

Wonder Women

Celebrating **International Women's Day** with empowering stories of women who stepped out of their comfort zones to break some stereotypes and, in the bargain, are inspiring us for the better.

PRITI RATHI GUPTA

MD & Promoter, Anand Rathi Stock Brokers, Film Producer & Founder, LXME

By Rachna Viridi

As the MD and promoter at Anand Rathi Stock Brokers, film producer, and the founder of LXME, Preeti Rathi Gupta brings a unique blend of experience and expertise that sets her apart in the industry. Unique skill sets built within each role have exponentially helped her accomplish them to a T. Finance and money management are a part of her DNA, it is an environment where she has spent most of her adult life. Right from the age of 16, she was asked by her father Anand Rathi to manage the family portfolio and that was her entry in the field. While she brought her finance expertise in running budgets and making every project viable, filmmaking opened her mind to a world of endless possibilities. LXME—India's first financial platform for women—is an out of the box solution tailored for an underserved segment. As the founder of LXME, she is pioneering a revolution towards financial inclusion and empowerment of women.

“It has been an interesting journey with diverse experiences, and learnings across diametrically opposite fields. My role at Anand Rathi Stock Brokers has honed my strategic thinking and business acumen, equipping me with the skills needed to identify opportunities and drive growth in the financial sector. Filmmaking which is more of an ode to my mother, helped to hone my creative side. My passion for bringing financial security and financial freedom to women drives everything we do at LXME. By creating a platform tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of women, we are breaking barriers and democratising access to financial services. It is the best use of both my financial acumen and creative talents,” insists Priti.

Equal opportunity to women

Priti had for long been mulling over the thought of financial empowerment for women and it was during a presentation for a class on strategy at Harvard Business School that this inkling of an idea was transformed into a business idea. Having worked in the financial services sector for almost two decades, she understood and experienced that financial services companies considered men to be their primary audience and so was keen to turn the industry on its heel to make it more accessible for women. “I could see the vast opportunity and impact of making this 50 per cent of India empowered. To that effect, I founded LXME to inspire a wave of financially fearless women to actively manage their money and achieve their dreams,” she asserts.

Breaking the glass ceiling

“It is true for most women I may have pushed the boundaries slightly more. While setting up the commodities business, I went to markets where people refused to acknowledge me and preferred to talk to my male colleagues instead. Those were the challenging times that made me stronger. From making my way to the male-dominated industry forums, to now setting up LXME, I have come a long way in the financial services industry—an industry that has always been dominated by men.” When she started LXME, nobody was taking up the challenge of providing the right financial education to encourage women to invest. She wanted

to create a platform that not only makes it easy for women to start their journey of investing but also liberates them to aspire to do what every smart woman does.

Beating the odds

Priti doesn't look at the 'odds', but pays more attention to the 'evens'. She believes, “There is an opportunity in every situation that doesn't seem to be working in your favour. In the world of entrepreneurship, especially as a woman founder, I have encountered my fair share of challenges. How I deal with these challenges is important. Firstly, resilience is at the core of my mindset. I have always reminded myself that every challenge presents a chance to learn and improve. Strategic thinking and problem-solving skills to make a clear plan of action are instrumental in helping me do so. I have to say, being a start-up founder teaches you that adaptability, agility, and embracing change, can be a secret sauce to success.”

Priti's young team at LXME inspires her to be authentic and comfortable in being herself. Something that accomplished women do with their actions and words.

Striking a balance

Priti believes in work-life effectiveness as opposed to balancing them. “My thumb rule is to be 100 per cent present in whichever role I may be in at the moment. Being an entrepreneur also gives you the ability to manage your time at your convenience. However, systematic planning helps effective time management. I begin my day with a to-do list which I make sure I achieve through the day. Writing down goals makes me stay focused on each of my roles. I give more weightage to happiness than perfection. I believe balance exists in your mind, and not in your time allocation. As long as there is work-life harmony, I am on the right track,” she concludes.

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Drawing inspiration

Her family, right from her parents to her children, her teammates at LXME, and women of substance are all a huge source of inspiration to her. “In my early years, I watched my grandmother do the financial planning of the house with sharp acumen. Coming from a middle-class family, we were taught that every penny saved is a penny earned. Also, managing money had no gender-specific role in my house. During adolescence, I watched my father not just earn money but also wisely invest it for asset and wealth creation—a strategy that my mother was always on board with and played an equal part by being a pragmatic spender and astute saver. My husband has been the wind beneath my wings in everything I have achieved so far. My children inspire me with their clarity of thought, hard work, and determination to build their careers, despite being more privileged than I was at their age,” states the financial whiz.





