

WOMEN

SHiNE

VOL 44.0 | JANUARY EDITION

Initiative of WE Foundation



Dr. Naznin Holia



CHIEF EDITOR'S LETTER

#SHINEON
APARNA MISHRA
Founder , Women Shine

fb.com/womenshinemag

womenshine.in

instagram.com/womenshinemag

Dear WomenShine Community,

Cheers to a new year!

The pages of WomenShine are filled with inspiration, hope, and a renewed dedication to honoring the accomplishments, fortitude, and strength of women everywhere as we begin a new year.

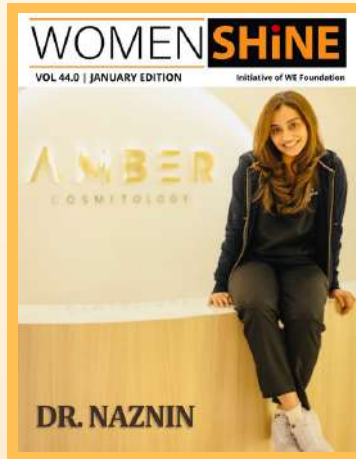
In this January edition, we are thrilled to present stories that resonate with the spirit of new beginnings. This edition is a canvas of empowerment and elegance, from discovering the transformative journey of a remarkable Cosmetic Dermatologist from the cultural city of Lucknow to exploring wellness and self-care in our special Wellbeing Corner.

WomenShine is committed to being your online sanctuary as we move through 2024, providing you with information, community, and celebration of the diverse brilliance that makes women unique.

Cheers !!

Aparna Mishra
Founder Editor,
Womenshine-A global digital magazine
www.womenshine.in

WOMEN SHiNE



COVER STORY	1-05
WHAT'S TRENDING	06-12
SHE LEADS	13-15
SHINING STAR	16-22
VOICES	23-37
BEAUTY	38-40
TASTE BUDS	41-43
WHSIPERING THOUGHTS	44-46
DIL SE	47-49

Magazine designed by : TEX Technology Exchange
E-mail : womenshinemag@gmail.com
Website : www.womenshine.in

To advertise:

E-mail : womenshinemag@gmail.com
Visit website : www.womenshine.in

Disclaimer

Women Shine magazine is not responsible for any opinions, views expressed by its authors. All rights reserved worldwide. Reproducing in any manner without prior written permission prohibited.

(For editorial queries, e-mail:womenshinemag@gmail.com)

Unlocking Timeless Radiance: A Journey into the Expertise of Lucknow's Premier Cosmetic Dermatologist

Explore the world of glowing skin and classic beauty as we present the cover story of our featured expert, a renowned cosmetic dermatologist from Lucknow's rich cultural heritage. She is at the forefront of skincare innovation because of her strong commitment to skin health and her acute understanding of aesthetic science.

Learn the strategies she uses to provide individualized skincare solutions, the secrets to her success, and the life-changing effects of her knowledge in this exclusive interview.

Come explore the intriguing area where precision meets beauty as we dive into the art and science of dermatology.

Prepare to be moved by the story of a cosmetic dermatologist who is empowering people to accept their inherent beauty by changing the definition of skincare.

Welcome to the world of timeless elegance and expert care.



WS: What inspired you towards cosmetic dermatology?

NH: I chose cosmetic dermatology as it was inspired by the desire to make a meaningful impact on individuals' lives. The field offers a unique blend of medical expertise and artistic skill, allowing practitioners to enhance not only physical appearances but also boost clients' confidence and well-being. I used to work in Emergency Medicine prior to this and the kick of saving a dying person is completely different. But I suffered Endometriosis and it was challenging to be on foot all the time and the extra long hours.



As the disease progressed, I saw so many changes on my skin, hair and body which bothered me and I thought to myself that there have to be so many people who do not understand the correlation between hormones and the skin and hair. That's when I started to dive into the field and eventually I left Emergency Medicine for good to be a Cosmetic Dermatologist.

The dynamic nature of cosmetic dermatology, with continuous advancements in technology and treatments, provides an intellectually stimulating environment. For those drawn to a combination of medical science, aesthetics, and the opportunity to contribute to others' happiness, a career in cosmetic dermatology can be both fulfilling and rewarding.

WS: People consider Cosmetic Dermatology as an easy branch to be in and refer it to salons and spas. What's your take on it?

NH: The perception that Cosmetic Dermatology is synonymous with salons and spas oversimplifies the complexity of the field. While the aim is to enhance aesthetic appearances, the foundation lies in medical science. Cosmetic dermatologists undergo rigorous training, combining medical expertise with artistic skills to provide safe and effective treatments.

Unlike salons and spas, cosmetic dermatology involves in-depth medical assessments, diagnostics, and the use of advanced technologies for various procedures. It requires a comprehensive understanding of skin conditions, anatomy, and the potential risks associated with different treatments.

While the field is undoubtedly focused on aesthetics, it's crucial to recognize the medical underpinnings of Cosmetic Dermatology. This specialty demands a high level of skill, continuous education, and a commitment to prioritizing patient safety alongside achieving aesthetic goals.

WS: Apart from your international training, Can you describe your experience of training under renowned professionals like Dr Jamuna Pai and Dr Akbar Aimer in India?

NH: Being under the mentorship of esteemed aesthetic practitioners like Jamuna Pai and Akbar Aimer has been an enlightening journey. Their profound expertise, coupled with a history of delivering exceptional aesthetic treatments, not only instilled confidence in my abilities but also reinforced the transformative impact of their work on patients.

Witnessing their commitment to excellence and the positive influence they have on individuals' self-esteem and overall well-being inspired me to aspire to their level of proficiency. I am motivated to emulate their dedication to delivering high-quality aesthetic care and contributing positively to the lives of my future patients.

WS: What motivated you to pursue a PG Diploma in Practical Dermatology from Cardiff University, and how has it shaped your career?

NH: My inclination was never towards traditional clinical dermatology, but I recognized the paramount importance of acquiring a comprehensive dermatological education. Opting for the Diploma in Dermatology at Cardiff University, renowned globally for its exceptional program, was a strategic choice. The knowledge garnered equips me to proficiently diagnose patients and prescribe necessary medications, forming a solid foundation for my practice.

Delving into the advanced realms of dermatology, I've embraced the dynamic landscape that revolves around cutting-edge technologies like lasers, LED light therapies, and a pronounced focus on cosmetic enhancements. This strategic blend of traditional diagnostics and contemporary aesthetic advancements positions me to provide holistic and nuanced care to my patients.



WS: What were the challenges and triumphs in setting up your cutting-edge cosmetology facility in Lucknow?

NH: Our journey has been rife with challenges, from sourcing skilled professionals for our cutting-edge services to diligently training them on sophisticated equipment. Yet, the most formidable obstacle has been fostering awareness in a 2-tier city where understanding and acceptance of aesthetic medicine are limited.

It's a delicate balance—providing top-tier services while educating a community on the value and safety of aesthetic procedures. Financial constraints often intersect with the desire for quality, creating a unique challenge in conveying that excellence comes with an investment.

However, amidst these challenges, the triumphs are significant. Clients who entrusted us have experienced the promised results, contributing to a growing community of satisfied individuals. Touchwood, within just one year, we've made substantial strides, building trust and delivering quality services in the realm of aesthetic medicine.



WS: At Amber Cosmetology, how do you ensure that your services not only enhance physical appearance but also boost the confidence of your clients?

NH: At Amber Cosmetology, our approach extends beyond enhancing physical appearance; we are committed to boosting our clients' confidence.

Our personalized services are designed not only to address aesthetic concerns but also to understand and cater to individual needs. By fostering open communication, we create a supportive environment where clients feel heard and understood. We prioritize delivering natural-looking results that align with each client's unique features and preferences. We emphasize the importance of holistic well-being, ensuring that the transformation our clients undergo positively impacts their self-image and confidence.



WS: With your extensive experience, how do you see the field of cosmetic dermatology evolving in India?

NH: The field of cosmetic dermatology in India is undergoing a notable evolution. There is a growing trend towards a more holistic approach, focusing not only on aesthetic enhancements but also on overall skin health and wellness. Technological advancements continue to play a pivotal role, with a surge in demand for non-invasive procedures and innovative treatments. Moreover, there's an increased awareness and acceptance of cosmetic procedures across different age groups and demographics. The industry is witnessing a shift towards customization, with clients seeking personalized treatment plans tailored to their specific needs and preferences. As the field progresses, I anticipate a further integration of technology, a wider array of advanced treatments, and an emphasis on natural-looking results. The evolving landscape presents exciting opportunities for practitioners to contribute to the well-being and confidence of individuals seeking cosmetic dermatology services in India.

WS: What future developments or expansions can we expect from Amber Cosmetology?

NH: The future of Amber Cosmetology holds exciting prospects. We are actively exploring strategic partnerships to introduce cutting-edge technologies and expand our range of services. Plans are underway to establish additional branches in key locations, ensuring accessibility to a broader audience.

In line with industry trends, we are investing in ongoing research and development, anticipating the integration of emerging technologies into our practice. Amber Cosmetology aims to be at the forefront of innovation, offering the latest advancements in cosmetic dermatology to our clients.

Our commitment to providing personalized, quality care remains unwavering, and we envision further collaborations with experts in the field to enhance our offerings. As we evolve, our goal is to solidify Amber Cosmetology's position as a leading name in the industry, synonymous with excellence, innovation, and client satisfaction.



