother came in front of me. I saw the girl was holding a polybag with a beer bottle in it which contained acid. She took the bottle out of the polybag and emptied the bottle by splashing the acid on my face. Post this accident I was immediately taken to the government Hospital and from a different journey started for me. After undergoing treatment in the Government Hospital. I have had five surgeries in the private hospitals as well, since then I have experienced so much of struggle in my life. I have been living with this struggle from last 18 years now and each and every day of the last 18 years was extremely difficult. So, this the story of my journey.

You are a true legend, a superwoman and definitely an inspiration for all the women. We would love to know about your journey.

First and foremost, I want to emphasize that I have learned to accept myself, including my burnt face. There was a time when I felt suicidal upon seeing my reflection in the mirror, but I realized that I needed to confide in my parents. They supported me through my struggles, always reminding me that anything is achievable. Despite facing criticism and harassment, I refused to hide my face, as I had nothing to be ashamed of. I believe that when survivors speak out about their experiences, it encourages others to do the same. Through my organization, The Laxmi Foundation, we support survivors and their families, helping them overcome their trauma and pursue their aspirations. Rather than offering menial jobs, we focus on rehabilitation and providing a path towards fulfilling their dreams.

A lot of women see you as an inspiration, but we would love to know your source of inspiration?

As I mentioned earlier the line said by my father at that time that, "Nothing is Impossible", I realized that there is no one above my parents because of the immense amount of love and support given by them, which I really needed at that time. We always look for love in someone else but never realize the love around us in the form of our Parents, Brothers, Sisters, our friends, etc. So, this line said by my father has always motivated me to do something for a greater cause. My father is no more now but I always remember him and specially these lines said by him.

As a woman, what has been your greatest accomplishment?

When I came out in the public after the Acid attack, I saw many survivors coming out who were not only acid attack victim but victims of Rape, Domestic violence, physical assault, etc. I saw them also accepting themselves like me, struggling and fighting for justice, broke societal norms and even got a few laws amended in favor of acid survivors by restricting the acid sale. I think there cannot be any biggest accomplishment than this, as there was specific law about it or discussion about it. We have made awareness that acid attack is such a heinous crime, and if the acid attack survivors are coming out in the public and completely accepting themselves, I feel it is a biggest accomplishment for all of us.

How do you feel like by breaking the societal stigma of beauty by becoming the Face of Fashion for many brands?

The day I have accepted myself and since then I have been saying that I love my face. I started loving myself again, and from that day onwards I have crossed all the boundations of my life. The best part is I ensured that I grab all the opportunities that comes my way. I feel very delighted after realizing that Brands are reaching me and wanting to work with me and I feel good today that I have changed the norms of beauty created in the society. After working with so many Brands I have seen them embracing the real Beauty by saying "Ye Jaisi Hai Vaise Hi Rehne Do", which shows their generosity of appreciating the real beauty and accepting me as I am. My comfort zone is utmost taken care of by them and they apply makeup accordingly. I am very happy after realizing that these big Beauty Brands have also changed the Beauty norms by looking at Beauty with a different perspective. Such instances gives me immense pleasure and courage to do more, it gives courage to other survivors also and inspires them as well.



What message do you have for all the women to make them feel empowered?

Instead of talking in context to women, I will talk about equality. I feel a woman should not ask for respect, she should be given equal and fair opportunities like Men which will automatically give her the respect that she is worthy of. A woman should never feel pity for being a woman, if talking about empowerment of women, a woman should know about her rights and learn to fight for the rights and for the right thing whenever required. I have seen many times a woman silencing their child when they complain about any kind of abuse happened with them, so this should not happen. Women should live without any fear and live with freedom and liberty.

You have done such a praiseworthy work for the society through launching "Laxmi Foundation."

How has your experience been so far with "Laxmi Foundation"?

We started "Laxmi Foundation" with a vision that whatever has happened with me, should not happen again with anyone. We started bringing in survivors, helped them come out of the trauma they have been living in so that they don't consider themselves different from the society and overcome self-pity. After working in this field, I have never realized that I will become a social activist and work for such causes. As I mentioned earlier that I was working smoothly and through this work I realized that my work continued that now I am able to open a foundation. We have Dr. Navpreet Kaur who is the Co-Founder of Laxmi Foundation, we have Amar Rai and Anthony Lal. We have many such volunteers associated with our foundation; through them we get courage to work more. They all work together as team towards the welfare of the society. So, for me it has been a really amazing experience so far by helping the survivors. Our mission is to keep on helping the survivors and keep on organizing awareness workshops on social causes. I feel that a lot of people have acid in their minds and mindsets. So, I am working towards the cause of removing acid from the mindsets of people and accordingly keep on working for the betterment of society to ensure there is more 'Nirbhaya' or 'Laxmi.'

