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● **Women's world**

# Leaving the myth behind

As we stand on the threshold of another Women's Day, the theme set forward by the United Nations this year — 'Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity' couldn't be more significant. At a time when many women are living cloistered and unheard, unable to pursue their dreams, some truly stand apart, their success stories holding a candle to their determination and willpower.

In spite of hailing from a small village, Remadevi Thotathil, the head of Global Talent Management, ITC Limited, reached the upper echelons with grit and determination. Justifiably so. She was one among the three girls who were selected to join the first batch of women air traffic controllers with the Indian Navy in 1993. "For me, the charm was the uniform and doing something offbeat. As the pioneer batch of ladies in uniform, I was very excited. I had grown up in an atmosphere, like many others, which believed that women are meant only for certain jobs."

"Defence training brings a paradigm shift in you. I learnt the disciplined ways of armed forces and at the Air Force Academy, I was introduced to the blue skies and the machines. The moment you enter the Academy, your life changes, you never come back as the same person," she adds.

Remadevi, who was the first lady controller, recalls "no two days were alike in a zero error tolerance environment". "Being in ATT, you need to have sharp reflexes. I also won a rolling trophy and broke the mould," she says.



Remadevi

"I started my second innings, a corporate career, after 10 years when I joined the "civil" world after my short service commission. Now heading the Global Talent Management and a mom of two girls, she believe a woman can have it all. "There is a traditionally associated social template with specific fonts and colours which says women should be in a certain manner. I was able to go beyond that. And every woman can. The only constraint is in the mind," she adds.

R Indushree is in a world apart. A magician and ventriloquist, her forte is her vocal chords. A passion that began when she was in class two has taken her to 'Limca Book of Records'. For an art that takes much effort, she uses puppets and her voice (voices) to communicate and entertain. "You can say what you want to say through the puppet. But I always knew that I should never open my mouth when I am performing." Throwing one's voice away is easier said than done. "It's almost impossible. It is a lot of hard work. But I also have help from a relative to prepare my scripts and my father makes the puppets."

"Sometimes, I need to have five actions and reactions and the coordination is not easy. This is an art that needs practice and perseverance," she adds.

Allaying all doubts whether women can do comedy on

stage or not is Richa Kapoor. "I started off as the only girl doing improvisational comedy. Then I met Sumukhi Suresh, who had come for audition and we started performing together. We use comedy as a way to talk to everybody," she says.

These ladies have been performing humorous sketches, 'The Adventures of Richa and Sumukhi' to start with. It deals with politics, mundane situations, Bollywood, human nature and mythology. "The production is a combination of drama, intelligence and comedy," informs Richa.

The duo has been soaring high and were among those few women comedians who were invited to perform at 'Vir Das' Pajama Festival'.

"It is not the gender that is the problem, but the surroundings. I've been talking to a lot of women and I find there is always some apprehension and a lack of confidence to come on stage. It is up to the women to create

their own opportunities. You have to create a space for yourself," she adds.

Brewing success of a differ-



Richa Kapoor and Sumukhi (riding the bike).

ent kind is Lisa Srao. Chairman and Managing Director of I Brands Beverages, she says had always envisioned having her own entrepreneurial venture. "And when I started living in India, in 2003, having moved from the UK

following my marriage, I found that products in the price sensitive bracket were of very low quality standard and good quality products were extremely expensive. Since my father was in the business of liquor distribution, I had an exposure to that industry... so I started noticing a very specific gap in the market — the premium liquor segment in India's mass market was completely under-utilised. This is when I envisioned building a liquor business in this country that provided the market with value for money products yet giving the consumers a taste of international standards."

Being an entrepreneur, she says, offers flexibility in one's schedule to maintain a very healthy work-life balance. "I make sure that I spend enough time with my family. I generally make it a point to be with my kids in the evenings, helping them with their homework or having at least one meal with them."

She adds, "It is not impossible. You just have



Lisa Srao

to efficiently plan your time and you don't really have to feel guilty about never spending enough time with them. When you are going up the ladder of success, or pursuing a career in business, every girl I know faces it. And most girls compromise. People will tell you that women can't have it all. But I don't agree. I think women can have it all, a successful career and a wonderful family. As long as you have a supportive network."

A quote by Steve Jobs, she says, has become her mantra. "I want every woman to be inspired by what he said, 'The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do,'" she sums up.

Anupama Ramakrishnan



Indushree R

● **Sister act**

# Waiting for the right script

Celebrity sisters Karisma and Kareena Kapoor are known for their acting skills and glamour quotient, but they are yet to be seen on the silver screen together. Younger sibling Kareena says the wait will end with the "right script". "People have offered us roles, but we need to get the right script," Kareena, who is married to actor Saif Ali Khan, said.

Karisma, who quit the industry in 2003 after her marriage, has dubbed for Kareena's voice in film 'Bodyguard', but catching a glimpse of the two on the big screen together is yet to become a reality. On the small screen, Kareena made an appearance on a reality TV show 'Nach Baliye' to promote her film when her sister was judging the dance show.

Kareena says the characters of the script need to convince them to come on board. "We need to feel the parts. There is so much pressure that it has to be the right script," she added. A successful actress of the 1990s, Karisma is known for movies like 'Raja Hindustani', 'Dil To Pagal Hai', and 'Biwi No 1'. The actress was last seen in 2012 film 'Dangerous Ish-

hq', which was a well-publicised comeback, but fizzled out at the box office.

After Karisma, Kareena took the baton and found a foothold in the film industry with movies like 'Jab We Met', '3 Idiots' and 'Omkaara'.



CHOOSY Kareena Kapoor



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