

POWER

A YFLO AHMEDABAD INITIATIVE



THE
FESTIVE
ISSUE

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

SHRIYA DAMANI



Producing this issue has been very exciting! This issue has been dedicated to the months of festivities - from Navratri to Diwali and all the way up to Christmas. We thought, it would only be

perfect to have our cover girls, the ones who bring life to our celebrations. Purva is the creative head behind the many big fat Indian weddings, you and I must have attended. Shweta brings her design background to bring art to each of these weddings. Anoli is one of the most sought-after upcoming event designers and Meera is the pioneer of flea market-event zones in the city and is now expanding to many more new event formats.W

Each one of these women have brought smile to our lives, made us and the city alive. Talking about festivities, travel is an integral part of our lives, all through the holiday seasons. Read more about what Aarohi has to talk about vacations and planned trips. A sneak peek into Niharika's book is one of the features to look forward too.

As we finish 6 months of 2018-19 we have taken a little trip down the

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POWER Magazine is an initiative by Shriya Damani, Chairperson YFLO Ahmedabad, 2018-19. This month's cover features four extremely powerful women styled by Purni Mehta. "Being masters of organisation these ladies create magic behind the scenes at events. I wanted to showcase them as partygoers and show their individual eclectic sides. Each of these ladies let me take them out of their comfort zone with their look. It was a pleasure meeting and styling these four powerhouses", says Purni. To know more about them, read on and be a part of their journeys.



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SHWETA LUHANA STAY FOCUSSED AND DRIVEN, ALWAYS

Shweta Luhana is focussed, driven and believes that there is no obstacle a woman can't solve. As she speaks to Power magazine, Shweta spills the beans on her success mantra and how has she managed to walk the talk!

By Kinjal Shah Desai
Photography by Devansh Jhaveri

Do you think women today have the desire and drive to shatter the glass ceiling?

The fact that this question is coming from the most driven platform of the women, by the women and for the women – it speaks volume about the magnitude with which women power is on a rise. The very mantra of YFLO says “Unveil the hero within” – So when a women tribe confluences to support each other and grow together – SHEROES are born, the new heroes!! Its women who balance the best in both worlds, men just rule unidirectional. By now I believe we've travelled many generations gathering examples and experiences of such countless courageous super women to inspire all of us to not just shatter the glass ceiling but elegantly glide through it with poise, grace and most importantly with love for self and everyone around.

What do you think are the hurdles or obstacles that women face while trying to achieve their goals?

I believe that if a women believes in herself and has support from her loved ones, then there is nothing that can stop her. But the biggest challenge



irrespective of the drive, skill, balance and love that she can express – then it would be dis--belief in her potential due to shallow gender discrimination. When given equal share of opportunities, resources, funds and support system, I do not think there's any task that can be limit a women who is passionately driven for the goal she has chosen in her journey.

What are some of the ways in which accomplished persons can support aspiring women?

“BEHIND EVERY SUCCESSFUL WOMAN IS A TRIBE OF OTHER SUCCESSFUL WOMEN WHO HAVE HER BACK “ I think a women is gifted with the inherent quality of motherly love and selfless nurturing. If we all follow this mantra and support, mentor, nurture all aspiring individuals around us in the best of our ability and expertise with the inherent quality of motherly love and selfless nurturing in grooming and thrusting every aspiring women in her journey then we'll surely be creating a body of energy, which will be un stoppable!

Please tell us your story, and the steps you took to be where you are today.

I am a daughter and the only child to my parents and this has always made me feel very special, wanted and my upbringing was filled with love. I have never felt less than a son growing up. I was allowed every choice of self-expression and journey of my liking and I wish to continue living in the similar manner in the future too. I graduated from CEPT University to become an interior designer but destiny ended up transforming that skill into designing weddings and currently, that is my forte. Even before finishing my university I established my own firm called “THE OPEN WINOW” in 2013 with my friend and now my partner in the firm Aashka Ghelani. We were both young designers, still in college, who wanted to chase our dreams and create our own statement space. We

started in our bedroom, an office without capital, without mentorship, without referrals and today five years down the line we have our own studio that boasts of a body of work, which we proudly call our aesthetics. Our line-up of work has been acclaimed and loved and our good-willing clients come back to us each time throwing up a new challenge, thereby, giving us newer opportunities. This helped us discover a new field altogether - Wedding / Décor design. Currently, we have a niche name in the business. So if there's one inference that I would take as a closing note from this then it's -- believe in yourself, follow your dreams, get started and make it happen.

