



S W I M

SUCCESSFUL WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT

August 2007



The New Age Woman: Redefining Power, Success and Compassion

"The hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world"

GREAT LAKES
INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT, CHENNAI

From the Editorial Team

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second edition of the SWIM magazine!

GRAVITY, the in-house magazine of GREAT LAKES, takes this esteemed opportunity to bring you a panoramic vista of women who shape and empower the world we live in. We have endeavored to explore the values and strategies that have propelled these women to the heights of success and the power of belief in self.

Every woman has several facets to her and her repertoire extends to multifarious roles. She plays these with élan and has blended her boundless passion and enthusiasm with a calm and grounded demeanor. This balance and stability together with her innate sense of empathy and compassion has enabled her to take the corporate bastion by storm while still seamlessly managing her domestic responsibilities.

The new age woman is indeed an effective mix of ambition, success, power, compassion and much more.

The SWIM Magazine has set the platform for a host of successful women to share their experiences, hurdles and triumphs. We hope to leverage their exposure and expertise to facilitate and inspire the new age woman.

As film star Revathy told GRAVITY

“Women in India have been striding ahead at a very positive pace but still have a long way to go. I strongly believe that it can be achieved if all of us, women and men together, think of moving ahead as human beings and support each other in every way. I have faith in the younger generation. They will achieve this. “

Happy Reading!

We look forward to your comments and feedback at gravity@greatlakes.edu.in



TEAM GRAVITY From L->R: Aarushi Sangwan, Shriram Bharathan, Vijay Vasant, Soumya Bhattacharya, Bhagyalakshmi Deventhiran, Nandhini Rangan, Seema Mohanty, Sachin Agrawal, Pankaj Kumar, Sabarinath Nair

Founder and Honorary Dean's Message



Let me begin with an excerpt from *the Puranas where Queen Madalasa puts her baby in the cradle and when the cradle rocks to and fro, she begins to sing, "Thou art the pure one, the stainless, the sinless, the mighty one, the great one"*. This anecdote captures the true essence of a woman as the creator and nurturer of life. Time has seen the transformation of this queen into the new-age woman whose hand now rocks the cradle encompassing the world and she now sings the song of power, success and compassion. The current edition is a reflection of this thought.

Successful Women In Management (SWIM) is a socially relevant initiative started by GREAT LAKES to identify and promote more women to take up leadership positions and excel. This is an effort for them to emerge as a community and help them to tread the path of achievement, glory and success.

I have always admired strong women. Even as a child, I was in awe of the way our mother nurtured our family and stood strong even in the face of adversity. We were five children each vying for her attention. Her just ways and wisdom have influenced me a great deal. Today by the grace of God, all the five of us are successful in our chosen profession and our mother has definitely played an instrumental role in motivating and inspiring us at every step.

I was also fortunate to work with Mother Teresa. She was a strong feminist who urged me to encourage women to reach greater heights in the world of business. In fact, it was her request that made me want to give equal weightage while admitting women in my business school. GREAT LAKES certainly has a larger percentage of women students than most of the other business schools.

I'm glad that I can play a small role in celebrating the achievements of the women of the world and congratulate all women who have worked hard to break the mould and fight stereotypes. To my students, my blessings and support will always be with you. May you all go from strength to strength. The GREAT LAKES family takes great pride in your achievements and accomplishments.

With Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bala V. Balachandran'.

Dr. Bala V. Balachandran
Founder & Honorary Dean, GREAT LAKES Institute of Management
J.L. Kellogg Distinguished Professor of Accounting and Information Systems



Executive Director's Message



Dear all,

Successful women in management is a unique initiative that GREAT LAKES had started a couple years of back .The objective of this initiative was to identify and highlight what it takes for women to succeed in leadership positions .On one-hand, women face the proverbial 'Glass ceiling 'in organizations and on the other they are often expected to manage both the professional and the family front. Given such odds against them, it is important that we celebrate the successful examples in an organizational context.

This magazine is a product of our SWIM initiative and we hope that this will in some way contribute towards inspiring women to aim for leadership positions. We do surely hope that you will enjoy reading the articles and interviews. We would be very happy to have your feedback and support in this endeavor of ours.

With warm regards,

S. Sriram

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ABOUT SWIM

Successful Women In Management (SWIM) is a socially relevant initiative started by GREAT LAKES Institute of Management.

Our main objective is to identify and promote more women to take up leadership positions, in both the corporate and non-corporate spheres. Women are beginning to take on greater roles in organizations today and have indeed worked hard to shatter '*the glass ceiling*'. We believe that SWIM presents a wonderful opportunity for the woman of today to come together as a community & unearth their hidden potential. SWIM was officially inaugurated in 2005 by Ms. Mallika Srinivasan, Director, TAFE, at GREAT LAKES Institute of Management. This community was created to empower women to assume leadership roles & aims to enable women meet the challenges posed in multifarious activities, notwithstanding the tasks' complexity.