RASHMI BANSAL

Bestselling Writer, Entrepreneur and Motivational Speaker

By Neha Kirpal

An economics graduate from Sophia College, Mumbai, and an MBA from IIM Ahmedabad, Rashmi Bansal is the author of 10 bestselling books on entrepreneurship. Writing apart, she conducts online writing workshops, and mentors students and young entrepreneurs.

Reaching new heights

Bansal is the true embodiment of an achiever. Though people call her an 'overnight success', she believes there is no such thing. "Malcolm Gladwell rightly said that you have to put in 10,000 hours of passion and devotion to achieve something out of the ordinary in any

field," she affirms. She started writing as a second year BA Economics student at Sophia College, Mumbai. After completing an MBA from IIM Ahmedabad, she did not take a placement as writing remained her first love. She went onto work with a leading newspaper for two years after which she started her own company to publish *Just Another Magazine* for college students in 1995.

Winning the odds

In 2008, she emerged a winner with her first book on entrepreneurship, *Stay Hungry Stay Foolish*. The book brings together who she is and everything she stands for—choosing her own path, her love for writing and her experience as an entrepreneur. According to her, it was the right book in the right place at the right time. "It was all about storytelling, not a business book filled with jargon. And it was the first time we read about middle-class people—not Tata, Birla or Ambani—starting their own ventures," she says. While Bansal never expected it to be so successful, when the book sold over five lakh copies, what touched her most were emails she received from people, stating things such as 'I read your book and quit my job.' "The fact that my book made a difference to people and gave them the courage to pursue their dreams was very satisfying," she recalls. It motivated her to write a whole series of books that feature inspiring stories of enterprise.

The writer's curve

The success of her first book made Bansal think about people with business degrees. It led her to write *Connect the Dots*, featuring stories of non-MBAs who have been successful entrepreneurs. Similarly, *Take Me Home* is her book on entrepreneurs from India's non-metro cities, which she saw as a growing trend.

Over the years, she went on to write 10 bestselling books on entrepreneurship such as: *I Have a Dream*, *Poor Little Rich Slum*, *Follow Every Rainbow*, *Arise, Awake, God's Own Kitchen*, *Touch the Sky* and *Shine Bright*. Her books have sold more than 12 lakh copies and been translated into 12 languages. Bansal says that her choice of what to write is not motivated by what will sell. "Firstly, the topic should interest me, there should be some learning and discovery. Secondly, it should mirror a broad trend in society. Thirdly, it should have mass appeal and help inspire a set of people," she explains.

In each book, she strives to include diverse stories in terms of age, gender, education, geography and type of business. "It is not the glamour



of the personality or the size of the business which attracts me but the honesty and strength of each story," she adds.

Drawing inspiration

Bansal's biggest source of inspiration is her parents. Her father hails from a small town in Madhya Pradesh but became a renowned astrophysicist, and her mother is a living role model of unconditional love and sacrifice. Further, her mentor, Sunil Handa, inspired her to become an entrepreneur. She is inspired by several books, especially the biographies of *Helen Keller*, *Mahatma Gandhi* and *Steve Jobs*. After being a successful non-fiction writer for more than a decade, Bansal recently forayed into writing fiction. During the pandemic, she experimented with her writing and penned down some fiction stories. Her first book of short stories, *Saturday Stories*, released last year. Bansal felt it was quite liberating to purely use one's imagination, as opposed to creating a story based on facts. Around the same time, she started conducting online writing workshops, which received an enthusiastic response. Next, she is working on a non-fiction book on new-age philanthropists in India as well as a sequel to *Saturday Stories*.



ANJALI JAIPURIA

Educationist & Writer

By Neha Kirpal

Anjali Jaipuria is an educationist with a vision for fundamental change in the Indian educational system. She combines her love for Vedic wisdom and its relationship with the needs of economic, social and political conditions of today, thereby creating contemporary learning materials.

Jaipuria continues to study Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's evolutionary work, Integral Yoga and Educational Reforms, the Vedas, the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Since 2015, she has been teaching the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Isha Upanishad* and Sri Aurobindo's sonnets to a group of aspirants. She also speaks to students on spiritual topics like *Who Am I*, *How to connect to God*, *On Meditation* and other related issues.

