

## THIS MONTH FEATURES...



### TETE-E-TETE

Vandana Chavan shares insights of her perspectives on women empowerment.



### OD ENTHUSIAST'S ORATE

Shanaaz Preena shares her thoughts on women self empowerment.



### OD FOLLOWER'S ORATE

Shahana Sharmin elaborates on importance of self empowerment for women of today.

Atyaasaa

ISSUE NO 99 | OCTOBER 2016



# KNOWLEDGE BEANS

A HUMAN RESOURCE NEWSLETTER



## TETE-E-TETE

# PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Vandana Chavan, MP, Rajya Sabha, careered as a practicing criminal lawyer in Pune. Elected thrice as a municipal councilor she became the first woman Mayor of Pune. She initiated and implemented several citizen centric programmes for Pune including the bio-diversity parks. Passionate about global warming and climate change she has represented India at several national and international forums vehemently upholding this cause. She has two NGOs working for women empowerment and climate change. She is a recipient of several national and international fellowships and awards.



## 1. Behind every successful man, there is a woman. Is the converse true? If yes, what role does a man play to this effect?

A man is the strong pillar of the family. Unless, a man supports and backs up the woman, she cannot commit to the cause she aligns to. My husband played a substantive role in shaping up my career. My career would not have been possible if there was no understanding and active support from my husband. When I compare my career with other known women, I can see the difference in where they are and where they could have reached.

## 2. What challenges have you encountered as a woman in your career? How did you deal with them?

Gender bias is still prevalent today. This was the biggest challenge I faced when I practiced criminal law.

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## THE EDITOR'S MESSAGE

The theme for this month focusses on **Women's Self Empowerment**. From time immemorial, women have continued to get identified and treated as an inferior gender fostering inequalities. The world over there have been fewer exceptions to this phenomena. Concerted initiatives on women's empowerment have seldom borne expected success. Real success though will come only and only if women become self empowered. Drastic changes in the core within them will facilitate their true empowerment.


strongly in the power of engagement. Such leaders are a product of formative experiences, deeply held beliefs and behaviours that have transcended their own personal strengths and the discretionary actions of individuals. These leaders step up and proactively own up their actions. Better business results through innovation, quality and productivity can only come from highly engaged people which are an outcome of an engaging leadership.

The topic for next month is **The Magic of Engaging Leaders**. Today, most organizations endeavour to make engaging leadership a part of their organizational culture believing strongly

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There were only two ladies including me who practiced criminal law. The attitude, body language of the men was quite demeaning to us. This instilled confidence and spark within me to prove that we are no less than men and can do far better than what they can do.

**3. Do women really need a support system to get empowered?**

A support system is definitely needed for women to get empowered. The topmost is the education. Education makes one stand-up to their conviction. It gives you a platform to put forth your views confidently. Currently, we are mentoring the municipal corporation girls who are prone to child marriage. Secondly, economic empowerment is important for a woman to be independent. Thirdly, safety and security of women need to be ensured. A woman should have the zeal to go ahead. Unless the push that is required at the inception is not given, it would not help a woman further to make her own path in a male-dominated world. To achieve true self empowerment, a girl's proper upbringing at home and in school is crucial.

**4. What do you think is the true role of a woman in nation building?**

The nation itself defines the true role of a woman. We are almost fifty percent of the population. Very aptly expressed by our great leaders like Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Phule, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, that if the nation neglects fifty percent of the population, there is no development economically as well as socially. The GDP would not scale up and the value addition to the nation would remain stagnant.

**5. Today, in many organizations, the concept of glass ceiling effect exists. This disables a woman to muster courage and overcome the presumptions that the organization has about her. What are your thoughts on this?**

Today, maximum women are stepping in the corporate world. Everyone in the organization must support and respect each other, but certainly, a man's ego does not allow him to come to terms with a woman in the leadership position. This creates stressful scenarios, thereby forcing a woman to step back at times, avoiding unpleasant situations. This effect is predominant when the woman returns post marriage or post child delivery breaks and she is viewed as a redundant employee.

**6. What kind of a balancing act was required to be performed by you professionally and personally?**

I believe that being a woman is a gift from God as she is strongest in all terms. She can multitask, thereby achieve whatever she chooses. The chemistry, composition and the disposition of a woman make her stand out. Balancing the time was difficult for me, but fortunately, the support from family made my professional and personal life manageable.

