

Steps

A Journey of 16 women achievers

in association with



Department of Mass Media

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about

The United Nations Information Centre (UNIC)

The network of 63 United Nations Information Centres are key to the Organization's ability to reach the people of the world and to share the United Nations story with them in their own languages. These centres, working in coordination with the United Nations system, reach out to the media and educational institutions, engage in partnerships with governments, local civil society organizations and the private sector, and maintain libraries and electronic information resources.

UNIC New Delhi serves as a focal point for news and information about the United Nations for audiences in India and Bhutan. They assist UN agencies in India with their communication strategies and information needs.

UNIC also participates in observances of international days, years and decades. Commemorations take many forms and may include presentations involving national or local dignitaries, workshops, seminars, educational programmes, sporting events and musical performances.

UNIC is responsible for promoting greater public understanding of and support for the aims and activities of the United Nations by disseminating information on the work of the Organization to people everywhere, especially in developing countries.

(Source: Official website of United Nations Information Centre)

foreword

The Director of The UNIC

“Equality for Women is Progress for All”. This year’s International Women’s Day theme has resonated in the work and conviction of the United Nations through the past almost seven decades.

Recognition that including women in political, economic and social empowerment processes can make a huge difference in the work of the UN was an idea that is as old as the international organization itself. The three main pillars of the UN - peace, development and human rights - have provided a solid foundation to women’s empowerment and under the able leadership of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, women have continued to empower and be empowered by the UN’s diverse scope of activities in all parts of the world.

Through the narratives of the 15 women changemakers outlined in this handsome publication, the Day’s theme is espoused, elaborated and celebrated, even as these changemakers continue to catalyse both men and women around them, leading by example, overcoming enormous obstacles, and becoming worthy of our emulation.

Yet, we all realize that there is a lot more left to be achieved. In South Asia, gender indicators and their analysis conceal more than they truly reveal. The women in this book have all realized that, and have continued in their resolve to question the status quo. From the boardroom to the pavements, their initiatives for change continue and will continue to inspire us to create a more equal world. There are many more such role models for each one of those chosen here.

The UN Information Centre for India and Bhutan is proud to join forces with NIMAYA FOUNDATION in this publication endeavour to bring these stories to you.



Kiran Mehra-Kerpelman
Director UNIC

about

Nimaya Foundation

Founded by Entrepreneurs Ayesha Thapar and Samyak Chakrabarty, Nimaya Foundation is a not-for-profit seed fund aimed at enabling women from lower income groups to start their own small businesses.

Our vision is that the entrepreneurs we invest in become financially independent while creating a greater sense of self worth. We hope to achieve this by providing the necessary training, seed funding, mentoring and all other forms of support required for their venture to become sustainable as well as profitable. Our exit will be when we achieve a break even and the same amount will then be ploughed back into the system for other candidates. In the year 2013, we will work with 10 women residing in the Dharavi slums, Mumbai and by 2015 we aim to invest in atleast, 100 women entrepreneurs in 2 cities.

message

Nimaya Foundation

‘Nimaya’ means opportunity. Our primary objective is to create an eco system for women from lower income groups to become financially self sufficient as well as add to the household income. In order to achieve this, we are forming self help groups which shall function as small business units and manufacture products / provide services in the open market. Our role including providing the necessary seed funding, mentoring and auxiliary support systems in order to ensure sustainability as well as positive cash flows. By 2015, the aim to support 100 such groups with atleast 10 members.

‘Steps’ showcases the journey of 16 women achievers whose stories have the power to inspire many others to pursue their dream despite various obstacles including strong social and economic barriers. We thank the United Nations and students of Jai Hind College who helped put this together.

Happy Reading !

Ayesha Thapar and
Samyak Chakrabarty
Founders

shereen bhan

*Managing Editor,
CNBC TV-18*



Going that Extra Mile

Often recognized as one of the few TV Journalists who is a youth icon and a leading English Journalist, Shereen Bhan's looks definitely defy her age! Executive Editor, and very recently, successor of Udyan Mukherjee as the Managing Editor, CNBC TV-18 has seen all the dynamism in Shereen Bhan. In her stint of 14 years at CNBC TV-18, she has kept her audience intact by hosting milestone interviews with Bill Gates, Michael Dell, Indra Nooyi, Kofi Annan, Richard Branson, the late Benazir Bhutto, Azim Premji, and Narayan Murthy.



