

# Exceptional Women

A woman is captured in mid-air, jumping with her arms raised in a gesture of triumph or joy. She is silhouetted against a warm, orange-hued sunset sky. Several birds are seen in flight, scattered across the upper and middle portions of the frame. The overall composition is dynamic and inspiring.

## Spotlight Series

## FORWARD NOTE

It is with great pleasure and admiration that I introduce this extraordinary collection celebrating **31 remarkable women**. Within these pages, you will discover the stories of trailblazers, innovators, and visionaries who have left an indelible mark on their fields and communities.



Each woman featured in this ebook embodies the spirit of resilience, determination, and courage. From breaking barriers to shattering glass ceilings, they have forged paths of excellence, inspiring generations to come.

As you delve into their stories, prepare to be inspired, uplifted, and empowered. Whether they are leaders in business, advocates for social change, pioneers in science and technology, or champions of the arts, these women have shown us what it means to defy expectations and create lasting impact.

Thank you for joining me in celebrating the power and potential of women everywhere. Together, let's inspire and empower the world with their remarkable stories.



## ANDREA JAYATILLEKA

### Leadership



#### What & who inspired you to enter your profession?

My coaching journey was shaped by two remarkable individuals: my father's commitment to servant leadership and my previous boss's dedication to inspiring change.

#### If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?

To enable everyone in the world to be their best. As I believe that we will all be creating an amazing place for us and our future generations to live.

#### Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?

Launching Smart Quest at 26, I formed key partnerships with Anil and Jayantha, and fostered international collaborations with Coach Masters Academy Singapore, Onefluencer India, and Radical Edge India, emphasizing the value of collective wisdom.

#### If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?

My dad- The Silent HERO

#### Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?

In a male-dominated industry, I leaned into my strengths, believing in my purpose to impact lives.

With little financial support, I embraced each step of my journey, grateful for guardian angels' support, yet navigating challenges as a woman in a sport where sponsorship remains elusive.

#### If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?

Mother Theresa- I would like to experience the depth of her faith and grace

#### One advice you have for women entering your industry?

Be clear of your Purpose and believe in yourself; work passionately towards it every step you take is what makes your journey.

#### "Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?

I am in a path of training and nurturing coaches and I wish to invest time to enable this community in 2024. Will be increasing the faculty of coaches and will enable more opportunities for woman coaches.

#### If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?

Mother Theresa; I would ask how she continued the great work she did despite the various criticism and how she found strength in those challenging times?

#### One adjective to describe you the best

Charismatic

## ANITA REDDY

Founder Trustee – DRIK- DWARAKA, AVAS, DRRT



### What & who inspired you to enter your profession?

Inspired by my father's selflessness and my school Rishi Valley, I found purpose in serving rural communities, drawing inspiration from the people themselves, leading to the creation of DWARAKA.

### If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?

I would make all those women whose lives we touched with our work to set out into this world and transform others' lives like their own, spreading a message that we must be the change that we want to see around us.

### Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?

My greatest joy lies in witnessing the children I once worked with in communities emerge as youth leaders today, continuing the work I started. Seeing them catalyze change in other communities brings immense pride and fulfillment.

### If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?

The heroes would be the youngsters and women with whom I have worked with and the title would be "Believe in Yourself As You Hold Up the Skies"

### Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?

1. In my early 20s, facing threats in a Bangalore slum, I chose to lead with confidence, bridging gender gaps and fostering community-centric solutions.
2. Transitioning from privilege to grassroots activism, I tackled societal biases by embracing service without expectation, persevering in community work for over 45yrs.

### If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?

I aspire to embody Gaddappa from the Kannada film Thithi, directed by my son Raam. Gaddappa's mantra of 'hogli bidi' reflects a profound acceptance of life's flow, emphasizing action without attachment.

### One advice you have for women entering your industry?

For women entering social service, my advice is to follow your heart without compromise. In DWARAKA, mobilize women for collective action, providing opportunities to enhance their creative, entrepreneurial, and technological skills for success.

### "Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?

Organizations like DWARAKA have consistently invested in women's empowerment across various sectors. In line with the IWD 2024 theme, DWARAKA has fostered a movement, transforming Kalamkari art and impacting thousands of lives.

### If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?

As a child, Florence Nightingale's story inspired me deeply. If I met her today, I would seek her guidance on uniting women against the devastation of war, echoing her compassionate service to the vulnerable amidst conflict.

### One adjective to describe you the best Selfless- (genuinely striving to be)



**RadicalEdge**  
Ignite • Coach • Empower



## BRENDA MENDES

*Career Development Coach, Author, Public Speaker*



**What & who inspired you to enter your profession?**

Over 350 million Indians were rendered unemployed during the pandemic. Contributing to the cause of employment, brought meaning and purpose into my life.

**If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?**

It would be for employment generation in India.

I believe that every job seeker who succeeds in getting the job accounts for one family empowered & and lifted economically.

**Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?**

I have helped over 250 white collar workers in India and abroad to get jobs through my coaching in the last 4 years and inspired hundred others to succeed in their career development.

**If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?**

If my life were a movie Indra Nooyi would play the lead role. The title would be Super Mom, Super Leader.

**Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?**

1. Being the sole breadwinner of the family, life long. Learning something new every day, kept me earning more every day
2. Transitioning from an Executive Assistant to setting up a new, wholly-owned subsidiary for Hindustan Unilever.

**If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?**

Wonder Woman

**One advice you have for women entering your industry?**

You are enough, you are unstoppable. Don't let others' opinions decide your destiny.

**"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?**

Count Her In

**If you could have dinner with any woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?**

Sudha Murthy

How could such a talkative woman stay married for so long to a man of such few words as Narayana Murthy?

**One adjective to describe you the best**  
Energetic

## CARRIE BENEDET

Sydney Australia (The Land Down Under)



### What & who inspired you to enter your profession?

Looking back, it was my Textile and Design teacher at Monaro High in Cooma.

### If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?

Global ability to bring peace and equality to all of humanity. Why? We have one precious life, and we should be able to give our best to more than just ourselves and, , learn and grow beyond our wildest dreams.

### Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?

Creating our book, Global Matters in 2023 with 11 other inspirational leaders influencing the future of culture, business and education.

### If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?

Dame Judy Dench in the Rebirth of the Phoenix

### Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?