Dr. KUILJEIT UPPAAL

World's First Image Scientist, Impact Strategist & CEO - Krea

Dr. Kuiljeit Uppaal, the 'World's First Image Scientist' and 'Genius Polymath' has been honoured with several national and international awards for excellence in the world of innovation, education and social impact including the Karmaveer Chakra Award by the United Nations and iCongo. Dr. Kuiljeit has been awarded with the esteemed 'Inspirational Polymath Award' being an Image Scientist, an Aviator, an Entrepreneur, an Author, an Educationist and a Creative Director amongst other hats that she wears. Dr. Kuiljeit is also an Independent Director certified by IICA, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India. She is the National President of the Women's Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry for Life Skills, the G-100 India Chairperson V&V, and the ALL-India Chairperson for Image Management. She has pioneered the Science of PRIM with multiple inventions and scientific models for augmentation of an individual's persona and image, and is on a mission to make a difference to the world.

A lot of women see you as an inspiration, but we would love to know your source of inspiration?

An accomplishment of this magnitude probably emerges from utmost sincerity, focus and years of relentless hard work. Thus, while on one hand I feel very happy and satisfied to have brought India onto the global map in my area of research; on the other, I feel deep gratitude and humility to be an instrument of academic change for global society, as well as immense responsibility as a scientist and pioneer of the science of Persona and Image Management (PRIM) towards continually providing unique scientific concepts and innovations for academic consumption, as well as learning and development of human capital.

You have been honored with the title of 'Genius Polymath' with expertise in multiple and entirely diverse areas. You are an Image Scientist, an Impact Strategist, an Aviator, an Educationist, an Entrepreneur, an Author and a Creative Director, apart from a host of several other creative talents alongside. What has helped you in your journey in terms of growth and learning?

As I mentioned earlier the line said by my father at that time that, "Nothing is Impossible", I realized that there is no one above my parents because of the immense amount of love and support given by them, which I really needed at that time. We always look for love in someone else but never realize the love around us in the form of our Parents, Brothers, Sisters, our friends, etc. So, this line said by my father has always motivated me to do something for a greater cause. My father is no more now but I always remember him and specially these lines said by him.

A lot of women see you as an inspiration, but we would love to know your source of inspiration?

I was born with the incredible 'curiosity bug' that has made me an avid learner for life. Fortunately, my hunger for learning has never been limited to one area, and I have thus, explored multiple disciplines. I think growth and learning are synonymous with evolution and eventual success. Having a growth mindset coupled with focused execution and no 'fear of failure' can make your graph incremental and consistent. I have always dared to dream and achieve, and have welcomed challenges as opportunities for growth and evolution in my journey. These have made me strong and resilient and have given me the faith that I can achieve anything I put my mind to. So, I keep trying to soar into the skies for more!



Apart from your records, you have been honored with numerous international and national awards and accolades in multiple areas of expertise. Can you share some of your significant achievements from your treasure of awards and how you feel about them?

Awards and accolades are 'a warm pat on a person's back' for one's journey and I have been truly blessed and honored to have received several of them, at various stages in life in the diverse areas I have been part of. I am fortunate to have been felicitated with many prestigious national and international awards and accolades for excellence in the world of innovation, education and social impact, and for exemplary achievements and records, some of which include the prestigious World Innovation Award - Hall of Fame Honour 2019; Innovative Education Leadership Award for Excellence in Social Innovation & Global Impact 2019; Bharat Keerti Award 2022, World Education Award 2018 for Innovation; Bharat Gaurav Award 2021; Shiksha Bharati Award 2020; Global Educators & Researchers Empowerment Award 2021; Naari Udyamita Puraskar 2018 by the MSME Ministry & WES; Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan Award 2020; Maharashtra Ratna Puraskar 2023; WEF Exceptional Leader of Excellence Award 2021. I have also been conferred with the esteemed honour of Karmaveer Chakra Award by the United Nations and iCongo, as well as Global Goals Award 2021. Every award has been truly special and heartwarming as it acknowledges the years of perseverance and effort, uniqueness of accomplishment, as well as my social contribution to thousands of people in making a difference to their image and self-development in being an incredible version of themselves.