- Written By : ADITI GUPTA

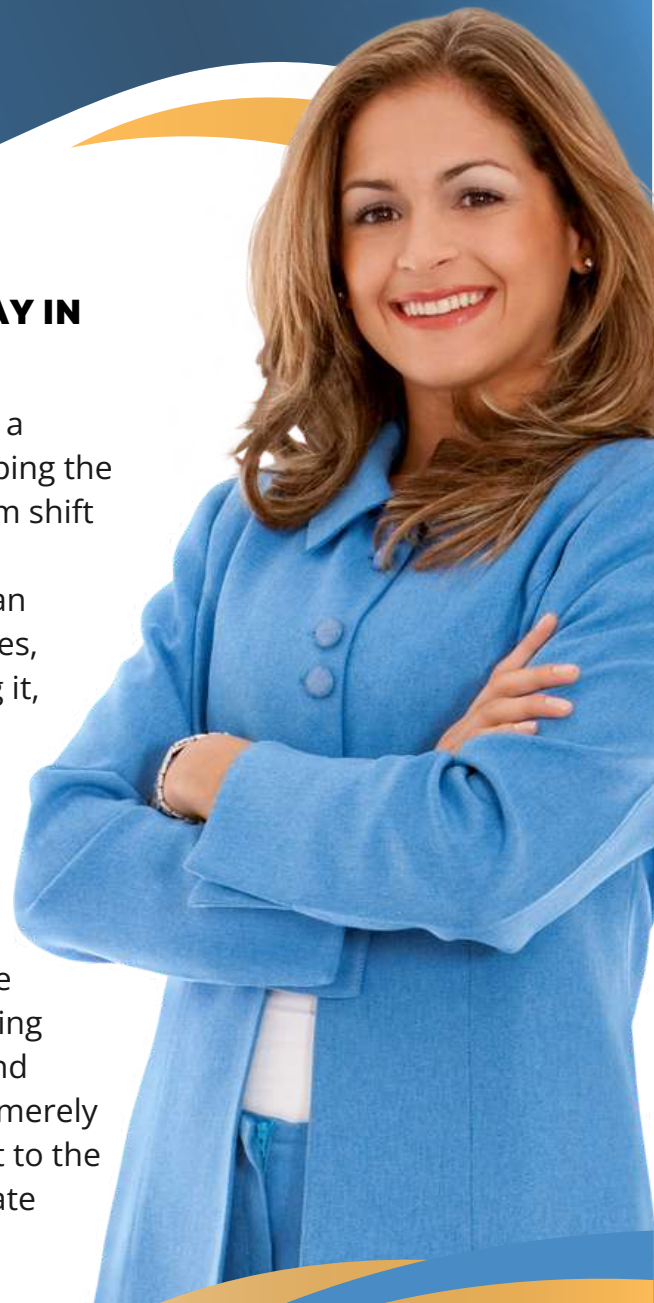


EMPOWERING CHANGE: WOMEN LEADING THE WAY IN INDIAN REAL ESTATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In the dynamic realm of Indian real estate entrepreneurship, a transformative shift is underway—one that is not only reshaping the industry but also challenging traditional norms. This paradigm shift is being led by women who, with their resilience, vision, and business acumen, are carving out a space for themselves in an arena historically dominated by men. As the landscape evolves, these women are not just navigating change; they are driving it, shaping the future of real estate entrepreneurship in India.

THE RISE OF WOMEN IN INDIAN REAL ESTATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Historically, the Indian real estate sector has been known for its male-dominated leadership. However, in recent years, the narrative has begun to change. Women are increasingly making their mark as influential figures, spearheading businesses, and bringing fresh perspectives to the industry. This surge is not merely a reflection of diversity and inclusion efforts; it is a testament to the undeniable talent and capability of women in Indian real estate entrepreneurship.



BREAKING BARRIERS AND SHATTERING STEREOTYPES

One of the most remarkable aspects of this surge in women-led Indian real estate entrepreneurship is the ability to break through traditional barriers and shatter stereotypes. Women are not just participating; they are excelling as property developers, brokers, investors, and innovators. The myth that real estate is a male-centric field is being dismantled, paving the way for a more inclusive and diverse industry.

LEADERSHIP IN ACTION: WOMEN PIONEERING CHANGE

Across India, there are inspiring stories of women who have risen to prominence in the world of real estate entrepreneurship. These leaders are not only making waves within their organizations but are also championing meaningful changes in their communities. Their success is not measured solely by financial gains but also by the positive impact they are making on the industry and society at large.



CHALLENGES AND TRIUMPHS: NAVIGATING THE REALITIES OF INDIAN REAL ESTATE

While women in Indian real estate entrepreneurship are achieving remarkable success, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges they face. Gender bias, unequal opportunities, and a lack of representation persist. However, the resilience of these women is evident in their ability to overcome obstacles and create pathways for others to follow.

Triumphs come in many forms. It's the moment a female real estate entrepreneur secures funding for a groundbreaking project, proving that financial institutions are recognizing the value of diverse leadership. It's the successful negotiation of deals in boardrooms where women were once a rarity. It's the mentorship programs initiated by successful women in Indian real estate, paving the way for the next generation of leaders.

DRIVING INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Women in Indian real estate entrepreneurship are not just navigating the industry; they are driving innovation and sustainability. The unique perspectives they bring to the table have led to a greater emphasis on environmentally conscious development, community engagement, and the integration of technology in property management. As India grapples with the challenges of urbanization and sustainable development, these women are at the forefront of creating solutions that go beyond profit margins.



THE ROAD AHEAD: ENCOURAGING DIVERSITY IN INDIAN REAL ESTATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As we celebrate the achievements of women in Indian real estate entrepreneurship, it is crucial to recognize that there is still work to be done. Encouraging diversity in leadership, dismantling systemic barriers, and fostering inclusive workplaces are essential for the continued growth of the Indian real estate industry.

The road ahead involves mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and a collective commitment to creating an environment where everyone, regardless of gender, can thrive.

In conclusion, the landscape of Indian real estate entrepreneurship is undergoing a transformation, and women are undeniably at the forefront of this change. Their leadership is not just a matter of representation; it is a catalyst for innovation, sustainability, and a more inclusive industry. As women continue to lead the way, they are not only shaping the future of real estate entrepreneurship in India but also inspiring generations to come, proving that empowerment is not just a goal; it is a powerful force driving positive change in the world of business.



- Written By :
Ms. Shivani Priyam Patel

Reflections & Resolutions

Dr Jayshree Venkatraman is today one of the leading educationists of Pune in Maharashtra, the city deemed as the Oxford of the East.

Born in Vadodara, as the last of the four children to a pious couple Mr and Mrs Sivaramakrishnan, Jayshree was a pet to the family. She remained an above-average student during her school days and had the good fortune to an excellent exposure to performing arts. She was adept at managing multiple tasks. Along with her regular studies, she pursued learning Hindustani Classical Music from the Music College of MS University. She was also a Bal Vikas student of the Sri Satya Sai Seva Organization which trained students in understanding Hindu scriptures and oriented them towards adhering to Right Values.



Dr Jayshree Venkatraman has a Master's in English and Business Administration, a Bachelor's in Science and Education, Diploma in Music and Law. She was recently conferred a doctorate for her contribution to the field of Education by Maryland State University, USA.

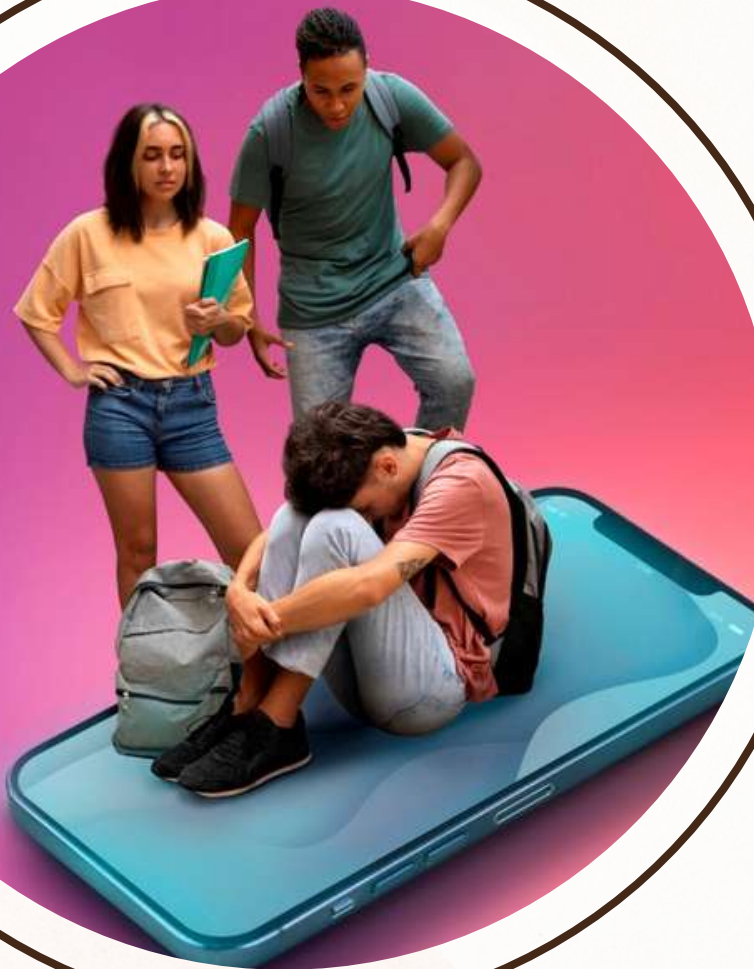


This year she is driving a serious campaign on Sustainability Development Goals. As part of the campaign this year, over 2500 students and teachers of her school have started using Fountain pens replacing the ballpoint pens to control the landfill. Single-use plastic is banned in the school.

This year saw the release of the short web series- LIFE 2030 which she had scripted to reflect the expected impact of AI on our lives. Students of the school have acted in this series and the shooting was done in the school.