Being taken seriously in family and workplace so developing grit and Grace has been deliberate and effective for strong and fruitful relationships.

### If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?

Wonder Woman - her superpowers enable her to travel across realms and right wrongs, spread peace and loving kindness through adversity and strength.

### One advice you have for women entering your industry?

Seek and surround yourself with the right circle for honest feedback and kindness and care in times of adversity, and for fun and laughter together!

### "Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?

I always aim to shout out generously to women across sectors of culture, business, and education, particularly when they give it are dhot shot!!

### If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?

Ruth Bader Ginsberg - in the moments of deep discrimination, humiliation and injustice, how did you continue to put on step forward and believe in a future that had yet to unfold?

### One adjective to describe you the best

Zest



## DR. CHAITRA HARSHA

CEO - Edufrontiers Educational Institutions, IIMB, IISc



*What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

My Alma Mater Indian Institute of Science

*If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Empowerment is a superpower that women wield every day, breaking barriers, inspiring change, and shaping the world. Celebrate the strength, resilience, and achievements of women on this day and every day as they worth it.

*Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

I am proud of building 3 educational institutions that empowers generations of Students and teachers. It's an exciting opportunity for me to contributing to building a culture among the teaching fraternity.

*If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

If my life were a movie, I imagine someone like Benedict Cumberbatch could play the lead role, and the title might be "Uncharted Echoes."

*Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

Overcome bias by building a robust business case, leveraging metrics, and networking with diverse investors." "Prioritize clear communication, encourage open dialogue, and establish clear expectations for mutual understanding in professional interactions.

*If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Fascinating fictional character to trade places with for a day could be Hermione Granger from the Harry Potter series. Embracing her intelligence, magical abilities, and being part of the wizarding world would offer a unique and enchanting experience.

*One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

For aspiring women entrepreneurs, my advice is to cultivate resilience. Embrace challenges as learning opportunities, persist in the face of setbacks, and use your unique perspective to innovate. Your resilience will be a powerful asset on the entrepreneurial journey.

*"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

To support 'Count Her In' for International Women's Day 2024, I'll amplify women's stories, fostering awareness. Celebrating their contributions inspires positive change and investment in women's endeavors

*If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

If I could dine with a historical woman leader, it would be Golda Meir. I'd discuss her tenure as Prime Minister, her diplomatic strategies, and her adept balancing of leadership amidst geopolitical challenges

*One adjective to describe you the best*

Ambitious and Humble

## CHITRA SINGH

Founder & Chief Mentor - SalesWomentoring



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

Starting as a Medical Rep at Johnson & Johnson, I found my passion in sales. It's a chance to empower clients, change lives, and shape the world, one customer at a time.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

I would place women in all powerful & influential roles. Heads of Nations, States and top companies, policy & decision-making bodies across the world so that we could shape & create an equal world for the next generation of women.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

In 2002, as the first salesperson to head a bank branch, I shattered doubts by surpassing records, including crossing 100 crores in deposits within 6 months, despite recently becoming a mother. This achievement exemplifies that motherhood doesn't hinder a woman's ability to excel.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

"Main apni favourite hun"- I am my Favourite. If you don't love or value yourself, the world will never realize your worth.

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

Boldly challenge gender biases, own and claim your value to overcome feelings of inferiority. Despite societal pressures, retaining identity brings pride and empowers future generations.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Mr. India and I would go in & out of all my client's offices to listen to what they have to say about me.

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Don't give in to SIP - Superwoman, imposter & primary caregiver syndrome. Be CIP, conscious, intentional & purposeful about your career & Life choices to shape the future you deserve.

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Offer 20 minute free Speed mentoring to women to deal with their Sales or business challenges. Take awareness workshops in colleges about how Sales is a fulfilling & rewarding career choice for women.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Mother Theresa: I would ask how she continued the great work she did despite the various criticism and how she found strength in those challenging times.

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Bold



## Debbie Muno

Managing Director at Genos North America



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

Over 25 years ago I learned about, and became fascinated with psychometric assessments. This fascination and exploration led me to start my first business with the desire to enable people and organizations to fit each other more effectively.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Wouldn't it be great if we could actually and literally feel how other people are feeling? That perspective could be so helpful in how we connect, communicate and collaborate with each other.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

Years ago, Jeff and I built the largest partner business in our industry in America. I'm really proud of how we worked together and each of us leveraged our strengths to make that happen.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Movie title: "Answer to yourself (and everyone else!). Life as an Entrepreneur." I'd be honored if anyone made a movie about my life and grateful if there was an actor who wanted to play me!

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

Boldly challenge gender biases, own and claim your value to overcome feelings of inferiority. Despite societal pressures, retaining identity brings pride and empowers future generations.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

I am a huge admirer of the character Elizabeth McCord from the TV series "Madam Secretary". She demonstrates tremendous emotional intelligence, has a strong moral compass, and shows diplomacy and empathy in her interactions. This character is such a role model.

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Enter if you are passionate and your values align - and if so, always keep learning and adding to your experiences. Approach every interaction with empathy, authenticity and integrity.

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Standing up for women's rights. Supporting girls and women - words of encouragement and support, doing business with women, and supporting women in business. Encouraging female colleagues - recognizing the tremendous roles of mother and grandmother.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a trailblazer for gender equality, first Jewish woman on the Supreme Court. I'd ask her about her life and seek advice for women in 2024.

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Enthusiastic

**M A Lourdumary**  
Retired Math Teacher



*What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

I wanted to be financially independent and at the same time inspire through my work. Being a teacher got that to me. I also had time to raise up 2 fantastic humans too

*If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Brain that can multitask with great quality. As a woman, i literally had to do many roles; this superpower would have helped achieve quality alongside number of tasks

*Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

Not one, but everytime a student returns to the school or writes to me acknowledging my contribution to their life, I'm humbled

*If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Bullets and Blades. I would love play the lead role (be my younger version) even at 76 now.

*Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

1. Look down for decision making- started to share my views earnestly (inbuilt pros and cons technique in my brain) instead throwing my victim card as a woman.
2. Women cant do things alone- broke this myth by staying in Bangalore alone during 70s working and raising children alone while my husband was working in another place.

*If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Dora the explorer, learned about this character whilst taking care of my grandson. Love her curiosity and kindness

*One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Teaching is not for making money, it's shaping the future. Be conscious of it all the time.

