

THE LEARNING BLAZE : IGNITING MINDS

ABOUT BOMBAY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

The Bombay Management Association (BMA), stepping into its dynamic 71st year, continues to be the go-to platform for elite business leaders. With its legacy of exclusive forums, visionary insights, and high-impact networking, BMA has consistently empowered industry frontrunners to master challenges and seize global opportunities. This milestone reaffirms BMA's commitment to shaping visionary leadership and driving transformative change at the forefront of the business world.

HER VOICE, HER IMPACT.. CELEBRATION तो बनता है।

In this March edition of our e-newsletter, we proudly celebrate "**Her Voice, Her Impact.. Celebration तो बनता है।**" a tribute to the strength, resilience, and profound influence of women around the globe.

This issue is dedicated to amplifying the voices of women achievers from all walks of life. From unsung heroines who work tirelessly in silence, to powerful leaders sharing their thoughts on the world, we bring you stories that highlight the diversity of women's contributions. You'll also discover an inspiring article that portrays women as not just beautiful, but as brains and beasts – a force to be reckoned with in every sense.

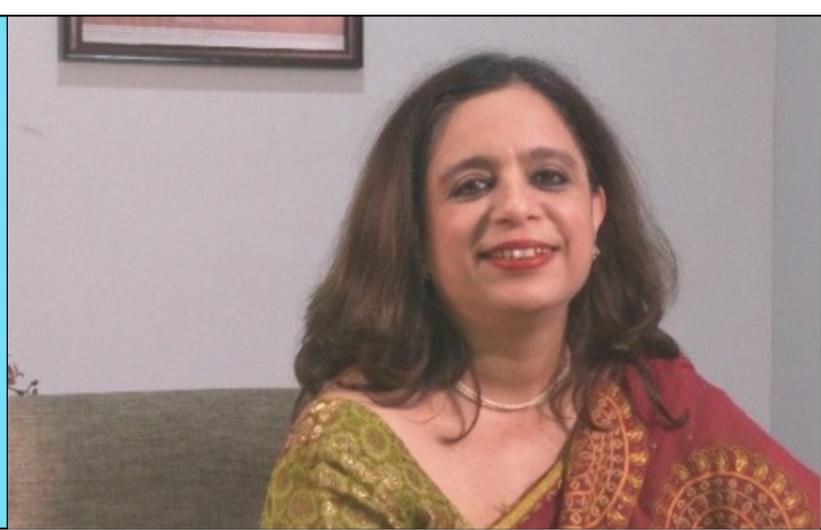
And, we shine a well-deserved spotlight on first-time women achievers, recognizing their accomplishments and honouring their contributions, while also inspiring future generations to break barriers and pave the way for change. Through these stories, we continue to celebrate the women shape history and inspire progress in every field.

Inclusion and Diversity - The Changing Times

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The work of DE&I is change management and social change at that! As a DE&I professional the constant endeavour is to not make it just a top down agenda. It is about winning the hearts and minds of the everyone in the organization. Social change without grass root support is no change. Making real connections with real people across levels is the real ask. In one significant way this change is not a routine one where we create a "buy in". Its more than that; it means that this change has been accepted by one and all "Dil Se".

The one powerful tool that we discover in making this social change to be embraced by all is the tool of an honest conversation.

Be it voicing allyship or voicing pushbacks the change process needs everyone's support. Not all push backs on various aspects of this change process are just objections for the sake of it. They represent the emotional data of people around this topic. Cutting it out is a huge disservice to all. And Allyship needs a conversation too. Real allyship requires the courage to walk the talk and give real power to critical initiatives. Its only when there is a real conversation on the counter view and that gets heard and assimilated that the process of shift begins.. It is this shift that leads to inclusion.

Popularly we always focus on supervisors, leaders, Managers as the force driving inclusion. What we learn is that team members and their attitudes are an equal part of how inclusive a team culture is. A team that nurtures each other, is sensitive to each other's needs and gives voice to all will present a counter force to their own leaders. The entire team simultaneously needs to balance the hard everyday tasks and the productivity metrics that they collectively chase daily. This power needs more harnessing, is a hard road to traverse and yet it holds the key. The work is to build a virtuous cycle where culture supports people and facilitates success for all. In all of this work we must not underestimate the importance of rewards in perpetuating this virtuous cycle. These rewards need to be seen as equitable, be truly meritocratic for people to believe that there is authentic inclusion. In companies, it is the interplay of connectedness, respect, productivity and rewards that builds inclusive workplaces.