Four major resolutions she proposes to take for the year 2024:

1. Educate at least 15000 students about their physiological and psychological safety. Apprise them against Substance Abuse, Social Media, Cybercrimes etc.
2. Strongly strengthen the SDG Campaign and involve students as the Ambassadors of Change.



3. She proposes to train a minimum of 100 students to repair leaking taps. A professional plumber shall initiate the training under her guidance. This shall be done to ensure that no taps in school or homes leak, thereby curbing the water wastage.
4. Being a CBSE Master Trainer for Principals and Teachers, she wants to ensure that the dignity of the Teaching Profession is restored to its full by empowering the teachers.



**- Written By :
Dr. Jayshree Venkatraman**

PALMONAS:

The Future of Jewellery in India

Palmonas is a demi-fine jewellery brand that was born out of a desire to offer affordable luxury to fashion-conscious women. We aim to make women feel confident, stylish, and empowered without breaking the bank. We strive to create a brand that empowers women to look and feel their best every day.

Read more about the brand Palmonas and its CEO and co-founder Pallavi Mohadikar-Patwari

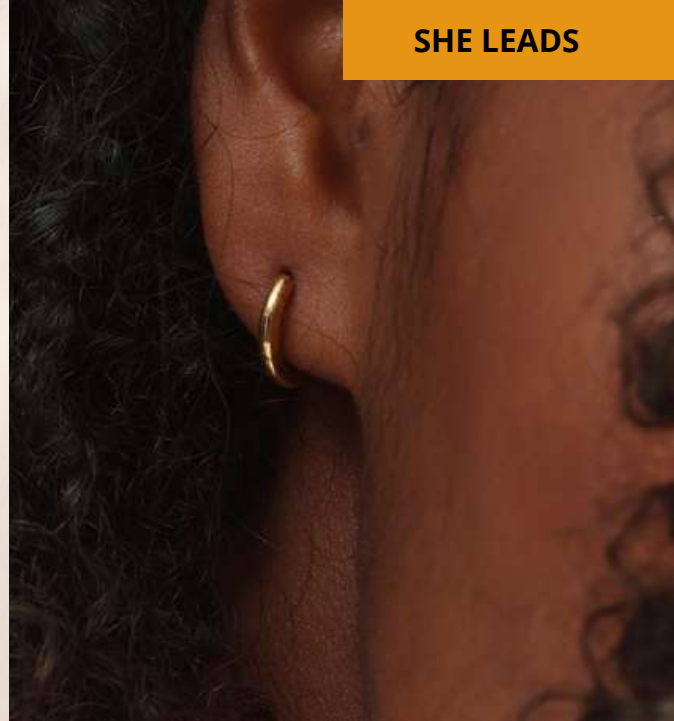
WS: TELL US ABOUT THE INTERESTING STORY OF AN IDEA TO MAKE DEMI FINE JEWELLERY.

PMP: As a jewellery enthusiast, I often experienced skin rashes from imitation jewellery. My husband Dr Amol Patwari, an orthopaedic surgeon, inspired me with his tales of surgical equipment longevity. I was shocked to learn they had been using the same equipment for a decade and wondered why jewellery could not be made from similar materials.



In India, two categories dominate jewellery: fine jewellery (pure gold, diamond, platinum) and imitation jewellery (brass, nickel). Both have drawbacks: fine jewellery is expensive, while imitation jewellery is often skin-irritating. Recognizing the gap between these categories, we explored Demi-fine jewellery, a popular category in the US and UK. Realizing its untapped potential in India, we launched PALMONAS.





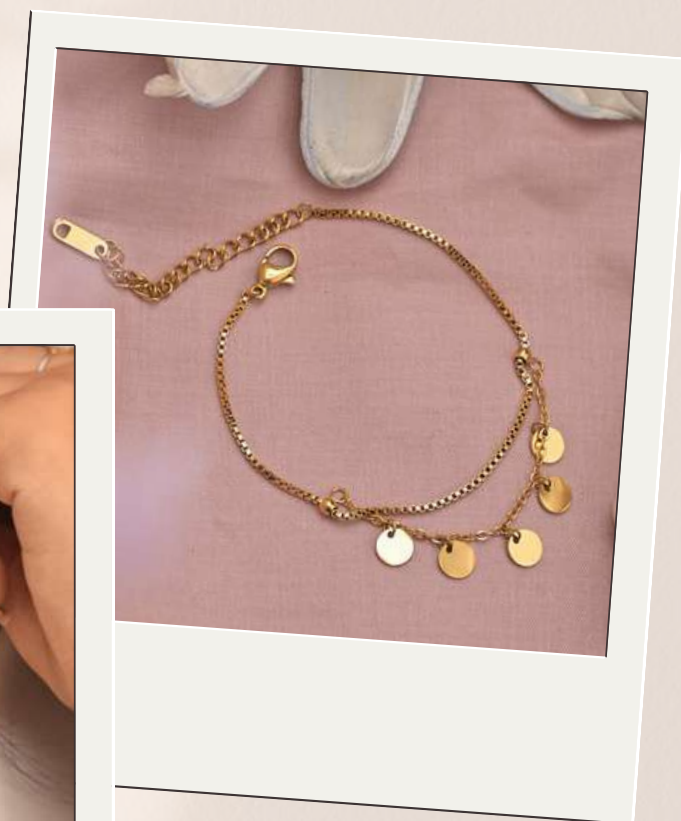
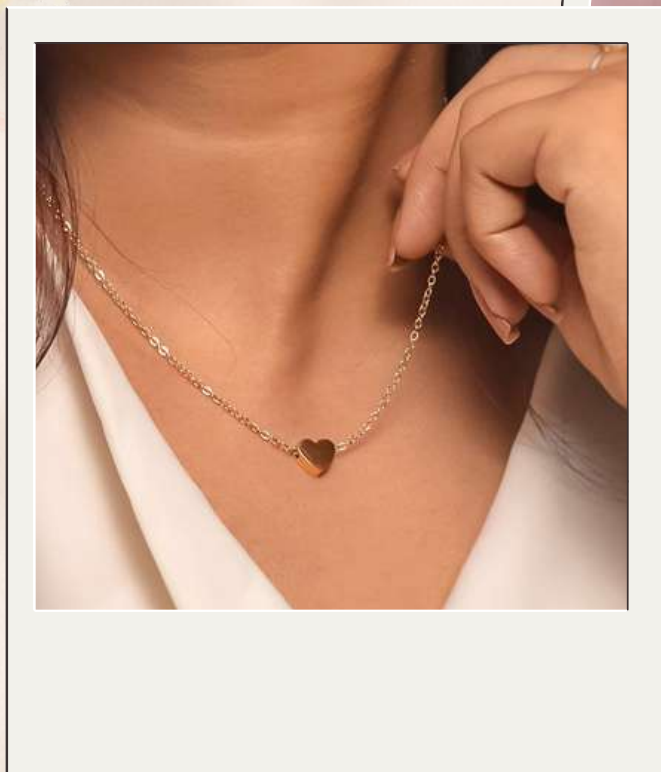
WS: WHAT MAKES YOU STAND OUT FROM YOUR COMPETITORS?

PMP: In the gold-plated jewellery space, we stand out by utilizing cutting-edge plating technology. Our jewellery is plated with a thick 2.5-micron layer of gold on either surgical stainless steel or sterling silver. This thickness ensures the jewellery looks, feels, and even tastes like gold, allowing for unrestricted wear. Our collection of 'new age gold' boasts an array of stunning items, from Mangalsutra, and heart-studded bracelets to delicate solitaire rings, wheat-like woven chains, and striking snake-shaped earrings, among others. Additionally, our jewellery comes with a lifetime warranty, instilling customer trust and confidence.

WS: HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE THE PERFECT BALANCE OF AFFORDABILITY, QUALITY, AND LASTING?

PMP Jewellery is essentially a design game. We have a large in-house design team that creates new designs every week, launching 15 new pieces every Friday on our Instagram Live. This freshness drives repeat purchases, with our current rate at 30 per cent, exceeding industry standards. Moreover, Dr. Amol instils a focus on consumer safety. We use skin-friendly materials and subject our jewellery to rigorous testing. Our designs are minimal and delicate, appealing to our target audience of GenZ and millennials.





WS: WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE SO FAR?

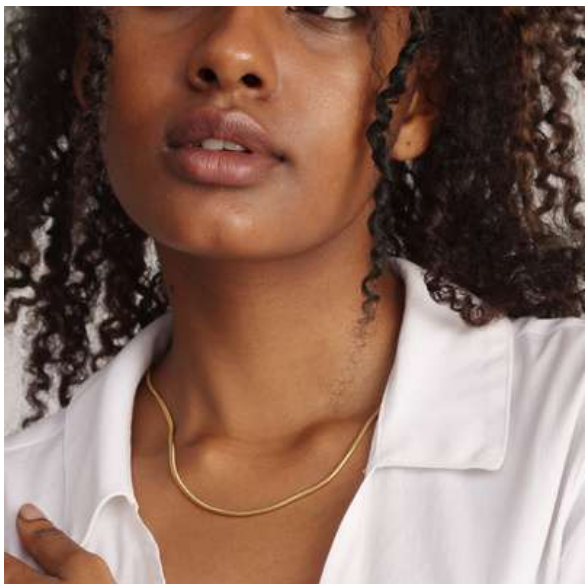
PMP: Educating consumers about Demi-fine jewellery has been the biggest challenge. We are pioneers of this category in India, and initially, people struggled to grasp the concept of a gold alternative. Influencer marketing has been instrumental in overcoming this challenge. Influencers showcasing and endorsing our products have helped build trust and encourage first-time purchases.