*"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

I'm now retired in my village in India, I would like to educate families here about equal opportunities and being open to send girl child to school

*If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Mother Teresa- How to be assertive and humble at the same time.

*One adjective to describe you the best*

Determined



## DHANYA SUGATHAN

Founder CEO at Artizenery



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

I have been passionate about clothing and fashion since childhood and would sew clothes for myself and my sisters from school days.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

A wand that could take away hurt and shower joy for all.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

Starting Navigator, bootstrapped, really slogging it out and scaling the business to 25 staff members, shipping 2 million units worth 100 CR / year.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Sai Palava perhaps. For the energy and down to earth character portrayal.

Title ' Zabardast

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

The biases in the society. People finding it difficult to accept that a woman is running the company. It was just amusing that people would always assume any male team member I travel with is my husband whether it was an elderly supplier or a fresher recruit . And to fight for recognition and growth for the women employees.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Moana. I would love to sail over the beautiful oceans, overcoming my fears to contribute something beautiful.

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

It a wonderful industry and there is so much one can do. All it takes is hard work and passion:) A foundation of technical aspects of fabrics and garment making will go a long way.

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Am always happy to support anything for women.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Coco Chanel. I would just love to be part of her energy and discuss with her the about creating classics in a world of fleeting trends.

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Exuberant

## **DIVYA AMARNATH**

*Head Leadership and Organization  
Development - Bosch Global Software*



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

Family- Blessed upbringing, diverse career advice. MBA revelation: passion for presentations. Inspiration ignited: Leadership and People Development professional.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Swish a wand that turns us all into empathetic allies... so that diversity is celebrated and no one feels like a minority!

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

My TEDx speech was given in the presence of all my immediate family including my grandmother! The privilege of sharing a career highlight with my loved ones, brought a unique sense of pride!

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

'The Heroine's Journey' is how I would title it. Full of ups and downs, total drama, stage and flashlights - and some dance too. I'd love for Madhuri Dixit to play the lead role - because I find her exemplary as an actress and dancer!

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

When I was pregnant, seeking advice, I asked a seasoned leader. Her wisdom: Build a support system for both career and parenting. Priceless solution, not just a challenge.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

It would be fun to be Aamir Khan as Ram Shankar Nikumbh from the Hindi film - Tare Zameen Par. The creativity he leveraged to identify latent potential in people who were believed not to have any - I found this fascinating!

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Love what you do, your career will follow! People Development is a line where it is helpful to invest in yourself too! Make the mistakes, and learn the lessons, it will make us better teachers and coaches for the leaders and colleagues we work with.

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Continue to do what I do, invest in people - both men and women. It makes the world an equitable place.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Oh, I'd choose a queen! I wondered what Rani Lakshmi Bai's story would have been. I'd love to know what was going through her mind as she choose pain of battle over the privilege of pension. Combat over comfort.

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Authentic

## DIVYA ARORA

Director, Cofounder & Mithai Connoisseur at  
The Divine Taste Pvt Ltd, Kesar



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

Witnessing the neglected Indian Sweets scenario in my own country motivated me to start " Kesar " which is redefining the Indian Mithai through modern lens .

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

I wish I could ignite the sleeping embers in the hearts of people with a wave of a wand . This would help them see their own unique light , their own unique abilities which could illuminate their soul path . This would make world such a luminescent place to BE in .

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

Kesar got featured on FoxLife and Discovery Channel within 1 year of its inception . This is no less than a miracle for me as Jaipur is a Mecca for Indian sweets and we have stalwarts here who have business establishments for past 150 or more years .

On a personal front

Getting selected for the Goldman Sachs 10 K women program and getting an opportunity to study IIMB still feels like a dream to me .

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

I would certainly play the key role in the movie . Title - " Redheart Alchemist "

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

1. "You are not taken seriously when it comes to financial matters" Realized the importance of my opinions, upskilled, and gained respect.
2. When women demand a certain way of working and lay rules , they are considered " BOSSY ". Label by setting clear boundaries with support from husband. Team cooperation followed.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

" Ember Lumen " from the movie ELEMENTAL . I would love to be her to experience the play of elements in the world . Also to feel the joy she experiences when she finds her true love through accepting her truth . A beautiful movie to watch :)

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Know your art your skill well ! You will learn as you grow but you may not have an opportunity to learn if you do know well .

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Invest my time to mentor more women to see their light. To be able to help them see their potential and abilities. Inspire them to live the life they dream to live.

### *If you could have dinner with any woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Ms Sudha Murty

How she transcends moments of difficulty into humour and live on with grace ?

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Compassionate



## **FARAH ISMAIL**

*Founder Interact Consulting, Executive Coach,  
Leadership Facilitator, Speaker*



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

Inspired by mentors, including Brene Brown, I embraced courage, reimagining my life and business. Grateful for her catalyst role, I now empower others as a courage catalyst.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Empower women to play big, honor their dreams, and break free from fear. It's time to embrace courage and live authentically, leaving behind the confines of playing small.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

In 2021, I received a Gold Facilitation Impact Award for a project in Saudi Arabia, collaborating with a diverse dream team for 2 years. Sharing the power of facilitation globally is an honor, recognizing it as a vital leadership skill.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Fear Less , The women

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

Reinvention: Escaping the comfort zone, I embraced change by ending a stagnant relationship, viewing it as a metamorphosis. Reframing my beliefs, I found strength in vulnerability and courage in imperfection.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Morpheus (in Matrix) because I love his strength and dedication to his crew and to fulfilling a higher purpose . He is willing to give his life in service to that purpose and his self belief and conviction is unshakable. That is a powerful way of being in the world

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Be brave enough to use your voice, old enough to listen to your heart, and strong enough to live the life you imagined.

### *"Count Her In. Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Create an inclusive space for women to speak up and wake up to their potential, power and possibilities.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

I would love to have dinner with Indira Gandhi. I would ask her " In the 70's and 80's what helped you break the glass ceiling and reach the top?"