The prime motivation for creating such a community was borne from the conviction that women are under represented in honorable positions. We feel that the presence of a larger proportion of women will bring about a more holistic approach to managing organizations.

This led to the formulation of our theme for the event:

"THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE, RULES THE WORLD"

This theme was chosen after carefully evaluating alternate options of commonly discussed topics as it focused on the significance of exploring the prospects available to women and their exploits in a multitude of arenas. In this light, we have tried to assemble a panel of speakers from various walks of life who have strived hard to reach great heights in their chosen fields.

The release of this magazine is to not only recognize this evolving community but to serve as a beacon of light to women in their quest for empowerment. We hope that this effort will aid us emerge as a community and assist in motivating women who are treading the path of achievement, glory and success.

SWIM TEAM - CLASS 2008



Women as emerging managers



Ms. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw is the Chairman and Managing Director of Biocon Ltd. She is a civic activist, especially with respect to municipal administration in Bangalore. She is also an art collector. She has authored 'Ale and Arty,' a coffee table book about brewing beer illustrated by paintings of some of India's renowned artists.

In the '70s and '80s, women managers had to contend with the stigma of being "unreliable, unprofessional and high risk!" I say this with a first hand experience of trying to raise a term loan for my biotechnology project in the late '70s as well as recruiting people for my new enterprise. I vividly remember the great difficulty I experienced in raising funds for my biotechnology project from financial institutions, which were extremely reluctant to lend money to a woman entrepreneur. I also recall the enormous difficulty I had recruiting my first accountant and my personal secretary. Irrespective of their gender, people were reluctant to work for a female boss! The hard truth of being a woman in a man's world hit me and I spent the next decade building confidence and credibility for myself and my fellow women managers at large.

By the early '90s, the scene began to change. Women managers began to be recognized as a professional resource. Women managers slowly appeared on the professional firmament ranging from bankers to CEOs. At the Government level also, women were appointed to head departments and institutes. Women like Naina Lal of Morgan Stanley, Lila Poonawalla of Alfa Laval, Tarjani Vakil of EXIM Bank and of course the legendary Kiran Bedi had started making their presence felt. Management talk also introduced the jargon: 'Androgynous' managers which recognized the importance of male and female qualities for effective management. Women were considered better HR managers than men by virtue of their sensitive disposition. Men were, however, still acknowledged as being better decision makers and stronger and more aggressive in the market place. But by the late '90s, the advent of the 'Knowledge Era' obliterated all these mind sets and perceptions. Tom Peters, the management guru,

pronounced "Brains are in, Heavy lifting is out!" With this, women broke all holds and rapidly assumed leadership positions in almost all professional domains. In the last decade alone, there has been a 3-fold increase in the number of women managers in middle management who will soon make their way to senior management. 2004 statistics reveal that the Indian banking and financial services sector accounted for 650,000 women managers. The ICICI Bank, the second largest and fastest growing bank has been steered towards market leadership by 3 dynamic women at the helm: Lalita Gupte, Kalpana Morparia and Chanda Kochhar. ICICI as a conglomerate boasts of a women's brigade that accounts for 30% of its employee strength. Women entrepreneurs in the SSI sector number are in excess of 450,000 and the government of India as a whole (including state governments) employ in excess of 300,000 women managers. In a global context, it is reckoned that women entrepreneurs employ 25 million people on their pay rolls which is more than the sum total of the employment strength of all the Fortune 500 companies worldwide. Fortune's annual edition that features the 50 most powerful business women revealed that in 2006 there were 15 Fortune 500 companies headed by women CEOs led by PepsiCo's Indian born Indra Nooyi who was declared the most powerful business woman in the world. These impressive statistics substantiate the gender revolution that is taking place on the economic front.

A study conducted on managerial skills by the Department of Business Studies at the University of Southern California revealed that women managers possess strong people handling skills and more flexible and adaptable to change. Men managers on the other hand are more assertive, astute and have a greater risk taking ability.