WS: EXPLAIN ABOUT DEMI FINE JEWELLERY THAT YOU GET ABROAD AND IN INDIA.

PMP: Demi-fine jewellery bridges the gap between fine and imitation jewellery. It offers the look and feel of fine jewellery but at a lower price point than imitation jewellery. Our pieces start at around INR 1500, while imitation jewellery starts at INR 300 or 400. Our jewellery is made from safe materials, preventing skin rashes. It is coated with a thick layer of gold and comes with a lifetime warranty and hallmark certificate, guaranteeing material authenticity. Additionally, our prices are significantly lower than those of pure gold jewellery.

WS: WHAT ARE YOUR BUSINESS EXPANSION PLANS?

PMP: PALMONAS will pursue a combination of online and offline channels. Jewellery is an impulse purchase category, and people often make unplanned jewellery purchases while browsing in malls or airports. Gifting is also a significant aspect of our industry. Therefore, physical stores are essential. However, Demi-fine jewellery is poised for significant growth in India due to rising gold prices. As mass India cannot afford to purchase large quantities of gold jewellery, Demi-fine jewellery offers a classy and affordable alternative.



FOUNDER SAYS...

"I see Palmonas as a way for modern women to embrace their uniqueness, celebrate all big moments and small achievements, and stroll the streets with confidence every day."



Leading the way for made in India



Leading the Way for 'Made in India' in Global Fashion

In the world of fashion, there are leaders, and then there are visionaries like Arpita Katyal. At the young age of 25 years, Arpita is not only an entrepreneur but also a symbol of change, progress, and a commitment to quality. She has embarked on a journey to bring international standards of fashion to the heart of India through her Made in India brand, Roperro. However, her story is not just about products; it's about leadership, purpose, and the convergence of family legacy with contemporary vision.

The Early Years:

Arpita Katyal, the CEO of Roperro, hails from a family with a rich legacy in the fashion industry. Rather than resting on the laurels of her family's success, she has chosen to continue and redefine that legacy. Her passion for quality and fashion began at a young age and blossomed as she witnessed her family's three-decade-old OEM business catering to renowned global lifestyle and fashion brands.



Education and Expertise:

She holds a degree in Supply Chain and Information Systems from the prestigious Smeal College of Business at Pennsylvania State University. Her education laid the foundation for her to take her family business to newer heights. At Roperro, she skillfully combines her academic knowledge with practical experience to create a unique online marketplace.

Roperro: A Blend of Luxury and Affordability:

Roperro, under Arpita Katyal's leadership, is more than just a fashion brand; it's a manifestation of her commitment to quality and style. The brand specializes in a wide range of handbags, and accessories that reflect luxury and contemporary global fashion trends. What sets Roperro apart is its commitment to making these international-quality products accessible at Indian price points, making luxury an everyday indulgence.

A Leader with a Purpose:

Arpita Katyal is not just building a fashion empire; she is also actively engaged in the promotion of social causes. She represents Roperro Pvt Ltd. on the Council of Leather Exporters and the Apparel Export Promotion Council. Her dedication to empowering women and promoting education is evident through her support for the Vidya Devi Charitable Trust. A fixed percentage of the surplus generated from Roperro's sales goes towards skilling women and educating children through this trust.



Global Recognition:

Arpita Katyal's efforts and leadership have not gone unnoticed. She was recognized as a **"Global Indian Leader 2022"**. This accolade reflects her commitment to excellence and her dedication to putting India on the global fashion map.

The Vision:

Roperro is not just an extension of a family business, it is an earnest effort to build a global brand from India. It's a brand that aims to cater to everyone, from luxury enthusiasts to those seeking mid-range selections. The brand envisions bringing luxury to the doorsteps of every Indian and making everyday indulgence a global phenomenon.

Team WS

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

"ILLUMINATE YOUR PATH: CRAFTING EMPOWERING NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS FOR 2024"

As we usher in a new year, it's an opportune moment to embark on a journey of self-discovery, growth, and empowerment. The canvas of 2024 awaits, and the editorial team at WomenShine is excited to share insights on crafting New Year resolutions that resonate with your unique brilliance.

ILLUMINATE YOUR PATH WITH PURPOSEFUL RESOLUTIONS:

The essence of a New Year resolution lies in its ability to illuminate your path with purpose. Rather than generic goals, consider resolutions that align with your values, aspirations, and the authentic self you aim to become.

RADIATE POSITIVITY THROUGH YOUR RESOLUTIONS:

Positivity is a transformative force. Let your resolutions be a reflection of this radiant energy. Choose goals that contribute to your well-being, promote kindness, and infuse joy into your daily life.

CULTIVATE A GARDEN OF KNOWLEDGE FOR PERSONAL GROWTH:

This year, resolve to cultivate a garden of knowledge. Engage in continuous learning—read inspiring books, enrol in courses, and foster a curious mindset that propels you towards personal and professional growth.

BLOSSOM IN YOUR UNIQUE BRILLIANCE:

Celebrate your uniqueness through your resolutions. Acknowledge and embrace your strengths. Set goals that empower you to shine in your authentic brilliance, both personally and in your endeavours.

WATER THE SEEDS OF WELL-BEING:

Well-being is the cornerstone of a fulfilling life. Prioritize self-care, both mentally and physically. Your resolutions should be the watering cans for the seeds of your well-being, allowing you to flourish in every facet of your life.



CONNECT AND FLOURISH IN COMMUNITY:

Community is a powerful source of support and growth. Set resolutions that involve active participation in the WomenShine community. Share your experiences, uplift others, and contribute to a vibrant network of empowerment.

SPARK JOY IN YOUR SURROUNDINGS:

Your environment plays a crucial role in your well-being. Resolve to declutter and create spaces that spark joy. Whether physical or digital, surround yourself with positivity and inspiration.

NAVIGATE CHALLENGES WITH RESILIENCE:

Life's journey is marked by challenges. Set resolutions that fortify your resilience. Learn from adversity, bounce back stronger, and cultivate a mindset that turns challenges into stepping stones for growth.

DIVERSIFY YOUR PORTFOLIO OF EXPERIENCES:

Break free from the routine and diversify your experiences. Whether through travel, hobbies, or new endeavors, let 2024 be a year of exploration, enriching your life with diverse and meaningful experiences.

WRITE YOUR OWN NARRATIVE:

Take control of your narrative. Craft resolutions that align with the story you want to tell. You are the author of your journey—make it a narrative of dreams, achievements, and the brilliant woman you are becoming.

In 2024, let your resolutions be a beacon, guiding you towards a year filled with brilliance, empowerment, and personal triumphs. Illuminate your path, embrace the journey, and let your radiant glow shine through.



- Written By :
Ms. Aparna Mishra

WOMEN WHO SPARKLED: HIGHLIGHTING ACHIEVEMENTS AND TRIUMPHS OF 2023



As the year draws to a close, we take a moment to celebrate the remarkable women who illuminated 2023 with their achievements and triumphs.



These are the women who defied boundaries, shattered glass ceilings, and left an indelible mark on the world. Among them shines Raadhika Khetrapal, a name synonymous with dedication, and a passion for empowering differently abled.

Raadhika's journey is an inspiration in itself. At just 16, she graced the silver screen with her debut on Sony TV, showcasing her talent as an Odissi dancer. But her ambitions soared beyond entertainment. She envisioned a platform to celebrate and support differently-abled individuals, and thus, Radiant Sports Management was born.

Radiant's achievements under Raadhika's leadership are nothing short of extraordinary. They orchestrated the first-ever awards show for the differently-abled community, a monumental feat, with 20 Para federations from various sports such as Para Judo, Blind cricket, Para Badminton, Para Shooting, Para Swimming, Deaf Wrestling, Blind chess, that resonated across the nation. This recognition of their contributions and struggles was evidence to Raadhika's unwavering commitment to inclusivity and social justice.

Her dedication to excellence extends far beyond this one initiative. Radiant has consistently pushed boundaries in the sporting world, and Raadhika's contribution to this success was acknowledged at the G20 International Yoga Festival with the prestigious Braj Gaurav Samman. This award, bestowed upon individuals who embody the spirit of excellence and service, is a fitting tribute to Raadhika's relentless pursuit of her goals.



But Raadhika's impact falls beyond awards and accolades. She has become an icon for women in Uttar Pradesh, inspiring countless others to dream big and chase their aspirations. Her recognition as the Entrepreneur of the Year at the ANWA awards in 2022 stands as a beacon for aspiring female entrepreneurs, demonstrating that success knows no gender barriers.

Beyond her entrepreneurial ventures, Raadhika has captivated audiences with her innovative television show, "MISSION MADE POSSIBLE." This interactive series, featuring India's top 10 parathletes, has taken the OTT world by storm. It's not just entertainment, it's a platform that celebrates resilience, challenges perceptions, and ignites a spirit of inclusivity within viewers.

Through her multifaceted achievements, Raadhika Khetrapal has etched her name in the annals of 2023. She is a woman who sparks, not just with her own brilliance, but with the fire she ignites in the hearts of others. She is a symbol of the boundless potential of women, and her story serves as a powerful reminder that with staunch determination and a compassionate heart, anything is possible.



**- Written By : Raadhika
Khetrapal**

Empowerment in Every Season: A Year-Long Journey of Growth and Renewal



My journey to personal growth and empowerment is a long one and has been a constant ever since I started my humble enterprise House of Hindee, back in 2019. It was purely to create an environment of empowerment, sustainability and protection of Indian craft. By deciding that in today's time businesses have to mean more, create more and most importantly, renew and protect the Indian craft and handloom industry we established a platform for the tribal women of Himachal Pradesh to exercise their generational talent of hand spinning and hand weaving.