She comes from a Hindu Kashmiri Pandit family. Talking about her growing years, she says, "Since my father was from the Air Force, we kept moving to different cities in India every two years. I remember being home-schooled when we were in Iraq for a short time." This has helped her grow with a grounded perspective and be more adaptable to any situation. As a child, she always wanted to become a doctor, since a lot of her family members were into Medicine. "I worked with my Aunt in her nursing home during the break after my 10th board exams; I realized that Medicine wasn't my cup of tea. I fine-tuned my choice in college and found interest in documentary film-making," she says. Bhan is a graduate in Philosophy from St. Stephens College with a Masters in Communication Studies from Pune University. At this juncture, she joined as a research analyst for the show 'We The People'. Reminiscing on how she enjoyed the news, Bhan adds, "After my Masters, I joined Karan Thappar

in UTV and produced current affairs shows for several channels including what was then Star TV. This was the period where I got my basics right because emphasis was laid on fact checking, hard labour and intensive research.”

THE BIG SWITCH



The move to CNBC TV18 saw Bhan switch from Political news to business news. For her, a normal work day would start at 4:30 am and sometimes end at midnight. When asked about the shift from Politics to Business, she elaborates, “Initially the insecurity was in my own mind. But with help from my mentors and the opportunities given by them, the transition was smooth.” Explaining how stock market and finances are now a part of her life, she adds that Politics, Policies, Market and Business are all inter linked. She believes that the switch proved advantageous as it got her to understand two different

sides of Journalism.

Brushing past a nostalgic strand of Bhan’s career, the most celebrated moment was when she was declared as one of the Young Global Economic Leaders by the World Economic Forum in the year 2009. As the Executive Editor and the Delhi Bureau Chief, her major role was looking after the content of the channel. Her long list of achievements will definitely be incomplete without mentioning her flagship shows like India’s longest running show on Young entrepreneurs, Young Turks, now in its 13th year. Bhan has always been a fan of innovation at work. She says, “I am now looking for new opportunities for the channel. I am enjoying experimenting with new formats, introducing a bunch of new shows, creating new categories of programming and trying to bring in fresh ideas and energy.”

She appeared as one of the 50 beautiful faces in an issue of *Vogue* in 2008 and also in *Femina*’s 20 beautiful faces in the year 2005 but is she a believer that beauty can get you limelight? “Absolutely not”, she answers.

“I don’t believe that looks will get you credibility or respect. You have to be true to your craft and bring your skills and hard work to the table. If you’re a reporter you have to deliver on breaking the news and if you’re an anchor you have to deliver on being able to analyse the news in real time. The stereotype regarding good looks is blown out of proportion.”

In her view, being presentable matters because it is a visual medium but she lays emphasis on good quality journalism, on hard core reporting, on asking the right kind of questions, on doing in-depth research, on analysing the information in real time, because all of that will be on live television. She points out that as a Journalist, one doesn’t get a second chance to make an impression.

BREAKING JOURNALISM CLICHÉS

For Bhan the emphasis is on accuracy and getting the story right not necessarily getting it first. The winner of the award for the Best News

Anchor (ENBA 2013), Bhan is a firm believer in ‘humanising’ business news and staying relevant to the times. While business for many people is all about profit margins, numbers and balance sheets, Bhan makes a constant effort to de-jargonize the news and present it in layman’s language.



She says, “Business news is about value creation. The idea is not just to present a balance sheet but to inspire people with stories and ideas that drive change, stories of sustainable wealth and value creation. The idea is to focus on what businesses do, why some succeed and others fail.”

She goes on to further explain that she has always encouraged her newsroom to do stories about young entrepreneurs, about woman leaders, about companies and their relationship with stakeholders or their employees.

So what kept her going for 14 long years?

“I love my job; I am passionate about news and content creation. I have also been fortunate to have great mentors” she humbly accepts.

“When I launched CNBCTV18’s first daily political talk show that played out every night at 10 pm, I would get a message every night right after my show, from my boss. At 10:31, there would be an ‘I liked the way you spoke today’ or a ‘Brilliant questions asked’ message on my phone.” According to her, the instant feedback and encouragement kept her inspired to do the next show. She agrees that it is quite a struggle and that too, a tough one, to become a successful journalist. Patience, passion and commitment definitely top her list of qualities a Journalist must have. She goes on to explain,

“Journalism is pretty much like being a doctor because you are on duty 24 by 7. Today I see impatient youngsters enter this field wanting to be anchors, looking for visibility and fame in the first few months of their careers. But without a deep sense of passion and commitment, it will be difficult to stick around in the long run.”

She advises young aspiring Journalists that it is essential to have a goal, a fire in the belly and a deep sense of ownership if they intend making journalism a career. She feels that people join the profession not understanding that it is actually a team effort. Citing a simple description, she draws an image of a bulletin with one anchor delivering news in a studio actually has the hands of so many people behind the scenes who help air the show. Thus, a purview of a long career would definitely include appreciating the work of a team and sharing the credit equally. A long successful career and still continuing with the same grit, Shereen Bhan has walked an extra mile and she keeps doing that, as she signs off every night.

- Deepa Venkatesan