I would hazard a guess that a similar study in India would reveal the stereotype Indian male manager to be obsessed with profit, status and power whereas the emerging Indian female manager is innovative, adaptive and a good team player. . Modern Management practice calls for flat, networked and boundary less organizations and in context of leadership roles fitting this dimension, the above attributes would indicate that women managers would evolve into better new age managers than their male counterparts by virtue of their people handling skills coupled with their ability to accept and cope with change. Moreover, in the Knowledge Era, creativity and innovation attract the highest ratings where gender does not dictate! In fact, on an average, women managers demonstrate unconventional management styles, creative marketing methods and a strong emphasis on values and ethics. Anita Roddick of Body Shop fame exemplified all these and was successful in building a strong International brand for Body shop through innovative marketing methods and a strong "anti animal testing" campaign. As she said " We want to spark conversations with our customers not browbeat them to buy. By doing so, we let our customers spread our message by word

of mouth." Body Shop's various public interest campaigns attracted customer notice and media attention. Anita Roddick was also known to say " A great advantage that I had when I started Body Shop was that I never went to business school. Unconventionality, creativity and aesthetics are certainly not taught at business schools and yet they are such important management facets that come naturally to women."

The knowledge Era has initiated a number of women to enter into the exciting realms of Information Technology as well as Biotechnology. Women are pervading both these knowledge domains at all levels of management. Women have now acquired the confidence to start up ventures and what is more important is that venture funds are now eager to back such start-ups.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from the proceedings of the 1992 World Economic Forum that said "In the decades ahead, any organization which ignores or underestimates the potential of women or overlooks any source of talent for that matter will be making a fatal mistake."



She Inspired:

I declare to you that woman must not depend upon the protection of man, but must be taught to protect herself and there I take my stand."

~ Susan B. Anthony

My journey through the corporate jungle



The numbers of successful women leaders have only been increasing over time. I have seen this from the time I began my career about 17 years ago, to the situation today, with the significant growth in the sectors like financial services, IT and BPO.

Very early in my career, in a manufacturing organization, I had about 10 elderly men doing various roles in the finance team reporting to me, an absolute rookie! Not enough that they

had to report to someone younger but to a lady, was the ultimate insult for most of them. Thrown into leadership position in my first significant job, I learnt some invaluable practical lessons from my gender-agnostic manager. When it came to delivering against my targets, I was encouraged to roll up my sleeves if it was necessary, to complete the job. This helped me establish my credentials with my team and also gave the uncooperative team players a clear

message. Again, when it came to being tough with the operations personnel during monthly performance reviews, I was encouraged to speak my mind without fear. Competence was thus established even with my peer group and the factory leadership. Thereafter, my gender was not held against me and over time, it did not even matter. As far as the leadership team at the headquarters was concerned, considering that there were very few women in key positions, you tend to get noticed more easily – so my gender actually worked in my favor .

At 28 years of age, I was given the opportunity to head the finance function at Sasken, a company in the 'IT' industry, a role for which I did not have commensurate experience. A couple of years into dealing with these

challenges and I had my baby. In hindsight, the timing could not have been more inappropriate. I was fortunate, because my spouse had flexible and limited work hours during the early years. Yet, the need to balance out my life required that I carefully protect my time. This and my naturally introverted disposition, imposed significant challenges, mainly because I avoided networking opportunities both within the organization, outside and also international travel to make up for the lesser time I had. These are actually very essential for leaders today, irrespective of gender. Investments made in building equations with peer groups can significantly reduce time spent on influencing and hence must be viewed in that context. This is more so for women, since they are normally excluded from most networks. We need to make an extra effort to build our networks by methods that we are comfortable. Both all women support groups and mixed group networks need to be maintained. Evening sessions at the neighborhood pubs can be replaced with lunches or even tea time events, if one prefers.

Challenges arise for women because of the multitude of responsibilities that are required to be assumed. The assumption is that the lady will manage the children, the home and also her career. In the process of multi-tasking, the stress levels are so high, that the drop outs are many, especially as the children come along. The trick may lie in timing critical events on the personal front and those at the work front, so that both challenges do not peak together. Working out a responsibility sharing equation with the spouse, using the available domestic help options are some other must do's, to ensure that stress levels are minimized.

Ms. Neeta Revankar heads the Finance, Legal and Secretarial department at Sasken Communication Technologies Ltd. She has been involved with the Finance function at Sasken since April 1995.

Additionally, having parents or in-laws living in adjoining dwelling units provides a win-win, situation that must be seriously evaluated. Longevity with an organization is another critical factor ensuring that women are able to stay the course and reach the leadership levels.

Organizations can do so much, to support the development of women leaders. A focused program, where women leaders take on the role of mentors to the younger women during the phase of transition to leadership levels is one such action that must be driven by organizations. They must also use technology to provide working from home options and other means of providing a high level of flexibility to women during the years when they need such flexibility. Organizations that

are small minded and short sighted enough to grudge women this flexibility will have fewer women in leadership positions.