Hindee is my sanctuary of aesthetics, and it helps me make choices daily that are of slow living, sustainable and most importantly meaningful. This year has been phenomenally opportune for us, we have evolved into a more resilient and more effective community of textile design and established a foothold in this very small and niche sector of work. Each year brings forth new ideas, concepts and purposes for existence in businesses, this coming 2024 is exciting for us to venture out into the international world for textiles and create magic like never before.



**- Written By :
Ms Anhad B Malhotra**



WOMAN WHO SPARKLED IN 2023

2023 has been a year of milestones and moments that have shaped the trajectory of Assotech Group. Under my leadership, Assotech has pioneered Just in Time (JIT) Procurement and Six Sigma in Construction, setting new benchmarks in efficiency and precision. These accomplishments are not merely markers of success but narratives of innovation, resilience, and a relentless pursuit of excellence.

As a woman at the helm, it brings me immense pride to have been a driving force behind these transformative initiatives. My aspiration is for these achievements to inspire not just within the confines of Assotech but resonate across the industry, underscoring the indomitable spirit of women in leadership and innovation.



**- Written By :
Ms. Shivani Priyam Patel**

REFLECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS



As the Director of Assotech Group, my journey has been a confluence of passion, perseverance, and precision. The realm of real estate, with its ever-evolving dynamics, has been both a canvas and a challenge—a canvas where dreams are painted and a challenge where these dreams are brought to life with precision. Reflecting upon this journey, the interplay between my educational foundation and the practicalities of the construction landscape emerges as a defining theme.

Resolution-wise, 2023 has instilled in me an even deeper commitment to innovation and sustainability. I envision Assotech Group not just as a construction entity but as a beacon of excellence that champions environmentally conscious methodologies. My resolution is to further integrate sustainable practices, ensuring that Assotech's projects are not just marvels of construction but also epitomes of environmental responsibility.



- Written By :
Ms. Shivani Priyam Patel

CULTIVATING

Positivity

Positivity, for me, is an amalgamation of vision, resilience, and a steadfast belief in the power of innovation. As we stand at the cusp of a new year, my perspective is rooted in the potential that lies ahead—the potential to redefine boundaries, reimagine possibilities, and recalibrate our strategies to align with a future that is both sustainable and transformative.

My guidance to readers transitioning into the new year is to embrace change with an open mind, view challenges as opportunities, and cultivate a mindset that is not just solution-oriented but also rooted in empathy and collaboration. Together, we have the power to shape a future that is inclusive, innovative, and imbued with positivity.



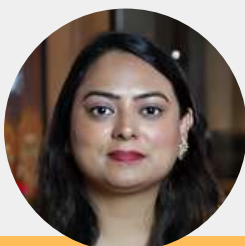
- Written By :
Ms. Shivani Priyam Patel



EMPOWERMENT IN EVERY SEASON

Empowerment, to me, is a journey—a journey marked by growth, renewal, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. The year-long narrative of Assotech Group has been a testament to this ethos, characterized by strategic initiatives, transformative innovations, and a relentless pursuit of quality.

My journey as the Director of Assotech Group has been synonymous with empowerment—a journey where each decision, each initiative, and each accomplishment has been a step toward creating a legacy of excellence. As we navigate the dynamic landscape of the real estate industry, I endeavour to foster an environment where empowerment is not an outcome but an ongoing process—a process that celebrates diversity, nurtures talent, and champions the relentless pursuit of excellence.



**- Written By :
Ms. Shivani Priyam Patel**



A YEAR-LONG JOURNEY OF GROWTH AND RENEWAL

Empowerment remains a constant theme throughout the year in the dynamic landscape of entrepreneurship, mirroring the ever-changing seasons. For female entrepreneurs, each season presents distinctive challenges and opportunities, contributing to an ongoing cycle of growth and rejuvenation.

Spring signifies the genesis of ideas and the sowing of seeds. During this time, entrepreneurs foster creativity and innovation, creating fertile ground for their ventures to flourish. Like a blossoming garden, they embrace their potential, laying the groundwork for a period of vibrant growth.

Summer embodies hard work and dedication, akin to the sun at its peak. Female entrepreneurs immerse themselves in the warmth of commitment, tirelessly working to bring their ideas to fruition. Armed with resilience, they navigate challenges, ensuring their endeavours thrive under the intense rays of perseverance.

Autumn brings a moment of reflection and adaptation. Entrepreneurs reap the rewards of their efforts, celebrating successes and learning from setbacks. Like gracefully falling leaves, they discard what no longer serves their business, making space for fresh strategies and partnerships. This season highlights their ability to evolve and embrace change as a crucial aspect of the entrepreneurial journey.

Winter, a season of rest and rejuvenation, provides an opportunity for entrepreneurs to recharge their creative energies. Amidst reflective quietude, they refine their vision and strategize for the upcoming year.



Similar to a dormant seed awaiting favourable conditions, they gather strength for the next cycle of growth. Empowerment remains a consistent thread woven into the fabric of each season. The journey of a female entrepreneur serves as a testament to resilience, adaptability, and an unwavering commitment to self-discovery. In every season, they not only transform their businesses but also undergo personal metamorphoses, emerging more empowered, wiser, and stronger than before.




This year-long expedition of growth and renewal is a harmonious expression of empowerment, echoing the tenacity of women entrepreneurs thriving in every season.



**- Written By :
Ms. Bhawna Sethi**

Reflections and Resolutions: Navigating the Journey of Self-Discovery

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a plaid shirt, is sitting on a concrete ledge by the water. She is holding an open book and looking out at the water. The background shows a calm sea and a distant shoreline under a clear sky.

Navigating the delicate balance between work and home, I find myself on a constant journey of self-discovery. Reflection becomes my compass, guiding me through the twists and turns of life's challenges.

At work, I tackle deadlines with resilience, turning mistakes into valuable lessons. Achievements stand as testaments to the strength forged in a competitive world. Amidst the chaos of my career, I yearn for introspection, seeking to uncover my true self beyond professional titles.

On the home front, I wear numerous hats – a devoted partner, a caring daughter-in-law, and the orchestrator of domestic harmony. Juggling family ties alongside daily demands, I discover beauty in vulnerability, embracing imperfections that intricately weave familial bonds.

With the dawn of a new year, resolutions take shape. It's not merely about triumphs in the workplace but relishing the small victories of personal growth. I pledge to find joy in the ordinary, savouring mundane moments. This year isn't solely about professional highs; it's a commitment to unveiling resilience and authenticity.

In the intricate dance of career and home life, self-discovery isn't a destination but an ongoing expedition. It involves gracefully mastering the art of harmonizing diverse roles – a woman evolving and crafting her story with each step. This journey encapsulates the essence of uncovering resilience and authenticity, not just in the workplace but within the nurturing sanctuary of home.



- Written By : Ritika Garg

A Versatile Voice in Aviation and Corporate Leadership

In a career that soars across both skies and corporate stages, Capt. Poonam Devrakhyani shines as an exceptional luminary. She is not just a trailblazer in aviation, but also a dynamic influencer in the business realm. Her journey, marked by substantial accomplishments in a demanding industry, establishes her as an exemplary figure and a powerful orator for various audiences. Excelling as a Commercial Pilot, a Consultant for the Government, and a Corporate Speaker, she embodies versatility and inspiration.

For educational institutions, Capt. Devrakhyani offers an enriching experience that transcends traditional motivational speaking. Her insights provide a unique window into the aviation world, giving students and future professionals an exclusive look into the life of an innovative pilot.

Her talks delve deeper than just the mechanics of flying; they are about steering through life's hurdles with grit and resolve. Capt. Devrakhyani imparts a powerful and uplifting message to her audience: the sky is merely the starting point, and boundless possibilities await beyond.

In the corporate realm, Capt. Devrakhyani's expertise extends beyond the realm of aviation, offering vital lessons in leadership, innovation, and resilience in the face of challenges. Her background in a high-stakes, dynamic industry provides her with distinctive insights into stress management, effective team leadership, and achieving success in pressurized environments. Her presentations are especially valuable for corporations seeking to invigorate their teams and foster a culture of excellence and innovation.

Capt. Devrakhyani's ability to adapt her message to a variety of audiences, from young students to experienced professionals in executive boardrooms, has made her a highly sought-after speaker. Each session with her is not just a learning experience but an opportunity for profound growth and inspiration.

Her story goes beyond personal achievement; it's a narrative of empowering and elevating others. She stands as a symbol of possibility, showcasing what can be accomplished through dedication, hard work, and a relentless spirit. Additionally, Capt. Devrakhyani's commitment to supporting children with special needs in adventure sports adds a layer of inspirational activism to her profile.

To experience the uplifting impact of Capt. Poonam Devrakhyani's speaking engagements, whether in educational settings or corporate events and to join her on an inspiring journey, visit her website at www.captpoonam.com. Her journey is not just about reaching personal milestones but also about elevating those around her, making every interaction with her an enriching experience.



**- Written By :
Capt. Poonam Devrakhyani**

NAVIGATING THE JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY

Emotional Liberation Through Psychology

While growing up little did I know that feelings also have their language of expression. This revelation happened at 35 when I started studying psychology it left me spellbound because for the first time in my life - I could articulate my true feelings. I found myself expressing through the spectrum of emotions breaking the age-old conditioning of suppressing emotions gripped by societal norms.

Growing up, superstitious beliefs and subtle cues from my surroundings engulfed my thought process. For example, my mom always cautioned me against expressing my happiness to everyone because I would have been looked upon evilly. However, overcoming this conditioning has evolved me into a very honest individual allowing me to convey my feelings with utmost humility.