When, according to you, does the trajectory of female leadership commence?

When she has a single-minded burning desire to win and win as a team – that's when a leader is born and legends are created.

How have you triumphed on your way to reach where you are today?

I never gave myself options, put myself into zones, which were never in my comfort level. I love taking risks and doing everything to overcome them. But I have always followed my heart and like a child never have I let go off my dreams.

Any sacrifices made? If yes, then how? If no, then how have you balanced it?

I wish I could spend more time with my loved ones. In the race to chase your ambition -- sometimes you let go of the simplest of pleasures in life only to realize they were your greatest treasures down the memory lane!

What has been or who have been the key influencers in your life? How and why?

My parents – they mean the world to me. If I am anything today, I dedicate all of me to them and them only! They were both proud to have me as the only child and daughter, but they also gave me the most beautiful childhood that helped me during my transition as an independent adult. They have never been less proud nor have they set any freedom boundaries different than that a son would have. I've travelled across the world, many a times solo, got the freedom to start my own venture without taking any experience under the established mentors, relationships have never been a compulsion for me – I know the true meaning of being free spirited. All this and more only coz they believed in me and trusted my potentials.

When it comes to setting up a business from scratch, how has the path been?

All unknown paths in the beginning are scary, messy, un-directional but there's just one key to

reach the end, you need to hang on through good and bad times. Hold your head high when times are difficult and keep your feet on the ground when times are flourishing. Have your goals clear, your methods clean and success will find you.

How did you manage capital for your business and was it difficult convincing your investors?

I had no inventory or investment in my business. We started with a brain, filled with imaginations, capitalized work, which kept moving from one good project to another, ensuring fantastic client satisfactions and relations. We simply put in our 200% and held on to it.

As a woman of power, have you ever received negative perceptions or rejections from your male counterparts? What kind



and how have you tackled those?

I might be the rare one saying this – but god has been grateful as we've always had men who supported and celebrated us.

Do you think it is healthy for senior women leaders to boost their junior or other female colleagues' morale as they grow up the hierarchy? How can this be done?

Of course! One must be like the banyan tree, providing shade for travelers who stop during a sunny afternoon, than be like a palm that just grows tall and harsh. If you want the future to be better than the past – we need to nurture it right from infancy – similarly seniors should always mentor freshers or juniors for they will be the next leaders in times to comes.

Do you think women are hesitant today to take up leadership roles, even though they aspire to take up one?

Depends on the individual – everyone has a different skill set – some like working behind the scenes, some like being the face of it. Everyone who inspires the other and can set a direction is a leader in her own way.

Do you think there should be special programs in the education system to build leadership qualities in women? Can you give a few examples if you agree?

I believe what you see is what shapes you, so if at a tender age one is exposed to lessons of greatness they will grow up to become one like them. I believe doing is the best teaching – so, as far as training programs to enhance or inculcate leaderships skills are concerned, young girls should have varied field activities, travel camps, where they actively participate and have opportunities to group up

and develop leadership skills and team work to accomplish the given task.

What according to you are the most important qualities in a career-- oriented woman? Please explain at least 5 points.

'A winner is a dreamer who never gives up' - every woman with such a focus will only proceed in her journey ahead, turning back is never an option or a possibility. As for listing the top five points is concerned, then the following is my pick:

Faith – The only parameter, which makes the impossible possible and imagination, a reality

Perseverance – The quality that will take you to the end of the road, despite everything on the way.

Love – As we need that little human touch and sensitivity to bring in the best from us and everyone around us. It is just about accomplishments, it's about celebration of the journey towards your goal.