From where I stand today, I do see significant impediments to women assuming leadership roles, largely because organizations have not realized what they must do to support. The natural tendency for women is to take the 'easier' path and drop out, to take care of the children or elderly parents. Those who have support either from friends and family or from their organizations or those who are tougher, manage to stay the course through these tough times and make it to the top.



She inspired:

“Nobody will ever win the battle of the sexes, there is just too much fraternizing with the enemy”
~ Henry Kissinger

The successful Indian Woman

A reality check



Our former Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru rightly said: “*You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.*” Post-Independence, we as a nation have made progress in various fields and women have contributed significantly in each one of them. Female literacy improved faster than that of their male counterparts in last 60 years of Independence. Today, the principle of gender equality provides for impartiality before the law, prohibition of discrimination and equality of opportunity in public employment.

Today of course, empowered women adorn several tags of success. Indian corporates are increasingly going global and consequently all corporate managers both men and women are being exposed to the international scene. Successful women who are shaping the business landscape of today and tomorrow are being treated with great deal of respect. However, women leaders still remain vulnerable to stereotyping which portray them as lacking the qualities associated with effective leadership. While issues such as glass ceiling, gender equality at workplace keep surfacing, in my opinion, all these are perceptions that are no longer true in today’s business environment.

Ms. Chanda Kochhar is a deputy MD of ICICI Bank Ltd. She heads two important businesses of the bank—international and corporate banking.

We have women leading from the front in all facets of life. We have the tenacious policewoman -Kiran Bedi, India’s first female foreign secretary-Chokila Iyer, the performing arts stalwarts like M S Subbulakshmi and the Mangeshkar sisters, sportswomen from PT Usha to Shiny Wilson and Sania Mirza, business leaders like Naina Lal Kidwai who was ranked 3rd among Asia’s top businesswomen by Fortune Magazine, social workers like Medha Patkar, authors like Arundhati Roy who have all proved that there is nothing that a woman cannot achieve. Same is the trend even in the rural sector, the Lijjat co operative society is one such example. All of these are women who proved that women could achieve not merely personal victories but victories for society as well. This is mainly due to two reasons.

There is also a perceptible change in mindset, especially in urban India. The family members of not only successful women but also those of an average working woman are much more cooperative and provide the much-needed support structure to a working woman. More and more men are extending the much-needed support to women by getting involved in family responsibilities. But while there has been significant improvement in the status of women, let me also reiterate some facts that reflect the other side of the story.

Organizations are adopting the culture of meritocracy. An individual’s success now depends entirely on one’s capabilities and not on gender and rewards are based only on individual’s performance. The urge to prove her mettle is coming from within. Women are ready to take on challenges to prove their worth in the world outside their homes.

- The majority of women go through life in a state of nutritional stress they are anemic and malnourished.
- Literacy rate for men is better than that for female in our country. Even when girls are enrolled in schools, fewer girls than boys manage to stay in school for a full ten years.

Clearly, there is still more that needs to be done. We need to continue to work towards development and empowerment of women for a better tomorrow.



The successful woman:

Perspectives from both sides of the gender barrier

The new age woman is a hard to believe blend of determination, confidence, courage and ambition. However these qualities alone would not have gotten her anywhere. She had to pepper these with resilience, empathy, discipline and a very clear cut prioritization in life. The challenges she has been facing in life are mind boggling and her ability to come out of it and bounce back every time proves her aggressive will towards life, living and her goals.

What is commendable about woman of today is the way she has broken personal, familial and societal shackles and has created an image for herself and a niche in the society. Today she has brought about a shift in the paradigm from being docile and shy to outgoing, from an all enduring to speaking her mind and powerless to being empowered.

How did she re-brand her life:

At the personal level:

She started believing in her personal growth of learning, thinking and decision making and stood through several challenges that came on her way. Some challenges were confronted and some she consciously endured.

At the familial and societal level:

She continued to play the multiple roles of a daughter ever understanding, a loving sister, a patient wife and a caring mother. Her compulsion to perform every role to perfection often made her stretch her capacities to the fullest.

At professional level:

Today she is at par with any of her counterparts. She can lead a conversation or a formal meeting, gatherings and take high stake business decisions. She has the ability to project her convictions with empathy, her

strong will with humility and she has the capacity to be firm yet polite. Due to the optimization of these dichotomous qualities there is an increasing presence of women in management and leadership positions.

Caution and care for continued growth:

I have great conviction that women will continue with this journey in times to come and will achieve even greater heights. The areas of caution could be that they do not succumb to stress, never lose trust in themselves, continue to empower themselves and clearly understand the purpose of empowering is to complement with the world and not to compete with it.

My husband's view:

Though the new age woman is a catchy title, it is not something which has been achieved overnight or even in a matter of days. It is a never-ending challenge inside each woman to keep bettering herself till nothing less than the best in her manifests.