Recognizing that while my emotions hold significant personal importance, others may prioritise their feelings very differently. I've learned not to make my feelings a top priority for everyone.

Resolution: A crucial lesson from this year is the art of not taking things personally.



Physical Health and Wellbeing

During my upbringing, the essential concepts of nutrition—calories, protein and carb intake—were never part of our education. My dietary choices were influenced by prevailing trends and the latest offerings available at restaurants. Physically, I ignored the signs until my body began screaming through inflammation, joint pain, migraines, high cholesterol, and chronic fatigue. The easiest solution was a visit to the doctor and popping pills.

I understood the importance of consuming raw and natural foods when I went for a retreat to Sharan in the year 2015. I got a real introduction to what real food is all about and saw a significant difference in my health. I reversed my cholesterol levels, my husband's acidity diminished, my son's asthma was cured, and my in-laws saw a huge difference in their BP and sugar levels.



The Importance of Movement

“When I hit menopause I realized that food does play a vital role but we also need to focus on strengthening our bones and muscles via regular movement and exercise. Exercising has become a way of life now and I do body resistance exercises, cardio, and stretches. My only regret is that I wish I had started working out a lot earlier in my life. It keeps me happy and energetic throughout the day.

Resolution: On the physical front, I wish to commit to five days of workouts because my bones and muscles also need fuel.

The Importance of Movement

In a world echoing with external influences, the importance of quiet time became evident. Sitting in silence, practising Vipassana, I reconnected with myself. In the stillness, the mind, body, and soul realigned. It's in these moments of self-awareness that true mindfulness blossomed.

Resolution: I want to have a deeper connection with myself with a profound intent. I wish to sit in silence for at least an hour every day for a more holistic living.



**- Written By :
Ms. Nidhi Nahata**

WOMEN WHO SPARKLED: REDEFINING HERITAGE LUXURY FOR INDIA AND THE WORLD

India's rich heritage has been attracting tourists from all over the world for centuries. It is the country's vibrant culture and history that has captivated the hearts of millions, and it is this same passion that drives Binny Choudhary to promote India's culinary and luxury heritage on the global hospitality map. With her passion for aesthetics, cultural heritage, and culinary arts, she has been successful in turning Noormahal Palace India's Iconic Heritage Hospitality Landmark into a sought-after wedding destination and a home to more antiques and artworks than many museums in the world.

With her unwavering dedication and tireless efforts, Noormahal Palace Hotel won numerous national and international awards and became a sought-after wedding destination in the Asian subcontinent in 2023.

Binny successfully infused the property with an awe-inspiring collection of antiques and artworks, making it a true jewel in the crown of India's Luxury hospitality industry. Taking the family legacy of world-class hospitality her son Roop Partap Choudhary has played an instrumental role in making Noormahal Palace Hotel one of India's most Instagrammable palace hotels and a sought-after wedding destination in the Asian subcontinent.

Binny Choudhary, Managing Director of Noormahal Palace Hotel says, **"As a family, we have always been passionate about India's rich cultural heritage and history. Our goal has always been to promote this heritage through our hospitality ventures. It gives us immense satisfaction to see Noormahal Palace Hotel and Colonel Saab being recognized as symbols of India's hospitality and culinary legacy on a global scale. We are committed to preserving and promoting India's rich cultural heritage, and we will continue to do so through our hospitality ventures."**



In her entire professional and personal life journey, Binny Choudhary has firmly believed in the power of a positive mindset. After the success of Noormahal Palace Hotel, she began a new chapter for her hospitality group. Along with her son Roop Partap Choudhary, she took on a huge challenge to venture out on the global platform with the launch of the first Indian fine dining restaurant in London – Colonel Saab. Her son Roop Partap Choudhary meticulously crafted the menu and art-festooned destination as a **“love letter”** to the family and India, launching this unique dining concept in the heart of London.

Putting together Colonel Saab gave me a wave of new energy and motivation. From being named one of the top Indian restaurants by Forbes, winning Best Restaurant in Feed the Lion awards, and welcoming regulars from Nobel Peace Prize winner, Malala Yousafzai to pop icons, TV stars, and presidents, Colonel Saab took the London Hospitality landscape by storm.

Following the success of Holborn’s multi-award-winning Indian restaurant, Colonel Saab launched the 2nd larger outlet in Trafalgar Square last month.

Binny is now looking forward to seeing more such footprints of her hospitality brand in other parts of the world and India.



- Written By :
Binny Choudhary



The Hidden Glow: Unmasking the Dark Secret of Mica in Makeup

#snioecbmicafreebeauty #micafreebeauty #TogetherWeCan

For many women, makeup is a world of self-expression and beauty. A world where shimmering shadows and blush enhance our features, making us feel confident and radiant. However, this shimmering glow often hides a disturbing truth: the exploitation of children in mica mining.

You shouldn't stay silent.

SPEAK UP FOR OTHERS!

Stop abuse by giving a voice to its victims.

#MICA FREE BEAUTY

#TOGETHER WE CAN

CONSUMER MOVEMENT

As MBA students at SNU, we embarked on a research project that delved into this harsh reality, leading us to uncover a systemic issue within the cosmetics industry.

Our journey began during our consumer behaviour course, where we stumbled upon the shocking reality of child labour in mica mining, the source of the shimmery effect in many makeup products. From that moment, we were driven to expose this injustice and empower consumers to make informed choices.

Our research took us into the intimate world of women's makeup bags, where we interviewed and observed consumers for and their beauty routines.

We discovered a vibrant world of colours, textures, and individual stories. But this time, the focus shifted away from the latest trends and towards the hidden secrets behind the products.

Together, we navigated the labyrinth of ingredient lists, deciphering cryptic codes like detectives. While some brands readily confessed their mica sourcing practices, others hid anonymously, using codes like C1 77019

Equipped with this knowledge, we witnessed a powerful transformation. Consumers, including the women we interviewed, began to view their makeup bags not simply as tools for self-expression, but as instruments of conscious consumerism. They started holding brands accountable, questioning their mica sourcing practices and demanding ethical alternatives.



This growing awareness sparked a powerful consumer movement, #micafreebeauty, uniting thousands of individuals in the fight against unethical practices in the beauty industry. The movement transcended the physical realm, capturing the attention of the SNU community and beyond through social media.

The #micafreebeauty movement serves as a testament to the evolving consumer landscape. It demonstrates that consumers are no longer willing to tolerate brands that exploit children. As informed consumers, we have the power to make a difference.

Shine a light on hidden exploitation! Create an Instagram post featuring your makeup bag and tag your favorite brands. Urge them to #micafreebeauty by stopping mica use or declaring its source (synthetic, natural, mining location). Choose brands like Etsy and Tint Cosmetics who stand against child labor. Spread awareness and join the movement! #TogetherWeCan



**- Written By :
Ameesha Varma**

INDIAN CELEBRITIES CAST THEIR VOTE FOR VEGAN FOOD



We all know the huge influencing power the celebrities in India command over the masses. The good part is that there is an array of celebrities who are using this power to help their followers attain a healthier life and in the process, they are also doing their bit to save our planet too. These celebrities are the ambassadors of Veganuary, a global non-profit organization that encourages people worldwide to try vegan for January and beyond.

A recent all-India survey organized by Veganuary highlighted that celebrities who have turned vegan are strongly influencing the masses, especially youngsters, to try vegan food.

Veganuary India has a long list of celebrities who are not only working as Ambassadors of Veganuary India, but themselves are reaping the benefits of turning to a completely vegan diet. This celebrity vote in favour of vegan food carries more power when the celebrities concerned themselves are completely vegan.



Sneha Ullal- (Actor)

Sneha Ullal is an Indian actress who has appeared in Telugu and Hindi films. She is known for her roles in the Telugu films Ullasamga Utsahamga, Simha and the Hindi film Lucky: No Time for Love with Salman Khan. She puts forward a very precise and simple argument in favour of Veganism. Says he, **“I don’t need animals harmed to live my life. Veganism is that simple.”**

Arvind Krishna- (Telugu Actor & sports enthusiast)

Arvind Krishna is an Indian actor who works in Tamil and Telugu films. He made his debut in the Telugu film It`s My Love Story (2011). He continued his journey with several Telugu films like Rushi (2012), Biskett (2013) and Adavi Kaachina Vennela (2014). His upcoming film Andhra Pori is set to release in June 2015. When asked about his choice of being a vegan, he said, **“Turning Vegan has been the single best decision of my life from the standpoint of my health, athleticism, look, spiritual growth and for just an overall sense of well-being.”**



Sadaa Sayed (Actor)



Sadaa Sayed, also known by her stage name Sadha, is an Indian actress who mainly appears in Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada films. She was introduced to the Telugu film industry by the director Teja along with Nithiin in the film Jayam (2002). Sadaa is an animal rescuer, a fighter for their rights and an ethical vegan.

Sadaa believes that a Vegan diet is not a compromise at any level, rather it prepares you better to face all the challenges in life. Says she, **“I make sure to eat a balanced plant-based diet to get all the nutrients my body needs, but I haven’t given up my favourite foods. I organize them, and it is simpler than you think. If you are still unsure about whether you can still sustain a vegan lifestyle, try Veganuary’s 31-day pledge, which will help you make the transition easily. Believe me, you will never look back.”**

Soundarya Sharma (Actor)

Soundarya Sharma is an Indian actress and model. She made her acting debut with romantic Ranchi Diaries in 2017 for which she won the **'Best Debutante'** at the Jharkhand International Film Festival and was nominated at Zee Cine Awards. In 2022, she participated in Colors TV's reality show Bigg Boss 16. Soundarya claims that her vegan diet enables her to face the rigours of life in the showbiz perfectly.