This Women's Day is all about "Move forward together". A more apt definition of inclusion cannot be found today. Diversity is not just about visible markers.

It's also about diverse perspectives, points of view, decisioning styles, communication preferences, leadership behaviours, value hierarchies. The more teams and people can talk through these differences, the more energy and momentum we will build around inclusion. Inclusion is an everyday challenge. Taking a forward step daily and making this movement itself more inclusive is the ask of the times.

"I had the privilege of working closely with Vaijayanti during her tenure with us. She was our HR partner. Her unwavering passion for diversity was truly inspiring and contagious, and she played a pivotal role by initiating key diversity programs and built the Diversity unit at Axis Bank. Vaijayanti's dedication to the initiative was evident in her efforts, and she also collaborated effectively with various teams, including finance, marketing, and operations. Vaijayanti was an exceptional partner on the HR front. She had an uncanny ability of balancing the diverse business needs and stakeholder expectations with the expectations of the bank and business teams. Her collaborative approach and ability to multitask between her roles as a partner and diversity head were commendable. She truly did an outstanding job."

PRASHANTH T.S

President , Head Mid Corporate Group & Medium Enterprises Group- Axis Bank.

Leadership Bias - Conscious and Unconscious

RANJINI MANIAN

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As the founder of Global Adjustments, an entrepreneurship bringing business cultures together, I consciously hired women, thinking they would be better at work and I could give them more opportunities. But I soon realized that gender balance is gender intelligence. Running an all-woman establishment wasn't the wisest thing. So, I gradually added men. I also went in for inter-generational hires. And I found that each segment uplifted others. Diversity worked well.

People of the same group often think alike and could get stuck in a way of thought. That's where diversity comes into play. A man brings a different perspective to a problem than a woman.

Experience can help out when young people get stuck, and innovative thinking when the older ones do. If my conscious bias was pro women, my unconscious one was that men don't stay the course, they'll soon leave for greener pastures.

That too was proved wrong. The finance manager I took on has been with me for 25 years. It continues to be proved wrong. Just as I was stepping out of Global Adjustments into Champion Woman, my non-profit, nation-building Foundation, I hired a young man as a designer. I found he would go beyond what he was asked to do, suggesting improvements. He was not a 'Nay Sayer' and not a people pleaser either, and I liked that about him.

He walked in very unsure of himself. Six-and-a-half years later, he's just won the 'Star Performer' award in the company, country-wide. And he's still the same unassuming person.

"Initially, I was afraid to speak with you. But you made me feel comfortable. I never felt the Founder was sitting with me. One day, you said, 'I have worked with many people in this seat but you are the best and you are like my son.' I will never forget that moment. Your appreciation and recognition made me come up with unique things and made me happy." Understanding one's own biases is important.

For the young generation I use the mantra: USA - Understand, Strategize, Act. It is important to understand all the information and data coming at you. You must also understand your own strengths.

Then, strategize: Recognize what you're good at, what the company needs, and set goals. Bounce these off a mentor. Collaboration is part of the leadership mentality. Ask specific questions, and people will help.

Act only after Understanding and Strategizing. Don't give in to today's 'Hustle culture'. Pause, maybe quarterly, and take stock of progress. Review as you go."

Breaking Barriers:

A TRIBUTE TO INDIA'S FIRST WOMEN ACHIEVERS

India has produced countless extraordinary women who've made significant contributions to various fields but may not always be in the spotlight. Here are some of the lesser-known women achievers from India who've had a lasting impact in their respective domains.

KADAMBINI GANGULY

First Femal Graduate in South Asia



Kadambini Ganguly was one of the first two women to graduate from an Indian university, Calcutta University, in 1882. She became the first woman to practice medicine in India, breaking gender barriers in a time when higher education for women was virtually unheard of. Her contributions to education and women's empowerment were ground-breaking

ANANDI GOPAL JOSHI

First Indian Female Doctor in the USA



Anandi Gopal Joshi became the first Indian woman to study medicine in the United States, earning a medical degree from the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1886. She faced many struggles, including the death of her son and societal opposition, but her determination helped pave the way for women in Indian healthcare.