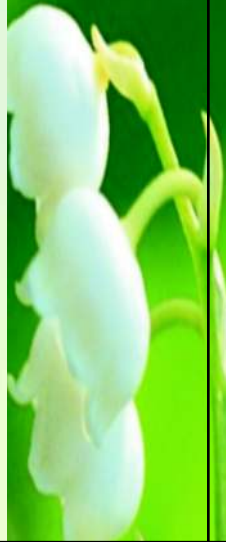
In my observation there are two simple mantras for any successful woman:

First in their ability to be independent – both financially, emotionally and socially i.e. if in a situation one of these factors is affected she does not crumble and play life as a challenge.

Second is their 'work-life balance'. This is something very special and unique to a woman. The new age woman will not be able to cope up with this unless she prioritizes with clarity and delivers with dynamism. Today the woman believes in nourishing her children emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. She is a friend, philosopher and a guide to whom children have a choice to discuss anything in their mind.

With this shift in the role and with her liberated mind she is out there to conquer.

Ms. Lalitha Maheswaran is a corporate trainer and a HR consultant. She is a visiting faculty at GREAT LAKES, ISB, IIM-B and other premier B-schools.



Compassion : It's Power & Success



All through history power and success were considered to be male dominated areas; probably a legacy from pre-historic times, when brute strength sowed the seeds of chauvinistic attitudes and compassion was considered the domain of womanly weakness.

As humans evolved, women used their inherent intelligence to influence the men who ruled their lives. Their greatest strength was the compassion to which all sentient life – including plants – responds. Gradually, women entered the fields of power and success; sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly.

Indian women owe much to Mahatma Gandhi. It was thanks to him that we got the right to vote and we got into mainstream politics; That paved the way for women's education and emancipation. Centuries of repression resulted in the feminist movement and in many cases it became a matter of men verses women. That helped nobody.

Both men and women need to face the fact that there are natural differences between the sexes and these differences are meant to compliment and supplement each other for the greater good of all. Biologists say that the female of the species is more deadly – a fact that men would be wise to remember! On the other hand, women lose their noblest instincts when they sacrifice their inherent compassion and gentleness.

I was drawn to the animal welfare/animal rights movement because animals are by far

the greatest victims of human avarice. They are more vulnerable than even orphans or oppressed women or bonded labor. It is human nature to sympathize with the underdog and we give up our claim to being called humans when we cease to want to alleviate the suffering in the world. Such people become inhumanly cruel and callous. They are the cause of reactionary movements and organized crime.

The world today sees 'success' as being synonymous with power and wealth and this faulty understanding has brought us close to destroying our world and destroying the enduring principles that brings peace and prosperity. People have no worthwhile role models. They feel let down by organized religion, by parents, children, political and social leaders and their teachers. The frenzied craze for sports and cine stars reveals how desperate the youth is, to have someone to idolize. The violent eruptions of anger when their hero fails reveal the need for a more enduring goal for which they can expend their energies.

The saddest factor is the waste of human potential when youngsters are carried away by vested interests ruining their lives and the lives of others; or are led to drugs, crime, suicide or worse. This happens because consumerism and peer pressure fan an insatiable greed for 'more' – of which there is no end. Or, it happens because they are deeply unhappy and frustrated, ridiculed for their idealism and uprightness.

Having outlined the factors that are at the bottom of most of today's problems, it is my conviction that the solution lies in compassion.

Ms. Purnima Toolsidass, one of the trustees of Compassionate Crusaders Trust(CCT), is one of the leading activists for animal welfare in the country.

Nobody can deny the desirability of power and success but redefining them is vital for our own happiness and prosperity and compassion is an integral part of the redefined perspectives.

We have come to a stage where everyone is suspicious about everyone else. Vested interests have fragmented humanity into caste, creed, status, color, language, generation, profession, etc. Helping a human in distress carries the dangers of getting a permanent liability or ingratitude and blame or some legal hassle. This induces us to suppress our natural instinct to extend help.

Having been involved in animal welfare and animal rights, I can state from personal experience, that I have benefitted from it more than all the animals that would have been helped directly and indirectly by my efforts. My anger at the injustices I see and hear about has got an outlet. Earlier, I felt frustrated at my helplessness; now I know that I have the ability to do something to make the world a better place. I have gained peace, self confidence and public acclaim. I have 'found myself', as they say.

There are plenty of women like me who get married before they can complete their schooling. My conservative social circle ridiculed my passionate reaction to animal abuse. I lacked the wherewithal to do anything on my own and confessed my sorrow and frustration to my Guru, Swami Akhandanand Saraswati. Like Swami Vivekananda, he also believed in worship through service and encouraged me to do whatever little I could, on my own. He assured me that if I put in a sincere effort, help would come.