Balance – The only way to have and manage the best of and the best in, both worlds – be it career or personal.

Selflessness – All greatness is achieved when it's not just for the self but for the world around you.

Why do most women pick up soft career roles as compared to men?

Women are not just bread earners – they are clan nurturers; they have a tougher hidden task as a family breeder, which surely gives the leverage to choose or dismiss the genre in a career path. Not everyone on a battlefield with the gun in hand is a fighter! The peacemakers and winners are many times the silent ones, striving and toiling endlessly, but choose a withdrawn contribution.



Where do you think or what kind of careers women can pick up today – please explain 5 with the kind of actions or roles they can play there?

I believe everyone should take up a task, which is natural to their persona and the one wherein their expression is effortless.

The Stylish ones can be the influencers -- be it in fashion, media, literature, image consultants – these are the trend setters.

The outspoken fiery ones can be the voice Raisers – they represent the idea that is the mass, be it through journalism, media, advertisement, politics, etc.

The quiet imaginative ones are the Artists amongst us - they contribute towards making the world

beautiful wherever they go.

The Strategic, analytical ones totally belong to the GIRL BOSS clan - these are the driven entrepreneurs-- following their dream and building their herd to create new ventures and spread them far and wide.

The nurturing kinds belong to Academic circuit - these are the selfless teachers and guides enlightening young minds to be the leaders of tomorrow.

How can the current corporate system support or push women in leadership positions?

If every women is ensured that against every ladder of responsibility and hierarchy that she climbs in her professional journey – she would not

have to give up her personal pleasures, duties and responsibilities – no one will ever back-out from taking the lead. Special policies for expecting and new mothers should be enforced to ensure they have enough time to bond with the little one, yet the work is equally contributed to. Day-care facilities are equally important. Annual vacations which guarantee good time given to the family is a key to balancing the professional and personal equilibrium.

What are you doing in your organization to support more women in top roles?

I ensure the maximum recruitment I choose are women. We are a company created and lead by women, so we believe if women become each other's best friends and supporters they can proceed with leaps and bounds in an atmosphere of warmth and love and not the usual corporate cut-throat, ruthless approach. We mentor & mingle with other women-led contemporaries to grow together and have our own happy clan of dreamers who become achievers.

How do you think the government can help women when it comes to making a wise career choice? Please give us your thoughts on equal pay for equal work.

Gender discrimination should be completely abolished as far as remuneration versus skill output is concerned. The evaluation and work assignments should be fair on the output irrespective of the gender to which the individual belongs to. In a male dominant society its time they respect, value and appraise the power of such talented hardworking women who strive hard to balance both the worlds and yet become efficient leaders. Special programs on vocational training for the less privileged, workshops or aptitude tests with mentors from various fields of expertise should be made available for young minds, skill up-gradation and training programmes should be facilitated for

women already reigning in their fields for better progress. The mantra should be- to be globally competent and not just regionally reigning.

Where can women look to when it comes to motivation? Or where can women seek motivation from?

Be a dreamer, a doer and see possibilities everywhere – your journey is never ending and the conquests are many.

One career and/or leadership quote or advice you would like to share with our readers. It could be from your personal life or something you have read somewhere.

'Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much more.' This is my success mantra and I believe anyone who wants to not just walk fast but reach far should follow the same. The energy is always in collective form than individual so, grow as a fantastic team like a laden banyan tree than a stark, tall, frail, stiff, date palm.

What and how did you get into YFLO Ahmedabad and what has been your vision that you are yet to achieve or have achieved?

I just felt very bored and stagnant of my current surroundings and people whom I've known forever. YFLO to me seemed to be the most vibrant confluence of driven individuals who not just mechanically perform tasks but celebrate the journey and togetherness. So being a part of it was an instant decision and my happiest choice for this year. I'm a member who has recently joined and I expertise in event décor and have been doing up the last two events for YFLO – Twinkle Khanna being my most recent one. I thoroughly enjoyed getting a free-hand on designing both of them and I believe I've raised the experiential level of both the events much higher and fuller in comparison to all the past events of YFLO till now.