You passionately work towards building the youth, professionals and women across the globe. What have been some of the greatest learnings in your life that you would like to share for them to imbibe?

Learnings are continual and abundant in nature, as long as one is a voracious receiver. I believe that life is very beautiful and that you live it only once. So, one must live it to the fullest, and leave no stone unturned to learn, enjoy, absorb, and manifest every piece of wisdom life offers you. It's important to be relevant and continually invest in yourself as that will determine your way ahead in life. In today's times, adaptability is critical to sustained personal growth and mastery, and one must be open to change and evolution, learn from mistakes and not let anyone or anything deter you from unleashing your true potential and shining radiantly. It is imperative to love and 'celebrate yourself' and your uniqueness, as well as honor your victories, no matter how small or big. Also applaud the presence of other people in your journey and be immensely grateful for everything you have received. There are a million other such learnings that have made me what I am today, and I hold on to them as precious gems and blessings of Almighty.





TANVI BHATT

Personal Branding Mentor

Tanvi Bhatt is an award-winning entrepreneur and thought leader in the field of personal branding and thought leadership in India. Over the past 10 years, she has helped global business leaders and entrepreneurs build powerful personal brands through her company, Tanvi Bhatt International. Tanvi has been a speaker at over 400 events for global brands like LinkedIn, Deloitte, KPMG, and Bank of America, and has been honored with several awards, including the Stevie Award and The International Alliance for Women's World of Difference Award. She believes in the power of spiritual thought leadership and has a passion for building personal legacies that outlive us. Tanvi is also a meditation mentor to CEOs, business leaders, and celebrities, and has founded a wellness start-up called SOMA, which offers high vibration spiritual wellness products to help people optimize their holistic wellness and live intentional, thriving lives.

What has been your greatest achievement in your career?

One of the proudest moments has been that at the young age of 25, when I became an entrepreneur. I was invited by the economic Times to author, a syndicate column for them, called 'Brandy', which I did for 2 years. And this was for and I think, for a pink paper which is read by, amazing leaders with more than 25 years of the experiences. I was writing column and sharing my thoughts, ideas, journey, and it as an expertise with them. So, this for me has been one of the proudest milestones in my life.

You have done commendable work as a personal branding expert and helping so many personalities with the personal branding. How has your journey been so far, and how do you consider personal branding important?

Around 11 years ago, my journey in personal branding began as I stepped out of B school, seeking a mentor to guide me in my path towards entrepreneurship. Despite wanting work experience in the industry, fate led me in a different direction. My search for a mentor left me disappointed as there were no coaching or mentoring services available for personal branding back in 2011. This realization made me understand that as a fresher, there were numerous individuals who could benefit immensely from such an intervention. This "Aahaa Moment" was the beginning of my foray into the industry of personal branding. After obtaining certification from New York, I established myself as a personal brand strategist rather than a public speaking coach, which was my earlier aspiration. I aimed to assist aspiring thought leaders who sought to make a difference beyond the 9 to 5 corporate world by creating value propositions to help individuals become better leaders, thinkers, and human beings. My focus was on helping individuals develop their personal brands as thought leaders in the industry by assisting them in understanding their thought leadership, positioning, and storytelling.

What makes you feel empowered?

Knowing who I really am as a person. My non-negotiables, personally, professionally, spiritually, is what to make me feel truly empowered. I think that is unfortunately, an epidemic, the epidemic of UN awareness that we are in today. Most of us are on such a treadmill day after day, that we don't pause, step off the treadmill and ponder that who we really are, what are we really doing? Why are we really doing it, and is what we really want to, or should be doing and investing our precious days in. So that awareness of who I am, what I really want to do, what I'm called for from a spiritual, perspective that clarity, that awareness, that knowing myself and having those non-negotiable live by every day is something that empowers me.

How has your profession of "Personal Branding" Mentorship helped you to empower women?