It did! The Statesman carried an article

about Debasis Chakrabarti, in January 1992. It spoke of the 'Dogs' Own' Home he had created for old and unwanted dogs. I contacted him and found a man who was both competent and committed. We teamed up in November 1993, when he founded the Compassionate Crusaders Trust and have never looked back. Debasis is the Managing Trustee of People For Animals Calcutta Trust. The two trusts work in tandem and have built up one of the world's widest network of activities. Each of us had qualities that supplemented the abilities of the other and it was a joy to work together and see the slow but steady impact on the thinking of people, politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen and social workers. The Sunday morning meetings were a forum for youngsters to express their own feelings, frustrations, doubts and uncertainties. In us, they found adults who were also friends to whom they could speak freely without being told 'be realistic'!

Every time a young friend – now placed in some excellent position – phones and tells me how those meetings and the voluntary work with animals helped him to gain self confidence and direction, I thanked God that my life was not a complete waste. Power is the power to do some good with what we have. Success is to know that we have helped to reduce the suffering in the world. Compassion means having understanding and goodwill for all beings, for nature and also for our own failings. This is the formula for happiness; and what is power and success worth, if compassion and happiness are absent?

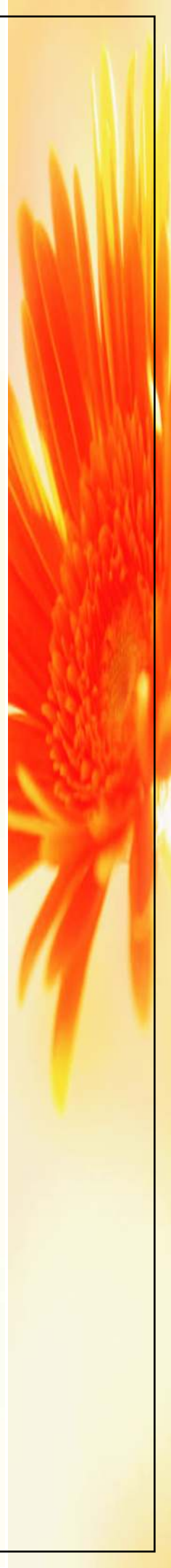
As someone said, 'If you're not a part of the solution, you're a part of the problem'. And, who wants to be a part of the problem, anyway!



She Inspired:

"There is no tool for development more effective than empowerment of women."

~ Kofi Annan



Why women make better managers:

An analytical look



Ms. Subha Sandeep is the president of Vision Media Entertainment and has produced more than thirty films in various languages.

Every business requires proper understanding, appropriate analysis of the pros and cons, competent execution and then finally monitoring results at every step making sure that every momentum would take the organization towards the targeted result. *Management is the word or a function that comprises all of the above.*

Women are successful in almost all areas of management be it business management, home management or even country management, for the simple reason that the entire flow of activity that is needed in any business or job is

very clearly stated and understood naturally in their system.

Women are more sincere and committed, dedicated and less diverted naturally. This allows their energy levels to flow in the right direction and therefore accounts for positive results.

Let us analyze why this should be so. Most of the courses intended to teach us business management are already taught to a woman from the time she is born. The language might differ but the essence is the same. Let us consider the following comparison table:

WOMAN'S NATURAL THOUGHT PROCESS

1. You are a woman and therefore there are some Do's and Don'ts as prescribed by society. There exists a 'Lakshman Rekha' that you cannot cross.
2. Women generally assess a situation thoroughly before reacting.
3. A respect for the elders and adherence to customs is naturally ingrained within a woman from her early days.
4. The element of sacrifice is a pivotal phenomenon in the life of a woman as she is required to relinquish her wishes for the good of her near & dear ones.
5. A woman juggles around with a multitude of roles in her life and is in constant endeavor to manage her time effectively to cater one and all.

THE RESPECTIVE MANAGEMENT LESSONS

1. Every business has its own Do's and Don'ts based on what it is catering to. It is important not to cross these predetermined limits.
2. Proper study of the market and competition is necessary.
3. A business can only thrive if it pays due respect to the competition, for it is through competition that it is able to recognize & leverage its own strengths.
4. A business sometimes requires a foresight to absorb initial losses to ultimately burgeon in the later years on a sustainable basis.
5. Time management forms the essence of any successful business venture.

They say “*Experience is the best Teacher*”. It is through life’s trials and tribulations that the innate managerial talents of a woman have been chiseled to perfection. Women worldwide with no formal training have succeeded in the art of mother hood, home management and so much more. It should be of little or no surprise for the world to realize that with adequate training and exposure she would obviously be able to achieve perfection in any field.