**7. Any message/tip for women to feel truly self-empowered?**

Today's young generation are quite smart and determined to win. The women have become competitive and are able to fend for themselves. Still, there are many grey areas that require being focussed on. The self empowered women of today's generation should take up empowering other women. **E**



**OD ENTHUSIAST'S ORATE**

# WOMEN'S SELF EMPOWERMENT

*Shanaaz Preena is a Director in an organization in Sri Lanka which is world's most recognized design to delivery solution provider in the realm of apparel and textile manufacturing. She is responsible for championing Women's Empowerment in the local, regional and global apparel industry. She is a distinguished alumni of University of Colombo, Concordia University and McGill University, Canada and the National University of Singapore. Having over thirty years of diverse experience in academia, airline and apparel sectors, Shanaaz has a proven track record in HRMD and service delivery besides many awards for her achievements.*



The organization which I am associated with continues to lead the way in women's empowerment in the apparel industry. It has eighty three thousand associates of which seventy percent are women. Since its inception in 2003, our flagship initiative "Women Go Beyond" (WGB) has grown from strength to strength seeing more women becoming economically empowered and advancing in their career, whilst fulfilling their family expectations and becoming inspirational role models through their success stories of change.

WGB has expanded its network nationally and internationally, engaging employees through non work related skill development, educational and awareness programmes to increase their self confidence, self reliance and decision making capability. While supporting and providing opportunities for women to perform well, they are given tangible and intangible moral support to create a balanced family life.



This programme developed a process to encourage gender equality at all levels of the organization and promote a conducive work environment, facilitating group wide implementation of policies on harassment and discrimination. It has created opportunities for the women work force to think beyond self and job. Many women have gone on to advance themselves and nurture stronger families and contribute exceptionally to their communities.

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Empowerment through sport is also foremost in our philosophy. This supplements WGB, by providing the women an opportunity to discover their inner strength through sport. "Many women are from a rural background and have become formidable sportswomen and a select few have already written their names in history. We nurture their job as well as the freedom to pursue their talent."

"When Women Go Beyond was first launched, we did not foresee the magnitude of its positive impact in enriching the organization, or on the lives of our associates and their families. We have now become an operationally diverse organization through this innovative initiative, structured differently and becoming agile enough to adapt to quick change. But our core will continue to nourish the philosophy of empowerment, as we consciously adopt policies, structures, and frameworks to make our organization a gender neutral workplace, always honouring and respecting women who make all this possible," concludes Preena. **E**



**OD FOLLOWER'S ORATE**

# IMPORTANCE OF SELF-EMPOWERMENT FOR WOMEN OF TODAY

Self empowerment is about looking at who you are and becoming more aware of yourself as a unique individual. An empowered person is able to take control of their life by making positive choices to achieve their set goals. Imagine if every woman could unleash their potential to change the world when empowered to lead.

An experience earned when Bangladesh Brand Forum announced a nationwide programme - Bangladesh Youth Fest Ideas Competition 2016. It was to encourage and engage the youth and women of today to generate fabulous ideas, highlighting their latest practical applications to advance social needs and better business.

Amongst the total youth participants, it was noticed that thirty five percent were young enthusiast women. Such competitive programmes proved how much value addition it would have to the future by enabling women with self empowerment aptitudes. Sharing two fantastic stories of the journey trailed from the young women participants on how this platform triggered their leadership skills.

**Story 1 – Project Naari by Wasifa Wali and Arunima Dutta from Chittagong University**

My team partner Arunima and I participated in women entrepreneurship. Our idea was providing women with menstruation healthcare advice over the phone. 'Naari' was the name of our service business, where women's menstrual problem is a constant stigma, being able to speak up was a breath of fresh air. Participating in YouthFest made realize the spree of young talents with business ideas that exist."

**Story 2 – Project Sopno by Marjina Masud and Md. Mahabub Chowdhury from Begum Rokaya University, Rangpur**

"It's been such a magnificent journey to becoming a winner on Women's Entrepreneurship category. This achievement, in such a situation where only three female participants are the winner out of fourteen, inspires me to fulfill my dreams in future." This experience was a real eye-opener for many, and has enabled us to help them utilize innovation to create a better future for themselves and their local communities.

To conclude I leave you with a vision we all believe in - When women are economically empowered, everyone benefits. **E**

*Shahana Sharmin is an influencer, socio-tech evangelist, and entrepreneur. Currently, she works as Country Manager for India's largest digital goods and mobile commerce platform. Double graduate in English literature and educational psychology respectively from Madurai Kamaraj University and IGNOU, her expertise covers public speaking, youth empowerment, sales and marketing, ICT development, agile methodology for start-ups/entrepreneurship, design thinking for innovation and ideation and accelerating it all to the next level of growth with market commercialization and business incubation.*



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 For suggestions : [feedback@atyaasaa.com](mailto:feedback@atyaasaa.com)

**BEANSTATEMENT**

The challenge is to manage the pressure of diversity and not choices of career.