Well, one of the biggest regrets I have, after being in this Industry for 10 years is there aren't enough women, entrepreneurs or leaders stepping up and wanting to build their personal brands. And it's tragic when I see that not happening nowadays, to be precise 80% of my clients, even today, are men and 24% of them are women. This is why I take every stage and platform that I can get myself invited on, or can invite me to speak to women, entrepreneurs, leaders, young women, graduate stepping out of college to teach them to share my story, to share my insights on how I was able to do it as someone who was fresh out of the school entering the corporate world with the right mindset, strategies build my own brand in an industry which did not even exist. If I could do it then everyone else who's more talented than me, more passionate than me around the areas of what they can do it they can be so much better. That is what I excited, I get excited about doing again and again on every platform that I'm able to get myself on to share this message.

What's your message to the aspirants of personal branding?

To begin your journey of thought leadership and personal branding, it is important to first transcend yourself. This means letting go of the four elements of your personality that may hold you back: social shame, ego, limits and illusions of limits, and preconceived fears. These fears may come from societal conditioning and can prevent you from committing to building your personal brand. Instead, focus on giving back and creating a positive impact through your work, rather than solely seeking influence or monetary gain. Look to thought leaders like Elon Musk, Malala Yusuf, and Jason Silva as examples of those who use their knowledge and passion to create change and transformation. As you embark on this journey, it's important to elevate your consciousness and align your personal brand with your spiritual destiny. This process takes time, but self-awareness and asking the right questions will help you transcend yourself and ultimately create a legacy.



PRAMILA DEVI SHAKYA BAJRACHARYA

Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science & Technology,
Singhdurbar, Kathmandu



How would you like to sum up your experience by working at this position?

Being a Secretary in the Government of Nepal is a prestigious and respected position. As the administrative head of a ministry, the Secretary is responsible for policy-making, planning, budgeting, and implementation. With 24 years of experience, I have learned the importance of discipline and ethics in this role. As a woman in this field, I believe every woman can overcome challenges and contribute to the country's development with higher education, skills, and experience. Although there is a gender gap in the workforce, the Government of Nepal has taken initiatives to promote gender equality and provide opportunities for women's career development.

Is there any experience in your life you would like to share which helped you feel empowered?

I feel empowered when I am given opportunities to pursue my passions and achieve my goals, regardless of the gender. There have been many opportunities where I have been able to showcase my abilities and prove my work which has helped me reach where I am today. When we women are given equal access to education and training, we can develop our skills and knowledge, which gives us a sense of confidence and independence.

We also feel empowered when we are given equal opportunities in the workplace, including equal pay, promotion, and recognition for our contributions. When women are respected and valued for our skills and achievements, it gives us a sense of self-worth and purpose.

Having a supportive community, such as family and friends, can also make women feel empowered. Being surrounded by people who believe in us and encourage us to pursue our dreams, it gives us the confidence to take risks and overcome challenges.

When we women have a sense of agency and control over our lives, we feel empowered, including making our own decisions about our bodies, relationships, and careers. When we are given the freedom to make choices that align with our values and goals, it gives us a sense of autonomy and empowerment.

What keep you going in difficult times?

During difficult times, it's normal to feel overwhelmed, stressed, and uncertain. However, there are several things that helps me to keep going and maintain my resilience. My Family has been very supportive since day one. It is one of the most important things when you're feeling down. Spending time with my loved ones, knowing when to take time off, and being in a positive circle always keeps me going. Sharing problems with other women colleagues can also be helpful in managing stress and anxiety.

Focusing on positive thoughts and finding the good in challenging situations has helped me stay motivated and optimistic throughout all of my working years. I believe that focusing on what I can control and what I can do to improve the situation is better than stressing on the problem.

I try to take care of myself physically, mentally, and emotionally during difficult times and spend quality time with my husband and children which gives me immense joy and happiness. Practicing mindfulness techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or yoga that helps me reduce stress and promote relaxation and allow me to be present in the moment. Taking care of one's mental health and well-being is just as important as taking care of one's physical health.

How important do you think women empowerment is?

Women's empowerment is crucial for achieving gender equality and promoting sustainable development. Empowering women means enabling them to have equal access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making processes. It is not only a matter of social justice, but it also has significant economic, political, and social benefits.

When we women, are empowered, we can contribute to the economic growth and development of our families, communities and country. With equal access to education, employment, and financial resources, women are more likely to invest in their families and communities, which leads to improved health, education, and living standards.