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Courageous

## FARZANA HAQUE

Philanthropist, Investor, Board Member,  
Senior Leader TCS



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

My parents are the inspiration and the reason why I do anything. At the core of all the work I do and contribute to my parents are the central inspiration.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

The one superpower if I had for any day / everyday / woman's day is to Enable And ensure every woman is economically independent. When a girl has financial strength she has the ability to transform her world

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

Every workday is a blessing, offering freedom, responsibilities, and the chance to make a difference. Building a global community with amazing people across industries and nationalities is my greatest wealth.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Kareena Kapoor. Everyone has always said that we resemble each other! :) A life well lived

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

When starting work, I believed in the power of continuous good work and authenticity. Despite naysayers, perseverance and being a valuable team player have been key.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Be all the princesses in fairy tales and change the narrative :) where the princess are saving their nation / kingdoms from evil forces and saving the prince too :)

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Stay the course. Persevere through all the challenges and you will succeed

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Anything and everything!! This is a fundamental belief for me.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Curious about my Irish aristocrat great-great-grandmother's journey: her courage to leave all behind, start anew in Chennai, and create her own world.

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Determined

## FARHANA HAQUE

Senior Director - Cloud Solutions - Manufacturing



*What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

My sister

*If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Super patience to answer my energetic twins constant questions!

*Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

So many! Each phase has had something I am proud of. Be it at Infosys, IBM, Vodafone or now at Microsoft, being a part of such great companies has given me immense opportunity to contribute.

*If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Priyanka Chopra - dare to dream.

*Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

Women struggle to claim their place under the sun having a group of mentors and idols help push the envelope.

*If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Wonder Woman! The original superhero.

*One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Have confidence in yourself, you will make Mistakes you will fall but when you trust and have confidence in yourself each setback will propel you higher.

*"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Mentorship and coaching.

*If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Audrey Hepburn she was the original one who broke the glass ceiling.

I love her movies!

*One adjective to describe you the best*

Energetic



**RadicalEdge**  
Ignite • Coach • Empower



## JUVI ALEX

*Keynote Speaker, Corporate Trainer, Founder - Speak*



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

Driven by passion and purpose, I thrive as a Keynote Speaker and Corporate Trainer, impacting lives through unique perspectives and stories. Inspired by icons like Les Brown and Oprah Winfrey, I aspire to influence and uplift audiences worldwide.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Empower women with confidence and self-belief to pursue goals, challenge injustice, and lead change, unleashing a wave of empowerment and transformation.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

I cherish impacting individuals and organizations through my speaking and training. From doubting my voice to nurturing young professionals, I'm proud of my journey, crowned as a top leader in 2020.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

This is indeed a fascinating question; I would love to see Deepika Padukone play the lead role and the title would be "You are Enough".

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

Work-Life Balance & Unequal Access to Education and Economic Opportunities. Maintain work-life balance by prioritizing self-care, setting boundaries, and seeking support. Ensure equal access to education for girls and women, addressing barriers through initiatives and mentorship programs for career advancement.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Cannot really think of any such character whom I could trade places for a day.

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Know Your Worth, recognize the value you bring to the table. Your unique perspective, experiences, and expertise are your strengths. Don't undervalue yourself.

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Implement mentorship and coaching programs pairing women with experts for guidance and support. Foster an environment for sharing experiences and learning from successes and challenges.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

To Mother Teresa: What inspired and sustained your unwavering compassion and love in serving the poorest amidst immense challenges.

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Authentic



**RadicalEdge**  
Ignite • Coach • Empower

## MADHU CHANDRIKA

Visual storyteller,

Founder - Earthen Symphony The Design Studio



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

I guess I was destined to be doing what I am doing! because when I look back and connect the dots, I see some people and instances that popped out of nowhere whose chance meeting nudged me towards choosing art and design as my chosen field.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

If I could have ONE superpower for Women's Day, that would be to instill a better sense of self-worth and self-love in every woman.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

The Goldman Sachs and Fortune Global Women Leaders Award that I received in 2012 gave me a validation and the confidence that what I do can and does MAKE A DIFFERENCE in the world. This moment helped me gain a broader perspective and added a bigger sense of responsibility in me towards my art.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Wow, if my life was a movie, Anne Hathaway/ Meryl Streep/ Julia Roberts would play the lead role as me!

The title of the movie could be: Making walls speak! "Mad-u's Many Strokes!", "Earth without Art is just EH! ",

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

Balancing family and career, both starting simultaneously, relied on passion, instinct, and strong support systems. Despite challenges like the COVID lockdown, perseverance and dedication prevailed, with a focus on giving more than 100% in all endeavors.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Elizabeth Bennet !! from pride and prejudice !!!

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Stay invested! Be resilient, build your team and create value !

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

This is something I have done all along in my studio. When you enter into my studio you will see women handling various divisions. I have invested in women all along by upskilling them and nudging them to take on responsibilities beyond their vision.

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Determined



## DR MARCELLA LUCAS

Founder & Managing Director of Lead to Innovate



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

Parents' unwavering support, urging me to seize opportunities, led me to take a prestigious role after initial hesitation.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

For IWD and beyond, I'll foster connections among women, recognizing their power for mutual benefit and support. Building a strong support system is crucial for success, particularly as we advance in our careers.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

Young ambition: CEO by 40, achieved at 32. Leaving stable job for consulting firm brought terrifying risks but rewarding freedom and fulfillment daily.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Meryl Streep would play the lead role and the title would be 'Power. Poise. Presence'.

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

1. Managing my energy in diverse cultural settings, I've learned to gauge and channel it effectively, especially navigating Asian communication norms."
2. "Overcoming self-doubt in my industry, I've built a strong support network, gaining repeat clients to validate my position and alleviate uncertainty.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

First female James Bond, saving the world effortlessly with an inclusive team and cutting-edge tech.

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Explore, be creative, and seize opportunities to discover your strengths and preferences, leading to informed selectivity.

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Intentionally support and invest in women, starting with actions in our own circles. A listening ear or a simple introduction can make a significant impact

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

I'd choose Michelle Obama and Sigrid Kaag for their credentials and poise. My questions to them:

1. How can we create a more supportive political environment for female leaders?
2. How do we address the 'either/or' dilemma of family versus work for women?

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Resilient



**Poonam Bir Kasturi**

*Compostwalli*



*What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

My late Father was one of India's first design engineers - he was an India addict and artist and visionary.

*If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

To build for long term - not short term!

*Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

Ordinary folks sharing stories of how their lives have been enriched by the journey of sustainability

*If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

The black soldier fly maggot would be the lead and the title would be The Brown revolution trumps the Green!

*Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

Balancing the role of Mom and CEO was the hardest. I had to let go of my need to be perfect on both ends, compromise!

*If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Mad Madam Mimp - in Sword in the Stone

*One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Get a great co-founder who has complementary skills.

*"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

I would be happy to mentor young women.

*If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Amrita Gill - I would love to have conversations around her creative process and her poetic muse.

*One adjective to describe you the best*

Don Quxiotic

## **PRIYA CHETTY-RAJAGOPAL**

*Founder & Managing Partner, Multiversal Advisory LLP*



*What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

Possibilities, relevance and a natural fit.

*If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Hindsight but more than that perfect foresight

*Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

So many and so different but setting up the Global Diversity Board for Stanton Chase stays with me.

*If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Katharine Hepburn. And it would be titled ' Multiversal -The Power

*If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Being limited by the present not the future.

*Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

Maybe Asterix. The Magic Potion is such a transformer.

*One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Look back with gratitude, look ahead with steely resolve and hope. Be meaningful. And have fun on the journey.

*"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

All I can

*If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Sita. I would ask her why she didn't ask why

*One adjective to describe you the best*

Multiversal

## DR. RAJNI AGGARWAL

*President Federation of Indian Women Entrepreneurs*



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

My parents, who were both educators, instilled in me a love for continuous learning and exploring. Additionally, my fascination with the human mind and behavior, along with a desire to help others, inspired me to pursue a career in Business. Everyday something new will crop up.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Ability to instill unshakeable confidence and self-belief in every woman and girl. Confidence is the cornerstone of success and empowerment, and by empowering women with this superpower, we can catalyze positive change and break barriers.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

successful implementation of initiatives aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs across India. This includes organizing impactful events, workshops, and training programs that have enabled women to develop their businesses, access resources, and network with other entrepreneurs.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Priyanka Chopra "Unwavering Resolve: The Journey of an Entrepreneur." This title reflects my journey of overcoming obstacles and making a difference in my life and people's lives by dedicating my time to women empowerment.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Wonder Woman. I admire her strength, resilience, and commitment to justice. Experiencing a day in her shoes would allow me to inspire others and make a positive impact on the world in a bold and empowering way.

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

As a woman my profession is breaking through the glass ceiling and gaining recognition in a male-dominated field.

Achieving work-life balance, which I manage by setting boundaries, prioritizing self-care, and seeking support from my family and colleagues

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Never underestimate your worth or capabilities. Believe in yourself, pursue your passions relentlessly, and advocate for the value you bring to the table. Surround yourself with supportive mentors and allies who uplift and empower you to reach your full potential.

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

To support the IWD theme, I would actively advocate for increased investment in education, training, and resources for women in confidence building.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Indira Gandhi, the first female Prime Minister of India. I will ask about her experiences and challenges as a pioneering woman in Indian politics.

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Resilient



**RadicalEdge**  
Ignite • Coach • Empower



## Reena Yadav Ramakrishnan

Artist



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

Mother's subtle influence ignited my creativity from a young age, evolving into a profession under mentor Leila Tayebaly's guidance.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

If I had a superpower, I'd selectively change past behaviors to eliminate the need for Women's Day.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

Hosting my solo exhibition at Jehangir Gallery was a pivotal moment. Interacting with diverse visitors, especially art students, challenged my perspective.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Title: "Nevertheless, She Persisted" starring Meryl Streep. Life's daily scenes are like an evolving movie, no need for remakes.

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

The key challenge for women is societal roles. To combat it, I embody change and persist.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Mowgli, without a doubt!! What a life he leads ... having animals for friends. giving him the purest kind of unconditional love and friendship and being surrounded by nature in all its pristine form with only goal in life ... to be happy! If I only I could get there, even for just a day!

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Prioritize yourself. Not everyone will like your work but persevere through highs and lows for eventual success.

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

As a certified Art Therapist, I recommend art therapy for women. It fosters self-expression, self-awareness, and personal development, aiding communication and interaction.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

To Frida Kahlo, who challenged gender norms: Despite struggles, what gave you the courage to vulnerably express personal experiences through art?

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Fiesty !

## Rinku Guzraty

Chief Operating Officer - Corrttech Energy Limited



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

My Mother, my professionally successful women friends and other inspiring ladies who have successfully climbed the corporate ladder.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Superpower of Invisibility (single power). Just like Superman ideally, I would also love to be a Superwoman (that we see in movies) with a variety of powers like strength, endurance, resilience, flight, super speed, x-ray vision, telepathy, psychokinesis, teleportation, etc. to magically help all those in need in my country.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

1. Thriving in a male-dominated industry for 15 years, I've established a respected presence."
2. "Transforming Cortech's export focus from minimal to dominant, reshaping the business landscape.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Wonder Woman Rinku – where I will be playing the lead role.

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

1. Interacting with PSU companies – Leading PSU discussions as a woman, firmly establishing my authority. Emphasizing my leadership role, insisting on respect for decisions
2. I have had to prove my worth as a capable and successful woman in many males dominated client meetings in India and Abroad

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Captain America: A courageous hero with a kind heart and sharp mind, inspiring others to stand up against injustice.

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Have Faith in God, Believe in Yourself and nothing can stop you ever !

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Lead by example: celebrating diverse beauty, empowering with kindness and strength, inspiring women to achieve their dreams.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Frida Kahlo, renowned Mexican painter, revered for her authenticity and deep connection to Mexico's culture. Over dinner, I'd inquire about her wellspring of inner strength, love for her homeland, and resilience in adversity.

### *One adjective to describe you the best* Authentic !

## RUPA PATIL

International Business Mentor, Trainer,  
Author & Speaker. Founder, Weekend Nuts.



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

From a challenging upbringing, I defied expectations, self-sponsoring my Engineering studies and building a successful corporate career. In 2013, I launched Weekend Nuts, elevating from corporate life to entrepreneurship, serving prestigious clients but aiming for greater impact.

From failed ventures to mentoring, I now empower Heart-Centered Entrepreneurs globally. My daily inspiration? Guiding others toward personal and financial growth.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

"If I had one superpower, I'd want it to be melting away anyone's 'imposter Syndrome' in a jiffy."