MEERA KUMAR

First Woman Speaker of Lok Sabha



Meera Kumar was the first woman Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of India's Parliament. A former diplomat and politician, she made significant strides in Indian politics, and her leadership helped shape policy and decision-making at the national level

JANAKI AMMAL

Botanist



The first Indian woman botanist is Janaki Ammal (1897–1984). She was a pioneering botanist and made significant contributions to the field of plant science. Janaki Ammal is best known for her work on plant hybridization and her research on the medicinal properties of plants.

GITA GOPINATH

First Woman Chief Economist of the IMF



In 2019, Gita Gopinath made history as the first woman to hold the position of Chief Economist at the International Monetary Fund (IMF). A globally respected economist, she has been instrumental in shaping global economic policy, especially in emerging markets like India.

SARLA THAKRAL

First Indian Woman Pilot



Sarla Thakral was the first Indian woman to obtain a pilot's license in 1936 at the age of 21. She was a trailblazer in a male-dominated profession and went on to become an aviation instructor. Her accomplishments inspired generations of women in aviation.

VIJAYA LAKSHMI PANDIT

First Woman President of the United Nations General Assembly



Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was the first woman to serve as the President of the United Nations General Assembly. She was also the first woman to be the Indian ambassador to the Soviet Union and the United States.

MUTHULAKSHMI REDDY

First Woman Legislator in India



In 1927, Muthulakshmi Reddy became the first woman to be elected to the legislative assembly of India. She was a pioneering doctor, social reformer, and the first woman to be appointed as the head of a government hospital.

LAXMI SEHGAL

First Woman to Join the Indian National Army



Laxmi Sehgal was a prominent freedom fighter who joined the Indian National Army led by Subhas Chandra Bose. She became the first woman to hold a military rank and was responsible for organizing the women's regiment in the INA.

ARUNIMA SINHA,

Indian mountaineer and sportswoman



Arunima Sinha, a former national-level volleyball player, is indeed the world's first female amputee to climb Mount Everest, achieving this feat in 2013 after a tragic train accident led to the amputation of her leg.

FUN FACTS!

The First International Women's Day Was a Party... Kinda: Imagine marching for women's rights while also throwing a street festival. That's basically how the very first International Women's Day went down in 1911! It was a mix of protests and speeches, but it was also a time of dancing and celebrating victories.



WOMEN OF TODAY: BEAUTY AND THE BRAIN! AND THE BEAST??

There are women who seem to exist beyond definition, beyond the need for categorization. These women don't need labels to describe they are everything at once—unapologetically, and in doing so, they set the world on fire with every step they take.

The Woman of today, she is as strong as beautiful and brilliant - all of these things in a way that is so intertwined, so deeply connected, that to separate them would be impossible.

Her **Beauty** doesn't need to be noticed, but it is impossible to ignore. It's the kind of beauty that comes from within—confident, authentic, and powerful. It shifts the energy of any room she enters, reflecting everything she's been through and overcome. This beauty is not just about appearance but about the depth of her character.

Her **Brain**, too, plays a vital role in her entirety! Her Intellect is not something to be admired separately—it's the core of everything she does. It drives her actions, decisions, and relationships. Her intelligence is not cold or clinical, but warm, dynamic, and alive. It enables her to listen, understand, and connect with people in a way that makes her a natural leader.

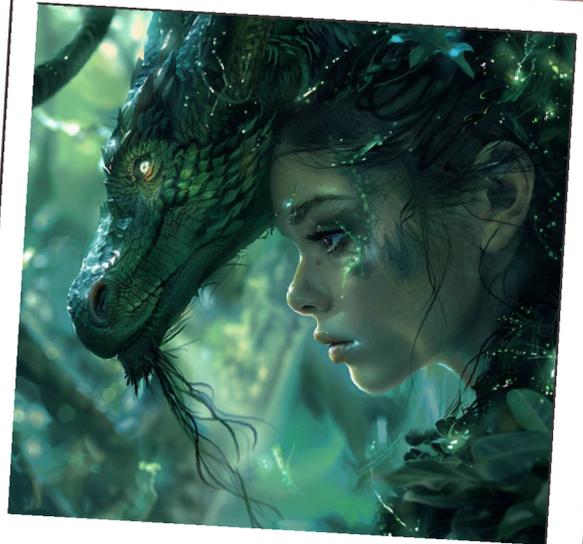
And then there's the raw power she carries within her, a primal force we might call the "**Beast.**" This Beast isn't driven by anger or aggression but is rooted in resilience and inner strength. It's what keeps her steady when life falls apart, rising when others falter. She stands in her truth, unapologetically and unafraid, not needing to shout or demand attention—her power is felt in her calm demeanor and unwavering conviction.