Women's empowerment also has important political benefits. When women, are in leadership positions and decision-making processes, we can bring diverse perspectives and priorities that can lead to better policies and outcomes.

Women's empowerment is a fundamental human right. Every individual, regardless of our gender, deserves equal rights, opportunities, and protections under the law. Empowering women means breaking down the social, economic, and cultural barriers that prevent us from achieving full potential and living a life of dignity and respect. It is a shared responsibility of individuals, communities, and governments to work towards a world where every woman has the opportunity to thrive and reach her full potential.

Other than education, what other skills and qualities a women should acquire to feel empowered?

Being self-aware has helped me understand my own strengths, weaknesses, and values. When we women are self-aware, we can make better decisions and take actions that align with our goals and values. Effective communication is another skill that has helped me express my ideas and opinions clearly and confidently. Good communication skills is equally important in building and maintaining relationships. Developing leadership skills has helped me take charge of their lives and make a positive impact on many fields of work. Leadership skills including strategic thinking, decision-making, and inspiring and motivating others can help women feel empowered.

Resilience is also a skill that helps us to bounce back from setbacks and challenges. Women who are resilient can cope with stress and adversity and find ways to move forward in difficult situations. I also believe financial literacy is also a critical skill for women Empowerment. Understanding basic financial concepts, such as budgeting, saving, and investing, can help women take control of their financial future and make informed decisions about their money. Advocacy skills, where women speak up for ourselves and others bring a positive social change towards work and our communities. Women who are skilled at advocacy can make a difference in their communities and promote social justice.

By developing these skills among others, women can take charge of their lives, make informed decisions, and pursue their goals with confidence and resilience.

How do you see media and entertainment industry growth in Nepal would benefit coming generation and empower women?

The media and entertainment industry has the potential to contribute greatly to the society and empower women in the process. Here are some ways in which the growth of this industry could benefit the coming generation and empower women in the process.

The media and entertainment industry create job opportunities for young people, including women, in areas such as journalism, film production, broadcasting, and digital media. This can help women achieve financial independence and contribute to their families' and communities' economic well-being. The media and entertainment industry can provide a platform for diverse voices, including women, to be heard and represented. This can help challenge gender stereotypes and promote positive role models for future generations. It can also raise awareness and educate the public about important social issues, including gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment. This can help shift attitudes and behaviors towards a more equitable and just society.

Furthermore, the industry can provide a space for creative expression and storytelling, including women's stories and experiences. This can help women explore and express their identities, dreams, and aspirations, and inspire others to do the same. Finally, it can help promote Nepali culture and talent on the international stage, including women's contributions. This can help enhance Nepal's global reputation and bring new opportunities for growth and development.

By leveraging the industry's potential, Nepal can tap into the talents and aspirations of its women and create a more equitable and prosperous society for all.

How has your journey been so far by working as a vice-chancellor of Nepal Open University?

The journey has not been exactly a bed of roses but rather fully challenging due to politicization of educational institutes in the country and due to the organizational politics, which, however, all are inclined to face in the current political milieu irrespective of gender or other perspectives. I have taken up this esteemed position with an aim and a vision to initiate sustainable institutional development of the university positioning it as an institution delivering quality education to all those deprived of higher education through traditional educational systems in not only the map of higher education in the country but globally as well first targeting a large segment of Nepalese working abroad and then all others. The focus is to develop both physical and IT infrastructure, which, so far, it has had to rely on rented or government resources and launch innovative and demand oriented programs as well as to meet the expectations of the masses deprived of proper education and develop a viable, functioning and contributing institution through employing them on a permanent basis following the due process (all human resources so far are on contractual basis), creating a tangible basis and environment for engaging their potential fully, and creating a delivering team. Of course, in the present scenario where a large number of vital positions are unfulfilled (some of the processes to address this issue, however, has already started), it is a formidable challenge and I have had to fill up the deficiency at least in providing academic leadership and resultantly the progress is slow. This, however, has not deterred me and I am more committed to translate the proposed vision fully with higher commitment and continuous engagement.

What is your opinion on Women empowerment in Nepal?