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

During early Covid, I aided a Filipino home-based business owner. Within 2 weeks, she transitioned online and secured her first paying client. As a Business Mentor, I witnessed 20 rural Indian women entrepreneurs swiftly mastering digital tools, thanks to Google and Sheroes' accelerator. Transitioning from business failures, I've found purpose in empowering Heart-Centered Entrepreneurs worldwide.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Join the #heartleaders revolution: Witness a small-town underdog rise to legendary status, inspiring heart-centered entrepreneurs nationwide.

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

1. Faced with gender bias, I, a dedicated female entrepreneur, was unfairly labeled 'money-minded'. While my male counterparts might be praised, I was scrutinized for my ambition and dedication.
2. Once labeled a 'horrible housekeeper' and 'not a good mother', I struggled with societal expectations. Over a decade, I learned self-acceptance, finding validation in my son's daily gratitude, prioritizing love over societal standards.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Moana :) Trading a day with Moana reflects my affinity for solo travel, self-discovery, and entrepreneurship, mirroring her journey of courage, resilience, and connection with self and environment

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Entrepreneurship isn't an easy path, but it sure is a soul-satisfying one. I recommend fellow women entrepreneurs to leverage the support of (1) Mentors, who've been there and (2) Masterminds, for continuous growth, without giving up.

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

As a Business Mentor and Founder, I'm dedicated to championing 'Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress.' by actively supporting and guiding local women entrepreneurs to enhance their personal, professional, and financial growth.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

This has to be Rani Lakshmibai. "In the face of fierce battle, how on earth do you instantly tap into your warrior energy, as a leader and especially as a mother?"

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Heart Centered



## SALLY LEONARD

*The Solution Alchemist at Black Dog Consultants*



*What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

A guy called Mark Jones. One day he ran a training course in my company that showed me what good training was all about. He then encouraged the entrepreneur in me to open my own consultancy.

*If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

I have one. Positivity. Never, ever, ever give up.

*Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

I can't say there's any one moment I'm particularly proud of. However, I'm proud of the accomplishments of my team and my people – but I think they'd be just fine without me :-)

*If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Kate Winslet. A life of two halves.

*Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

I'm lucky that I don't live in an oppressive anti-female regime and that I've had equal access to education and opportunity. Given this, I don't have a lot of time for people who complain about they don't have this or that.

The biggest challenge most women ever face is working out the balance if you're a working Mum. I don't really have a solution to share as everyone's situation is different, but I hope my son was ok with my choices. I know he's proud of my achievements so I'd say it was as right as it could be for us.

*If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Minnie Mouse. I'm kind of obsessed with Disney, ha-ha.

*One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Be yourself. Remember, everyone else is taken.

*"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Keep supporting the women in my company to follow their own hopes and dreams.

*If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

The late Queen of England. I'd like to know how she was so kind, welcoming and charming to every single person she met – even on the days when she'd rather not be working.

*One adjective to describe you the best*

Tenacious



## SHALINI RAO

Chief Marketing Officer - BIAL.



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

I have always been curious about how minds work and what drives people. This was my driving force to choose marketing as a profession.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Wave a wand and make every woman supremely confident about their right to participate, to be in a room and to speak up without fear.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

Building a strong brand presence across multiple industries - making Pedigree a strong brand in India and turning the airport category into a branded visible entity.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

The Gypsy Queen / The High Priestess - I would pick Sushmita Sen to play the lead role

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

1. Same thing said by a man is received better ; do homework and use data and facts to speak.
2. Often called too sensitive or over reactive - have learnt to talk with facts dispassionately

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Alice in Wonderland - the way she goes through her journey

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Be curious, ask questions and don't stop learning

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Focus on removing glass walls, impediments and arming women with the right set of tools to progress

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Maharani Gayatri Devi - How she combined grace with an iron will of steel in a fairly male dominant world

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Explorer

## SHILPA AJWANI

Founder & CEO - unomantra,  
Founder - SHEmantra Community.



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

It was a question I asked myself on my 45th birthday! "Your life has been a life of success, what would make it a life of significance?" Entrepreneurship was an inner calling that I answered after more than two decades as a corporate leader.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

My superpower would be to balance the masculine and feminine energy in every human on our Planet so we can show up as our whole, magnificent self and allow ALL to thrive in abundance!

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

I became a Managing Director at 38 and felt I was ready to take on the job confidently!

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

She came, She saw, She transformed will be the movie and I would love to play the lead role - why not?

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

Challenge 1: Keeping my own needs a priority as I juggled career and life: I had to learn how to prioritize, manage my expectations, know which tasks required what level of "perfection" and build support systems

Challenge 2: Managing the imposter syndrome that showed up in my early years as a professional. I learnt how to manage it through reflecting upon my strengths, honing my skills, becoming open to receiving both appreciation and criticism with grace.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Nancy Drew...I love solving mysteries and connecting dots!

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Make your career and your life YOUR responsibility, set and go after your goals very intentionally believing you deserve to be successful!

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Mentorship is powerful! I want to impact women entrepreneurs and corporate leaders at 10X my current impact so we see more women rise to their potential and enjoy the journey!

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Maya Angelou...I would sit with her, ask her to read me a poem of hers that she feels I need to hear.

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Purposeful



## DR. SHRILAKSHMI

Co-founder and CEO of AA Probics



*What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

My dad – Prof Kotra Srinivasulu – A scientist at par

*If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Ability to instantly empower women worldwide with confidence, self-love, and unwavering belief in their abilities, particularly in STEM fields and technology commercialization.

*Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

The successful launch of a company back in 2009. I had the privilege of leading a highly motivated team, instilling in them a belief in our collective vision and our ability to tackle market obstacles head-on. Over the span of 13 years, we achieved significant milestones by securing debt funding and Series A investment, underscoring the remarkable journey we embarked upon together.

*If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Chris Pratt- brings a blend of charisma and determination to the character. The title, "Beyond the Blueprint" seems fitting, encapsulating the journey from inception to accomplishment, the innovative spirit, and the perseverance of the team.

*Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

Work-Life Balance: Balancing professional commitments with personal responsibilities can be challenging. To tackle this, I prioritize tasks effectively, set clear boundaries between work and personal time, and delegate tasks when necessary.

Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling: Advancing in my career and overcoming barriers to reach leadership positions can be daunting. To address this, I actively seek out opportunities for skill & professional growth. I also build strong networks and seek mentorship from those who can guide me in navigating the corporate landscape.