Today India has a woman president who would be heading the republic.

Many businesses that have carved a niche for themselves in today’s world are headed by women that give no room to complain.

Truly God knew the importance of the world he created and he therefore manifested himself in the form of women to manage it.



Different faces of the new-age women

The role of the new age woman is under a lot of controversy these days. In society, a strong women's liberation movement is up against an equally vigorous opposition which defends traditional values. Women these days generally do not have the advantages of a close association with distant family, unlike olden days, when they lived together in joint families. Naturally, they became a little lonely and wanted to get out in the world. Work became a natural retreat. There are two sides to this story; working keeps her occupied and happy while being at home allows her to be emotionally in touch with her family's needs.

The modern woman has successfully executed the balancing act to perfection. She has flawlessly discharged her duties towards raising her family with due diligence and sincerity. She has also proved, if at all proof was required, her caliber in assuming a professional role within an organization and adding value to the same.

Earlier, women were stereotyped in the workplace limited to roles of a teacher or a nurse. Today, they have integrated themselves into every field and industry smoothly and skillfully. Running an organization or driving a truck, they are as

performance-oriented, sincere, competent and persevering as their male counterparts. A woman nowadays travels alone, puts in long hours of work, takes hard management decisions and even has better physical strength. Relational characteristics of women, such as nurturing and connecting with others, are now regarded as attributes required for all in the workplace.

A mother at home brings love and security to her children, sensitivity and stability to her husband and is caring to other family members. The mother is the child's first teacher and she alone can shape the young mind in those impressionable years. She knows that the rewards are greater for her at home. There exists a school of thought that insists that mothers need to be with children constantly till a certain age.

It's the new age woman who is free spirited, independent and confident. Education is the key to this kind of change. It opens the mind to broader horizons. The world is only now waking up to the emerging potential of the new age woman that is bound to transcend hitherto uncharted realms of imagination.

Ms. Perna Gupta is an alumni of GREAT LAKES and is also a successful entrepreneur.

The melody called life

An interview with Dr. Ambika



SWIM Magazine: *Can you tell us a little about the role music and dance played in your life, particularly how it helped you while dealing with differently abled people?*

Ambika Kameshwar: I began singing at the age five and took to dancing when I was seven. I was this little girl learning to perform but I always felt that there was more to it than meets the eye. Performing was surely one

aspect but there had to be others. I didn't know what it was that I was looking for. This belief would have however remained a belief but for God given opportunities. My family members are devotees of Ramana Maharshi. In Bangalore, there is an academy called the Ramana Maharshi academy for the blind. They approached my dad asking him if we (my sister and I) could help the students perform for their annual day. My dad was more than willing and approved it. This was the first opportunity.

SWIM: *How was your experience there?*

AK: It was so unbelievable. In one stroke, in one flash I realized that there is no such thing as a disability. This was way back in 1983 and now we are in 2007. 24 years and I am still struck by the wonder of their capacity to perform. Every mudra would be felt. Every stance would be felt and they would repeat it to perfection. Look at their sixth sense. Losing one sense (sight) still gave them the capacity to deal with not only dance but also life. Here it was, these children who couldn't see but who could dance. For spacing purposes, I would take them around the stage once and

they wouldn't make a mistake when they performed. Did they only learn to dance? No, of course not. They just realized that they had a greater capacity for life.

My sisters got more involved in the Ramana movement while I stayed back with the arts and special needs. That was my role and my calling.

SWIM: *You followed your calling and started RASA. How did you go about it?*

AK: In 1989 I started RASA. I had just finished my M.A. I had some experience in the field of special needs because of my earlier work with the blind children. I had also started teaching dance at the Spastic Society (now Vidyasagar in Kotturpuram) in Chennai. The children were my way to learn. They were such fantastic gurus. While I taught them music and dance, they would teach me in their non verbal ways, where I had gone wrong. Their smiles and frowns were so communicative. The spastic children are normally placed in cutout chairs, so as to control involuntary movements. They would wait for my class so that they could climb down and jump around with me.

Why should we not teach them everything they need to know in life? Why not create a methodology where they need not go for painful physiotherapy but can move around freely in rhythm, which would eventually be physiotherapy in its own way. So I started codifying that and created the THD (Theatre for Holistic Development). I started RASA so that I could reach many people to give them the treasure of theatre and how to understand every aspect of life through it.

Dr. Ambika Kameshwar is a well known exponent of Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi. She is also the founder of RASA (Ramana Sunritya Alaya), an organization which helps adults and children with special needs. She has been the proud recipient of the Bharat Kala Ratna amongst many others.