Despite the constitutional (2015) and legal initiatives (2017), the status of empowerment is still desired in Nepal as is also elaborated earlier. The efforts to mitigate the discrepancy is laudable but deep-rooted socio-behavioral values remain as the fundamental hindrance in the path to fully empowering women as biased views still persist in practice in many arenas. Only through concerted and continuous efforts, this dichotomy could be removed. The need is to bring the designated values in actual practice and behavior encompassing all aspects of human life.

As a woman, what keeps you motivated?

The family values, my own desire and commitment to contribute something to the human society that has been enduring untold sufferings and disillusionment, the religious values being a Buddhist, to be mindful, compassionate, knowledgeable and effortful to overcome the sufferings of the living beings, are all my sources of motivation.



**DR. SHILU MANANDHAR
BAJRACHARYA**
Vice-Chancellor-Nepal Open
University, Nepal

What has inspired you to join the Media and Entertainment Industry?

Despite the patriarchal nature of Nepalese society, women in Nepal have made significant progress in recent decades, primarily due to advancements in education and political reform that have led to the democratization of the country. Additionally, economic participation among women in Nepal has been the highest in the South Asian region, thanks to the country's ethnic diversity, which promotes egalitarian values and practices. Various indicators suggest that women's situation in Nepal has improved, such as near-parity in school enrollment, access to mobile and internet services, and adult literacy. However, some areas still need improvement, such as women's representation in civil service and managerial positions, where they remain underrepresented. Despite increased political participation since 2006, many women still face barriers in decision-making positions and unpaid work. Although progress has been made, there is still a long way to go to achieve equitable balance and fairness. The lower number of women directly elected in the 2022 election compared to the 2017 election suggests that this mindset still persists. Overall, despite some progress, women's representation and visibility in Nepal remain inadequate.

Do you think there are any challenges in meeting the education needs for females in Nepal? How do you think we can overcome it?

Although the indicators suggest that women's education in Nepal is progressing well, the reality is far from ideal. Disparities still exist, particularly for girls from disadvantaged communities who lack access to any form of education. Drop-out rates remain high, and there are limited opportunities for meaningful higher education in technical professional areas. Women also face low participation rates in higher professional categories and continue to engage in unpaid work. Furthermore, only around 25-30 percent of female students pursue higher education abroad. To address these challenges, proactive measures are necessary. Rather than waiting for marginalized communities to approach us, we must reach out to them. For instance, Tarai Dalits, Muslims, and people in Bhojpuri-Maithili areas require opportunities and access, which Nepal Open University has an obligation and potential to provide. We are mapping these areas of deficiency and planning to launch admission drives, design financial strategies for low or no tuition, and provide support for pursuing higher education. Short-term programs are also in the works to address deficiencies. Collaboration and cooperation with like-minded institutions are highly encouraged to achieve our common goals.

With evolving Media industry in Nepal, how do you plan on educating candidates in media and entertainment job at your esteemed university?

Media is considered the fourth pillar in democracy and in this age of information and communications, no word will be adequate to explain its need. Democracy and the real empowerment of people will thrive only on a solid foundation of adequate, transparent and true information that the media is capable of disseminating. The increasing reliance on technology will mean that it has not only be secured but also should not be affecting undesirably neither in eliciting them in undesired activities but also not affecting their physical and mental health. The way the gadgets and the technology are luring the humans, time may not be far off that they will be slaves of the gadgets and the technology rather than mastering them. This is where proper education will be required. I do not know how far I can go but I definitely will take some initiatives to address the issue. We can design short- and longer-term courses not only to educate in the skills, knowledge and techniques but also in ethics, proper and responsible use and safety, security and harmony. Continuous dissemination of right information and discussions about what is right or wrong in a given situation could be promoted through discourses and various tools available with the university. On the one hand we can work towards developing human resources, on the other we can promote education to users. My efforts will encompass both these dimensions and for this I will require to join hands with likeminded, capable and willing institutions and agencies.

What message like to give to all the women?

The message, I want to give is there is absolutely no other desirable basis other than equity, harmony and mutual interdependence. So, let us not divide the societies rather work continuously towards working for betterment with the realization all have the potential and therefore must be empowered and engaged not only in writings but in actual practice and deeds. The world is becoming more chaotic and unlivable and my belief is we can all transform it into more congenial, responsible, and livable. Let us all join hands together with this spirit irrespective of gender, ethnic, racial, religious, locational or political values, cultures and beliefs.

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