*If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Health industry, Dr. Gregory House from the TV series "House, M.D." He is a brilliant but unconventional diagnostician known for his unorthodox methods and sharp wit.

*One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Perseverance is key. One piece of advice "Embrace your curiosity and passion" for science. Biotechnology is a rapidly evolving field with immense potential for innovation and impact on society.

*"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

I would do is actively advocate for increased investment in programs and initiatives that empower and uplift women. This includes supporting women-owned businesses through mentorship programs, investing in educational opportunities for women in STEM fields, and promoting policies that promote gender equality in the workplace.

*If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Marie Curie, Question-What motivated and inspired her to pursue a scientific career, as well as the obstacles she encountered along the way? I would inquire about her scientific discoveries and the process of conducting her groundbreaking research on radioactivity, as well as the impact of her work on the fields of science and medicine.

*One adjective to describe you the best*

Adaptable

## SUCHARITA EASHWAR

Founder & CEO Catalyst for Women Entrepreneurship



*What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

I'd say that it has been life events that have inspired my career. Learning from each bend and curve, and ultimately bringing me here - to a delta where I am able to impact so many more women to follow their own journeys.

Like many women, my personal and professional life intersected at several points in my life journey - and I discovered an opportunity to follow my aspiration each time! I have worked with women at all levels of society over 3 decades. I have come to realize that Women have immense potential to shine in every area of human existence.

*If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

I think all women already possess several superpowers - incredible resilience, strength, and empathy. But, I'd love to be able to teleport! I love travel and experiencing new cultures, so being in a different country in an instant would be awesome!

*Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

I was invited in 2017 by G20 - to chair their Women20 Working Group in Women's Financial Inclusion. I was privileged to present the report and recommendations to G20 President Chancellor Angela Merkel. She and the G20 leaders endorsed this, and it led to the World Bank announcing a \$1 billion fund for women's financial inclusion.

*If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Julia Roberts for her versatility and her smile that lights up the room!

I'd love for her to star in my biopic 'Stake Your Claim'

*Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

When my first daughter was born, I was in the time-taxing advertising business: I would go to work when she was sleeping and often, when I got home late after a shoot, she would have gone to sleep. I said to myself, "Why did I have a baby if I can't spend time with her?". Once I created the intention to change this, sure enough I got an offer I could not refuse - to set up a media NGO with the office being one room in the apartment I could move into!

Again, when I decided to become a single parent, I wanted an opportunity with higher income. Sure, enough I got a lucrative offer with an IT startup with a flexible and supportive team.

learning is: when faced with a challenge, look for opportunities and put up your hand without questioning - Am I up to it?

*If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Alice in Wonderland! I'd love to experience the Mad Hatter's tea party as things get 'curiouser and curiouser'!

*One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Tune out the noise. There are always naysayers and doubters, just focus on your end goal and do what it takes to get there! As I love to say: Get Started, Dream Big. Keep Going!

*"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Bring in investors and matchmake them with investible women entrepreneurs who Think Big!

*If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Sarojini Naidu, I will ask her what made you write, "She is a twin born with primal mysteries, and drinks of life at Time's forgotten source"?

*One adjective to describe you the best*

Resilient

I'm resilient like a rubber ball - I bounce back: Bounce Back woman!

## SUCHETA DEB BURMAN

Ultramarathon Open Water Swimmer



*What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

My parents

*If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Mind control! Make everyone start picking up/ cleaning all the garbage/wastes properly discarded and recycle them the right way!

*Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

My 2-way swim from India to Sri Lanka & back, 62 kms in 19 hours & 21 mins.

*If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

"My Journey to Self-Discovery" played by Nicole Kidman

*Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

- Being very vocal of my opinions has been difficult among my dominant men swim committee. They are entitled to their opinion too which is far less convincing. I don't stop voicing my opinions and don't give them an opportunity to belittle me anymore and I show up and I tell them they will never be the human being I am.
- As a woman I am not eligible for sponsors for my swims. "Open Water Swimming is not for woman, she should be at home caring for a family". I'm still struggling with it and I'll figure it out in time

*If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Hahahahaha! This was a super one! I'd like to be Aqua man! I'm sure you're not surprised! Hahaha! I would just swim the depths of the sea and make friends with the marine life/animals so they can swim with me, protect me and guide me on a regular swim day at sea and help me towards achieving unachievable swims!

*One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Be yourself! You have nothing to fear & don't letting anyone tell you otherwise! Go take on the world! Woman power!

*"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

It first starts with them to identify & accept what makes them unique and I will support them anyway I can for them to achieve that so people will be more accepting of them being a good investment. Especially when they show up with confidence & grace.

*If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Grace Kelly.. It's obvious!

*One adjective to describe you the best*

Aqua woman



## SUJATA (SESHAN) SAHU

Founder - 17000 ft Foundation, Director, ATREE



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

I am a corporate techie who after 15 years in the industry, quit to enter into the social sector. In 2010, I went for a solo trek into high altitude Ladakh which changed my life. Faced with the extreme challenges of high altitude, poor acclimatization, rough terrain, and lack of basic infrastructure or support, I suffered from pulmonary oedema and found myself in a remote village, desperately trying to find my way back to medical care. I stayed the night at the only home in the village, cared for by the kindness of the local people and got my first taste of what life in Ladakh was really like.

I saw my first Government school, a tiny one room structure, which provided education to all 7 children in the village. I met the only teacher on his monthly two day walk back to the main town to gather supplies for his school. I saw the teacher's dedication and commitment to provide the best education he could to the children. I saw the desperation of young parents who were driven to send their very young children to faraway towns and states in search of better schools and a good education. And I felt my own privilege and that of my children who had been brought up with the best of education I could give them.

I made a promise to make a difference to the lives of children living in these remote mountain villages, villages that I never knew existed till then. I started 17000 ft Foundation to ensure that even little children living in the remotest of mountain villages have access to the same high quality education as their more privileged counterparts.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

The power to enable all women to believe in themselves, to give as much to themselves as they give to others.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

My career highlight would be when I took the plunge to give up corporate life and step into the social sector.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

I would love for Meryl Streep to play the lead role in a movie for which the title would be "Unstoppable Woman".