Her beauty lies in handling the delicate intricacies of life. Her brilliance is not something to be flaunted, it exists in the way she navigates the world.

It's not about being the smartest in the room—it's about knowing how to harness the power of knowledge in ways that move mountains, build communities, and spark revolutions.

And the beast inside her? It isn't something she hides; it's something she embraces. It's the part of her that protects, that fights, that rises when everything seems impossible. It's not a violent force—it's a force of nature, a quiet, constant strength that refuses to yield. Her power of endurance is unmatched—she pushes through every hardship, no matter how daunting, with unwavering determination and a deep commitment to those she loves.

The woman today is the perfect blend of all three, seamlessly. Her beauty is her intelligence, her intelligence is her strength, and her strength is her beauty. Together, they create a powerful, dynamic woman who is constantly evolving, growing, and pushing the boundaries of what is possible.



STORY TIME

The Quiet Strength Around Us



A few days ago, I went for my routine check-up at the clinic. As usual, it was bustling with patients, children crying, and the usual chaos of a busy practice. In the midst of it all was Maria, the nurse, who greeted me with her calm, reassuring smile. The first time I really noticed Maria was when a young mother, anxious after learning she needed surgery, was comforted by her. Maria approached her with genuine care, asking how she was feeling and reassuring her with a steady, calming voice. She held the woman's trembling hands and offered a glass of water. It was more than just medical care—it was compassion. When the woman left, she was calmer, all thanks to Maria's quiet strength.

Later that day, feeling too tired to cook, I stopped by a small food stall run by Fatima, an elderly woman known for her delicious home-cooked meals. The food always smells comforting, and it's the kind of place that feels like home. I took my food to go, grateful for a small break from the usual routine. Fatima, despite being in her seventies, still works hard every day to serve meals to the neighborhood. It's not easy running a small business at her age, but she does it with passion and determination.

Mornings are always a rush in my household—kids to school, my husband and I to work, and my in-laws off to their laughter club sessions. Aarti, our housekeeper, is the pillar that holds everything together. She manages the laundry, the cleaning, and prepares meals as per everyone's needs. By the time we leave, we trust Aarti to keep the home running smoothly.

On my way to work, I was reviewing my schedule when my driver, asked how I was doing and kindly suggested I take it easy. His concern made me smile. Later, a lunch meeting got cancelled, giving me a peaceful moment to enjoy my home-cooked dabba.

As I sat eating, my thoughts turned to the women I'd met in the past 24 hours—Maria, Fatima, and Aarti, my kamwali bai. Each one of them, in their own way, embodies a quiet power that often goes unnoticed.

Aarti arrives at our home before we wake and leaves after the day has faded. She works tirelessly, cleaning and organizing, while also managing her own family. Women like Aarti are often invisible, yet they carry the weight of not just their own homes, but the homes of others too. They don't ask for recognition—they simply show up, day after day.

Maria, too, may not make headlines, but her role is just as vital. She's not a celebrity or a CEO, but her empathy and ability to reassure people in times of distress are invaluable. Her work may seem small, but it's those moments of kindness that make a world of difference.

Janet, in her seventies, still runs a small food stall with dedication. Managing everything from cooking to serving, she works tirelessly, feeding those who depend on her meals. I often wonder where she finds the strength to continue, but somehow, she does, and with grace.

These women, though often invisible, carry the weight of families, homes, and communities on their shoulders. Their days are long and filled with challenges, yet they keep going without complaint. Their strength isn't loud—it's quiet, enduring, and unshakable.

It's not just in the physical tasks they perform, but in their emotional resilience. They show up for everyone around them, despite the struggles they face in their own lives. These women are fighters, constantly giving and supporting, holding everything together. They may go unnoticed, but without them, the world would simply not function. It's time we truly SEE them.



HEY, YOU!



DID YOU KNOW?



The official colors of International Women's Day are purple, green, and white. These colors symbolize justice, dignity, and hope—reflecting the ongoing fight for gender equality.

THANKYOU FOR READING