Says she, **"I am a Vegan. I feel fabulous and I have the energy to slay it on camera every single time. Veganuary's 31-day pledge helps you make a smooth transition to a plant-based diet, for your health, for animals and the planet. Join my squad, try vegan today."**



Kuntal Joisher (Mountaineer)



Kuntal Joisher is an Indian mountaineer based in Mumbai. Anyone who has doubts about the strength-giving power of a vegan diet would do well to note his achievements. His vegan diet was instrumental in helping him summit Mount Everest, not once but twice!

Says he, **"I have never eaten meat in my entire life and turned Vegan 17 years ago. I was successfully able to build top-of-world-level muscles and endurance and not only survive but thrive in the -50 Celsius degrees temperature on top of Mount Everest, not just once, but twice. Goes to show that no animal needs to suffer or die for our dreams to come true."**

Anushka Manchanda aka Kiss Nuka (Singer, Music composer)

Anushka Manchanda aka Kiss Nuka, is a singer, and music composer who came into the limelight as part of an Indipop girl group Viva!. She was also the winner of the popular reality show Khatron Ke Khiladi. She is a well-known name in the music and entertainment industry.

A vegan by choice, her adopted name Kiss Nuka - which stands for Nature's Universal Kinetic Attention, with a new vision for a better world, showcases her thinking. Says she, **"Just like the COVID pandemic, the ethical, health and planetary implications of farming animals is an enormous challenge that humanity is facing. Following a vegan lifestyle is a really effective way of addressing these challenges"**



MY ADVENTUROUS JOURNEY FROM A FULL-TIME WORKING LADY TO A STAY-AT-HOME



When you walk to the edge of all the light you have and take that first step into the darkness of the unknown, you must believe that one of two things will happen. There will be something solid for you to stand upon or you will be taught to fly. ~Patrick Overton~

Never in my wildest of dreams did I ever imagine myself staying at home and sitting babies, waking up to baby cries, cleaning poop, waiting patiently for burps, feeding a hungry machine or dozing off trying to put a baby to sleep? I didn't like babies, especially the noisy and cranky ones.

Just a year before this happened, I was a full-time working lady who was part of a choir, a band and several events happening around Kuwait. I had even punched my friend who read my palm and told me that I would soon leave my job and stay at home. I was annoyed that he thought I would do such a thing. According to me, staying at home was not an option for me. Working and earning money was a way of life.

How could I be dependent on a guy for money?

I've been working since I was 19. Why should I stop now? I gave my friend another punch. How dare he force his mentality on me!

But it all began when my husband wanted to leave Kuwait (the place I was born, bred, educated and married). He wanted to shift back to India, our home country that I knew nothing about. I dreaded coming to live here without a job, immediate family or friends around. He left in February and after a lot of contemplation, fights and arguments,

We toasted to a new beginning with 5 shots of Vodka. This was when I decided to take a 3-month-only break from work (as I had worked for 10 years already). Little did I know that I was going to stretch that break quite a bit.

I must say that I began enjoying myself not having to wake up for work. I joined a dance class, attended weddings out of Bangalore, visited friends, entertained friends, played lots of badminton, etc. I was having an amazing time. Until we heard that my first baby, my doggy named Cookie, passed away on 20th September back in Kuwait. I was in so much pain, that every time my husband would find me quietly crying.

Even through the 3-month break, I kept looking for jobs. By December, we found out that I was already 3 months pregnant. I decided that I didn't want to faint at a new workplace like all those actresses would while they were pregnant. Yes, I would watch a lot of saas-bahu series on STAR, ZEE, SONY, etc. So, I postponed going back to work after my baby was born.

I was still upset about my doggy's passing. But when we finally visited our gynaecologist, she told us something that changed my mood forever. She said that we conceived around 20th September. Superstitious or not, this news brought a smile to my face because until then I was mourning my doggy's loss. Now, suddenly, with the belief that her soul was coming back to me, I was overjoyed. I stopped mourning her loss and began waiting for her arrival. I must say that God works in mysterious ways!



Miles away, my mom was elated but feared the worst. I had never lived alone. And here I was all alone at home while I was pregnant. She called me regularly as the husband had long working hours and was rarely home except on weekends. Nevertheless, her baby managed to take care of herself well.

I had a caesarean section and vowed never to have more babies. That experience is for another blog.

Then one day, I visited an orphanage to donate items they required. The same one we had visited before I delivered. But now, as a mother, when I heard the kids asking us when their parents would return to pick them up, I had tears in my eyes. All through the journey back home, I kept thinking. God had given me a daughter. I didn't ask for it but maybe he knew I needed a daughter in my life. Though she was currently a tiny lump of flesh that just ate, drank and pooped, I could see that her whole being would search for me whenever I was away. I could feel her need for my presence every single day.

I thought about this for a few weeks. Half the time I felt that my life was over. Now it was hers to live. There were times when I felt that maybe I should stay home for her. There were also times when I felt that I had to look for a job. During these waves of emotions, I began enjoying her little milestones. It was overwhelming when she looked at me and smiled.



Soon, I knew that I didn't want another person taking care of her (like we initially thought because this was all unplanned). Suddenly, I remembered that for so many years, my single mother had taken care of us, our lessons fed us, took care of the house, etc. without a nanny, cook or maid. Then why couldn't I take care of my daughter while I had a husband, house help and cook?

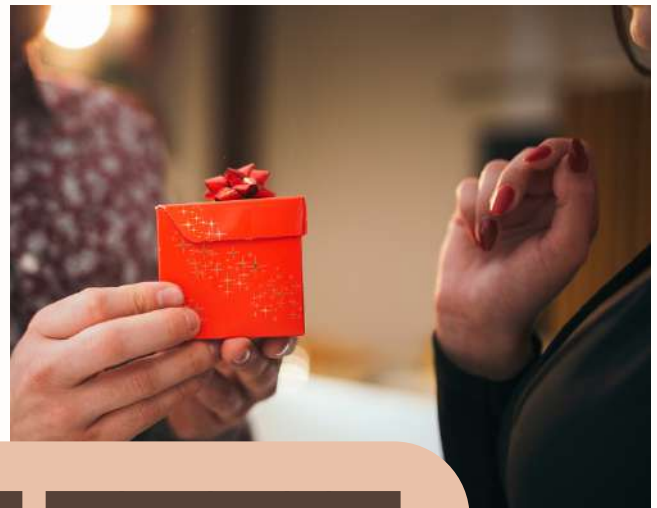
When I told my husband that I had decided to stay home, if he could manage the finances, he stared at me. He suddenly wasn't sure who I was. He asked me if I was sure (like a hundred times). He asked me if I was sure I didn't need a nanny. I gave him my mother's example and said if she could do all that without any help, I was sure I would be able to take care of a baby with help. He wondered why I took this decision despite being quite social and outgoing. He was also afraid I would churn his brain like dough if I stayed at home (like many housewives he has seen did). Though sceptical, he assured me that he would handle the house while I handled the home. However, we did have plan B just in case we couldn't manage this adventurous decision. But, I'm happy that we didn't need to implement it even after 11 years, 2 kids and a bigger home. My friends would sometimes hesitatingly ask me if the husband forced his manly decisions on me. I would laugh and tell them that the decision was completely mine. They wondered how a crazy, social party animal, who was out of the house almost 15 hours a day, would suddenly stay at home 24/7. It was a drastic change in my lifestyle but then I guess motherhood makes you do things that you have never done before.

Now I call myself an 'independent' stay-at-home mom because I handle the house, manage the kids, drive them to places, run outdoor errands, pay the bills and also travel alone with the little ones locally, nationally and internationally! I'm not 'financially independent' but independent in every other sense. And I'm happy this way!

Do you also have an adventurous journey you want to tell us about?



- Written By : Cindy D'Silva



नव वर्ष का उपहार

20 वर्षीय सुमित्रा जो नीराजी के यहाँ मेड नहीं उनकी बेटी की तरह रह रही थी . वह कल रात में उससे बात करती हुई अच्छी भली सोई थी लेकिन वह रात उनके जीवन की अंतिम रात हो गई थी . उन्हें इस हालत में देख वह घबरा उठी थी और वह फूट फूट कर रो पड़ी . उसकी आँखों से निरंतर अश्रुधारा प्रवाहित हो रही थे. उन्होंने उसे हमेशा अपनी बेटी की तरह प्यार से रखा था . वह समझ नहीं पा रही थी कि क्या हो गया

वह सोच रही थी कि अब वह बेसहारा हो गई है . उसके सिर के ऊपर से छत छिन गई थी. उसकी पालनहार आज दुनियासे विदा हो गई थीं , कई बार उसने खुद उन्हें अपने बेटों से कहते हुए सुना था कि तुम दोनों तो मेरे बेटे हो ही लेकिन मेरी एक बेटी भी है , जो रात दिन मेरी सेवा में लगी रहती है .

आज अचानक ही अपनी आँखें मूँद कर चिरनिद्रा में लीन हो गई थीं .

वह घर में बिल्कुल अकेली थी और जब नीरा आंटी ने सुबह से आँखें ही नहीं खोलीं थीं . उनको बेसुध देख कर उसे ऐसा लगा कि जैसे सब कुछ थम सा गया है . उसने पड़ोस में रहने वाले रमेश अंकल को फोन किया तो वह तुरंत भागते हुए आ गये थे फिर तो उसे जल्द ही समझ में आ गया कि सब कुछ समाप्त हो चुका है .

उनका पार्थिव शरीर 2 दिनों तक मोर्चुरी में रखा रहा था . उनके दोनो बेटे अमेरिका में थे , इसलिये उन लोगों को आने में दो दिन लग गये थे . वह उनकी याद करके लगातार रोती बिलखती रही थी .