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

I have endured and survived domestic violence, and have walked out of my marriage with my three children who also bore the brunt of it. The separation was difficult and traumatic, but I rebuilt my life and that of my children and am happier for it. As a woman I also faced harassment, aggression and toxicity at work from a male colleague, which was ignored and disregarded, despite my complaints. I was asked to turn a blind eye and forced to continue to work with him. I fought the aggression and the system, but the system won. There still is such limited acknowledgement or understanding of the issues faced by women at the workplace and the resultant sheer neglect faced by them at home and the workplace is one that is being ignored.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Goddess Kali/Durga - she expresses the dual nature of the destruction that must come before new beginnings, and of the strength of the female power.

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Your empathy is your strength - Don't shy away from it or be apologetic about it. Wear it like your skin. Women make the best change makers.

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

I will fight for equal rights for women, speak openly about challenges faced by women and offer support to other women wherever possible.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Savitribai Phule, India's first female teacher and social reformer, who played a vital role in improving women's rights in India. She is considered as the pioneer of India's feminist movement. Her life and work is a testament to social reform and female empowerment in Indian Society. This is what I would want to ask her - "How do we educate and empower not just women, but also men about contributing to building an equitable and just society for all?"

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Indomitable

## TINA MANSUKHANI GARG

CEO Pink Lemonade



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

Was always inspired by the ad gurus of the 80s and 90s. I remember memorising the ad jingles and making games out of it during our play time and enacting the advertisements we saw on TV. I think there was always a storyteller in me.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

To ensure that every woman finds an equal voice within her house and her professional workplace.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

When I got invited by the US state department for a mentorship program by Fortune Global leaders. I was one of the 3 women from India to make it there. It was a world-changing experience. Owning the launch of Chandrayaan 2 was another such moment, where we met the prime minister too. I am grateful for such opportunities that my workplace has given me.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

It would be called - Still, she rises. And the protagonist would be Alia Bhatt or Vidya Balan.

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

1. Being able to win business without greasing palms. We have never done it and my solution was always to be so good that you'll still get the business.
2. Being able to win respect at a table full of men. Again the solution is to know your work and let that speak. Respect is always commanded and not demanded.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

Lady Mary from Downtown Abbey. Her grit and determination to lead the family as a woman of her time, are endearing. And of course she gets hero!

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

For women in any industry, be ready to have two careers - at home and at work. As a mother your home career rarely stops. Lead with empathy but know where to draw the line. Our emotions cannot allow us to be taken for granted.

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Bring more women into the workplace. Enable them to act with confidence. That's always been my passion space.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Indira Gandhi. I would really want to know how she did it sitting in the first office in an age where the whole country didn't know its own direction. Her challenges to lead men must have been plenty but she continued to stand tall.

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Vivacious

## VIJAYA KUMAR

*An eternal student of life & Informal coach & mentor*



### *What & who inspired you to enter your profession?*

My inspiration at all times have been the wonderful people I have worked with and my purpose has been of making a difference to the organizations I worked in besides enriching and empowering every team member as best as I could. Leaving a legacy that outlived me was a core driver.

### *If you could have a superpower for Women's Day, what would it be and why?*

Just for one day, I would like to have the power to imbue everyone in the world with inclusive thinking, to appreciate & celebrate differences, and to know that in our differences lie both beauty and strength. I would like people to understand that divisive ideas of diversity are artificial, a rainbow is beautiful because it brings together a cohesive color palette of all its seven colors, take away even one color and it loses its sheen.

### *Can you share a career highlight that you're proud of?*

1) I co-designed 'Ascend,' a systems-driven leadership program at HSBC India to build a gender diverse talent pool. Focused on fostering inclusion, it empowered women by addressing their unique contexts and challenges. Structured mentoring by senior leaders ensured its enduring success, the programme is a legacy that lasts till date.

2) Again while with HSBC, I was fortunate to work with young girls with impoverished backgrounds but loads of ambition and grit. One girl who I worked with is now well on her way to becoming a Chartered Accountant. I feel blessed that I could contribute to her life in a meaningful way.

### *If your life was a movie, who would play the lead role, and what would the title be?*

Meryl Streep would play the lead role with unparalleled grace and depth. Her ability to embody diverse characters and convey raw emotions would bring authenticity to my story. The title would be "The Tapestry of Tomorrow." This title reflects the intricate weaving of experiences, choices, and aspirations that shape my journey, with Meryl Streep guiding viewers through the rich tapestry of my life.

### *Two key challenges have you faced as a woman & share your solutions?*

I can only say that all challenges are opportunities, to explore alternatives or to do something different. I have never experienced any limitations on account of being a woman. I take being a woman as my good fortune and a privilege.

### *If you could trade places with any fictional character for a day, who would it be and why?*

If I could trade places with any fictional character for a day, it would be Alice, from the book - "Alice in Wonderland". She embodies curiosity and adventure, navigating Wonderland's whimsical realm with an open mind. Her journey mirrors personal growth, as encounters with peculiar characters spur self-discovery and resilience. Through imagination and creativity, Alice challenges societal norms, symbolized by her confrontations with the Queen of Hearts and the Mad Hatter. The Cheshire Cat, elusive and wise, serves as her enigmatic guide, embodying ambiguity and the power of imagination. As Alice embraces curiosity and individuality, she inspires readers to question reality and embrace the wonder and mystery of life besides challenging the status quo.

### *One advice you have for women entering your industry?*

Argue for your limitations and sure enough they are yours.

### *"Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress." is the IWD Theme for 2024. What is the one thing you would do to support?*

Being available as a Coach and sounding board to the wonderful women finding their way through the world.

### *If you could have dinner with any historical woman, who would it be and what would you ask her?*

Joan Ruth Bader Ginsburg. My question - "How did she become this person who never needed any excuse to hide behind and received no concessions for her gender & yet became a force to reckon with in a profession that did not take women seriously at the time? How did she know exactly what kind of change she wanted to see in the world?"

### *One adjective to describe you the best*

Curious



**RadicalEdge**  
Ignite • Coach • Empower



A person is shown in silhouette, jumping with their arms raised in a gesture of triumph or joy. The background is a soft, hazy sunset or sunrise sky with a few birds flying in the distance. The overall tone is inspirational and uplifting.

# Thank you!

**"Am I good enough?  
Yes, I am." —  
Michelle Obama,  
"Becoming"**