SWIM: *You were married at an early age. How did marriage affect you and how supportive was your husband?*

AK: Marriage didn't put an end to my learning. It didn't put an end to my seeking of this treasure. I got immense support from my husband, my family and my inner self. There is normally a tendency to blame the husband for lack of support but there is blame to share by the wife as well. She may be contributing a lot to the non encouragement herself. There can be no blame on you which can exist without your contribution to it. I fell in love at a very young age and decided to get married. I hadn't even finished my graduation. But after marriage not only did I manage to finish my graduation but I also finished my M.A., M. Phil and Ph. D. So it's definitely possible.

SWIM: *The SWIM event for the year is based on "The New Age Woman: Redefining power, success and compassion". In this context, how do you think men should react when they have to report to women bosses?*

AK: There isn't anyone who is a boss or anyone who is a subordinate. We are all playing roles. The same boss today could be subordinate tomorrow and the same subordinate today could be a boss tomorrow. Its all in the role. What I have understood is that theatre is life and life is theatre. We are all only playing different roles. If you can understand what is to be done in your role and do it properly, then there are no conflicts. Everyone gets maximum benefits. It is only when the subordinate tries to be the boss or vice versa

do we start having problems.

That's what theatre has taught me and the people around me. You know your contributions and what needs to be done. Do it well.

In conclusion, Dr. Ambika's views on life.

"A teacher normally gives a lesson and then the exam but life gives the exam first and then teaches the lesson through it."

Life is the greatest teacher. It puts you through a tough phase so that you can understand and conquer your difficulties. In a sense, theatre and life are not apart. Whatever we do in life is present in theatre. We move, we share, we communicate and we play roles just like in life. Even a movie is theatre in celluloid format; life is theatre without the celluloid.

Natyashastra beautifully describes Abhinaya. Which is nothing but communication. The gestures (actions), the sounds (dialogues), even the costumes (clothes) are powerful in communication. Our basic emotions add to these three factors as well.

Theatre transcends barriers and encompasses all in its nature. This is very evident while working with children who have special needs.

I have been able to understand the miracle of understanding life through theatre and I don't want it to end with me.



She inspired:

Women will not simply be mainstreamed into the polluted stream. Women are changing the stream, making it clean and green and safe for all -- every gender, race, creed, sexual orientation, age, and ability.

~ Bella Abzug

Reminiscences of a reformer



Brought up in a family of strong and independent women, it was not difficult for me to accept the important role of a woman in the fabric of our society.

My mother fought for independence, was on the all women's groups for human rights and later became the chief scout of the Boy Scouts in India.

My elder sister, a doctor, became the legendary Capt Lakshmi of the Subhash Chandra army in Singapore and was responsible for a women's army that fought the British. Five years ago, she was nominated to be the President of India but was superseded by Dr. Abdul Kalam who was my husband's (Dr. Vikram Sarabhai) student at his laboratory in Ahmedabad.

In many ways my love for the dance was not in the traditional norm of the family. It came (as I believe) from a previous birth. There seems to be no other explanation for I never actually 'saw' dance performances, till much later.

Many years later after I came to Gujarat, social issues began to trouble me. These problems naturally were woven into my dance programme through classical techniques. Perhaps the first was 'Shakuntala' which I choreographed in a different interpretation and in the finale Shakuntala rejects everyone stating 'In life we are born alone and now I go into the world alone' Later all problems were projected through

dance pieces. As early as the 60's I created a piece on dowry deaths, relevant even today. That was followed by the killing of Harijans in a village in Gujarat.

As a lover of nature, many of the dance pieces are based upon humankind's abuse of our natural resources. In order to reach a wider audience, a poem I had written which brought in many problems was performed in folk styles. We often had the villages as a backdrop to our performances. All the societal issues were brought in and 'laced' with folk dancing. This is still a very popular piece and has influenced a great many people, to better themselves and work towards helping the community in different ways. As many of Darpana's students participate they realize social issues and become involved.

At Darpana, dance drama and puppetry have all been used for presenting problems that are prevalent in the country. Amusingly, I found that puppets can speak more frankly of problems like 'AIDS', 'contraceptives' etc. that an audience won't accept directly from a human being!

Through the years we have confronted many social evils through art forms and I feel it is the strongest and yet most beautiful way of creating awareness of the social problems in India. I believe that it is the new age woman upon whom lies the mantle of tackling the basic ills hurting a society, that is on an epoch making spree.

Ms. Mrinalini Sarabhai is a celebrated dancer and choreographer. She is the founder-director of the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, Ahmedabad. She was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the President of India in 1992.

She inspired:

"Being a lady is an attitude"

~ Chuck Wolery



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