20 साल की सुमित्रा की अम्मा नीरा आंटी के यहाँ बरसों से बर्तन और झाड़ू का काम किया करती थीं . वह स्कूल में पढती थी . अम्मा चाहती थीं कि वह पढ लिख कर मास्टरनी बन जाये .उसने बी.ए. में एडमिशन ही लिया था तभी आंटी को टायफॉयड हो गया था ,तो उन्हें दिन भर की देख भाल के लिये किसी की जरूरत थी इसलिये अम्मा ने उसे ही चार -छः दिनों के लिये उनके घर पर रख दिया था बस आंटी को अपने अकेलेपन को दूर करने के लिये, वह इतनी अच्छी लगी कि उन्होंने अम्मा से कह कर उसे अपने घर में ही रख लिया था . और साथ में उसकी पढाई का भी पूरा जिम्मा भी ले लिया. वह उसे बहुत प्यार से रखती थीं .

एक साल भी नहीं बीता था , कोविड ने सब कुछ तहस नहस कर दिया . आंटी को भी कोरोना हुआ था लेकिन उसने अपनी परवाह नहीं की थी और दिन रात एक कर दिया था उन्हीं दिनों उसकी अम्मा कोरोना की महामारी में इस दुनिया से उसको आंटी के हवाले करके सदा के लिये चैन की नींद सो गई थीं. वह तो अम्मा का मुँह भी नहीं देख पाई थी बस रोती बिलखती रही थी . उस समय आंटी ने प्यार से समझाते हुये कहा कि एक मां गई तो अब तुम मुझे अपनी माँ की तरह समझो. और फिर उन्होंने सचमुच उस पर माँ का लाड प्यार लुटाया था . वह अनाथ हो गई थी , अब तो उसके लिये नीरा आंटी ही उसकी सब कुछ थीं .

दोनों भइया और भाभी आई तो वह उन्हें देख कर वह फफक कर रो पड़ी थीं .वह अपना दर्द आखिर किससे बाँटे? वह देख रही थी कि अर्जुन भइया रहते तो अमेरिका में थे, परंतु अपनी मां की अंतिम क्रिया पूरे विधि विधान से कर रहे थे उसे यह सब देख कर आश्चर्य भी हुआ था , जब उस दिन बड़े भइया अपने बाल कटा कर धोती पहन कर घर आये थे । वह तो बिल्कुल चौंक पड़ी थी . यह सब उसके लिये अनूठा सा था .

आज हवन और उसके बाद ब्राह्मण भोज में तो भइया लोगों ने कोई कसर ही नहीं छोड़ी थी । वह तो पंडितों को देने वाला सामान ही देखती रह गई थी . अर्जुन भइया पंडित जी के लिये एक से एक कीमती सामान लेकर आये थे . जब उन्होंने पंडित जी को विदाई में सोने की अँगूठी दी तो सहसा वह विश्वास भी नहीं कर पा रही थी .घर मेहमानों से भरा हुआ था वह फिरकी की तरह पूरे दिन भाग दौड़ करती रहती थी . लेकिन रह रह कर उसकी आँखें बरस पड़ती थीं .

आज शकुन बुआ आई तो पहले तो जोर जोर से रोने का नाटक करतीं रहीं फिर उसकी ओर घूर घूरकर आयुष भइया से फुसफुसा कर कह रहीं थीं , "नीरा तो बहुत सीधी थी , ये लड़की बहुत चालाक लगती है, जाते समय इसकी तलाशी ले लेना इसने अकेले में जाने क्या क्या चुरा लिया होगा ."

उस समय वह किचेन में सफाई कर रही थी , सुनकर वह वह फफक कर रो पड़ी थी तभी सोमा भाभी इधर आ गई और उसको रोते देख भाभी ने उसे प्यार से अपने गले से लगा लिया था .

" सुमित्रा तुम बुआ जी की बात का बुरा न मानो . हम लोग उनके सामने इसलिये चुप हैं क्यों कि वह बडी हैं इनसे कुछ कहने का कोई फायदा नहीं है . वह तो शाम को चली जायेगी फिर हम लोग बैठ कर सोचेंगे कि अब आगे क्या करना है ."

सुमित्रा की आँखों से नींद उड़ी हुई थी .वह अपने भविष्य को लेकर बहुत चिंतित और परेशान थी .

अम्मा ने तो उसकी शादी के लिये रुपये भी आंटी के पास जमाकर रखे थे अब भइया भाभी को वह ये बातें वह किस मुँह से बताये. फिर वह अकेली लड़की अपना सिर छिपाने के लिये कहाँ जायेगी . आखिर में उसने निश्चय कर लिया था कि वह अपना सामान समेट कर पहले जहाँ अम्मा रहती थी वहाँ जाकर कुछ दिनों तक श्यामा मौसी के घर पर रह लेगी फिर सोचेगी, कुछ ट्यूशन और बढा लेगी. वह सुबह का इंतजार करने लगी. सब मेहमान जा चुके थे घर में सन्नाटा छाया हुआ था .

सुबह जब वह उठ कर कमरे से बाहर आने के लिये सोच ही रही थी कि सोमा भाभी उसके कमरे में आईं.

" सुमित्रा आज चाय नहीं पिलाओगी क्या ,?"

"जी भाभी बनाती हूँ . " वह आँसू पोछते हुए बोली थी .



“ तुम अपने लिये भी चाय साथ में ही बना लेना “. भाभी ने टोस्ट पर मक्खन लगाया और बोलीं, “चलो आज सब लोग साथ में बैठ कर चाय पियेंगे .”

वह शर्माई सकुचाई सी सबके साथ बैठी हुई थी तभी भाभी बोलीं, “ सुमित्रा आज अपने भइया को अपने हाथ की कढी जरूर से खिला देना , कल कह रहे थे कि बस एक दिन ही तो बचा है , आज कढी चावल बनवाना . सुमित्रा बिल्कुल अम्मा के स्वाद का खाना बनाती है .”

अर्जुन भइया बोले, “सुमित्रा तुम्हारी अम्मा तो अब रही नहीं , तुम अब कहाँ जाओगी?”

“ अम्मा ने बताया था कि तुम यहाँ पर बच्चों को पढाती भी हो .”

वह खुश होकर बोली कि आंटी कहा करती थीं “सुमित्रा अपने पैरों पर खड़ी होने की कोशिश करो .”

आंटी को याद कर उसकी आँखें भीग उठीं , “भाभी आप लोग फिक्र न करें , उस दिन श्यामा मौसी कह कर गई हैं , बिटिया अब तुम मेरे पास रह लेना.”

“कौन,? वह श्यामा जो उस दिन आई थी, वह तो कह रही थी कि सुमित्रा के साथ अपने भाई की रिश्ता करवा देंगे .”

“नहीं भाभी उनका भाई 40 साल का अवारा और बदमाश महापियक्कड़ आदमी है. ”

“आपने अच्छा किया कि मुझे बता दिया अब मैं उनके पास रहने के लिये कभी नहीं जाऊँगी .”

सब लोग एक साथ बैठ कर चाय पीते हैं और कल निकलने की तैयारी के बारे में बातें करते हैं.

तभी अर्जुन भइया बोले. “ सुमित्रा तुम मम्मी के पास कितने सालों से रह रही हो ?”

“जी भइया तीन साल हो चुके हैं . इस साल मेरा एम. ए. का आखिरी साल है . आंटी जी ने कई स्कूलों में मेरा फॉर्म भरवाया है . वह कह रही थीं कि तुम्हारा बी. एड . हो जायगा तो तुम्हें अच्छी नौकरी मिल जायेगी .और तुम्हारी अम्मा की आत्मा को शांति मिल जायेगी .”

“बी. एड . की तो फीस बहुत हुआ करती है .”

“अब एम. ए. की तो परीक्षा होने वाली है . फिर भइया किसी छोटे स्कूल मे या कहीं मॉल में कुछ दिनों तक नौकरी कर लूँगी , थोड़ा पैसा इकट्ठा हो जायेगा तब बी. एड. कर लूँगी .”

उसने दोपहर में लंच बनाया ,सब साथ में बैठे तो बडे भइया ने कहा रोटी सेक लो आज सब लोग साथ में खाना खायेंगे . सोमा भाभी साथ में काम करवा रही थीं . सुमित्रा डायनिंग टेबिल पर बैठी तो एक बार फिर से आंटी की याद करके उसकी आँखें भर आई थीं .

“सुमित्रा कल हम लोगों की फ्लाइट है , तुम जैसे पहले रहती थीं वैसे रहती रहोगी .”

“ सच कहूँ तो यह घर तुम्हारे लिये नववर्ष का उपहार है . अब ये घर तुम्हारा है ,”

“हाँ यदि इंडिया हम लोग आये तो तुमसे मिलने जरूर आयेंगे और तुम परमिशन दोगी तो तुम्हारे मेहमान बन कर रहेंगे . ये तुम्हारी पास बुक है जिसमें मम्मी ने तुम्हारी बी.एड. की फीस के लिये जमा कर रखी है .”

भइया ये घर आज और कल हमेशा आपका है और हमेशा रहेगा .

सुमित्रा विस्फरित नेत्रों से उन लोगों को देख रही थी कि क्या यह सच में यह नववर्ष उसके लिये इतनी सारी खुशियाँ लेकर आया है .

वह सोमा भाभी के गले लग कर सिसक पड़ी . भाभी आप लोग तो मेरे लिये भगवान से भी बढ कर हो . वह भइया भाभी के पैरों की तरफ बढी तो उन लोगों ने उसे अपने सीने से लगा लिया .



पद्मा अग्रवाल

WOMEN SHiNE

See you in the next edition