Making fundamental changes

Two decades back, Jaipuria introduced educational reforms in Seth MR Jaipuria School based in Gomti Nagar, Lucknow—her passion and life's *raison d'être*. As a part of that, Sanskrit was introduced as a mandatory third language after English and Hindi, from nursery

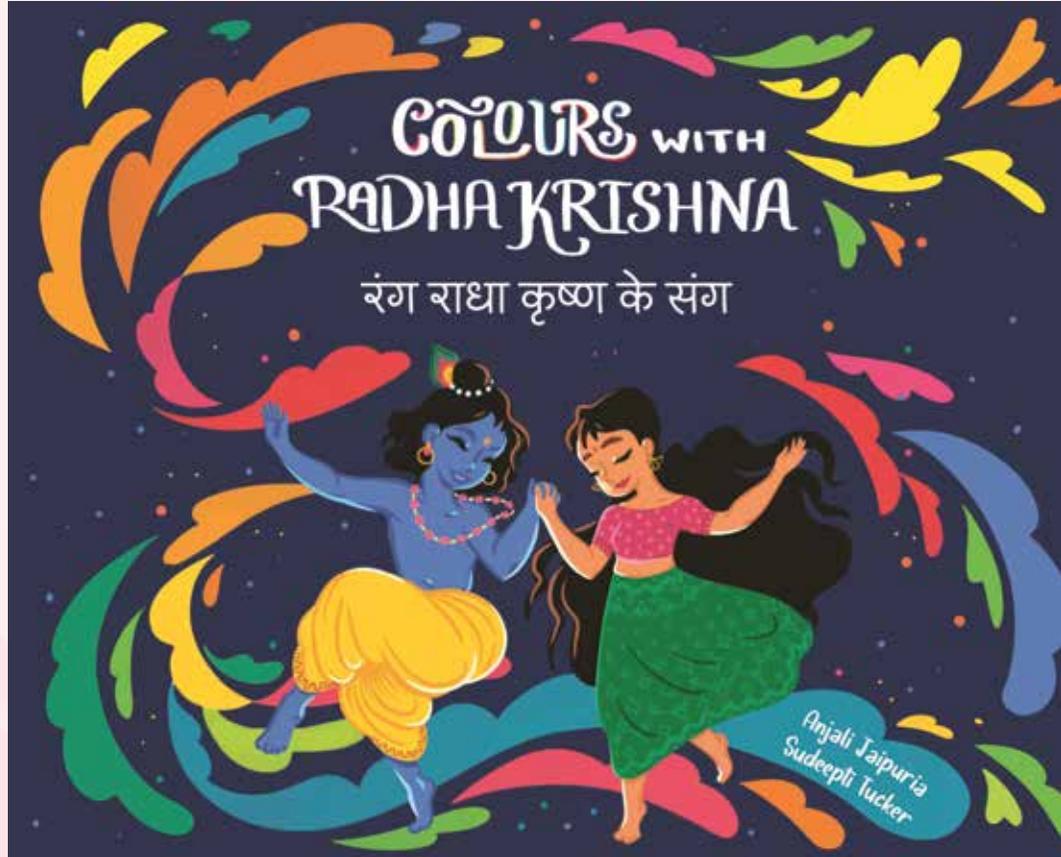
to Grade Eight in all the 55 branches of the school. Carving out so many periods a week from a super busy time-table and convincing the principal and parents was one of the initial hurdles. Further, finding and training Sanskrit teachers was the biggest challenge of all, for they had to first unlearn their rigid mode of prescriptive teaching and then learn the new method of making Sanskrit fun. "Looking back at life, I feel that the more difficult the challenge has been, the greater was the learning and inner growth it gave as a gift," she recalls.

Jaipuria has developed a conversational Sanskrit curriculum, which immerses students in Sanskrit in the early years through poetry, games, songs and dances. By the time children reach Grades Four and Five, they start falling in love with the language. "On the request of our students, Sanskrit has become an optional subject in Grades Nine and Ten (ICSE)—for the last three years," she smiles. The school has designed innovative projects to develop children's emotional quotient and turn them into responsible citizens who are constantly and consciously transforming themselves as well as the society around them. "We are, after all called, school of conscious transformation," she beams.

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The writing journey

As an author of several books on spiritual poetry, Jaipuria's writing journey began with an intense love for Shri Krishna. For many years, she wrote Hindi poems and letters about life, *moksha*, darkness, light and the four Shaktis. One such inspiration was to introduce colours and numbers to young children through a beautifully illustrated bilingual book, *Colours with Radha Krishna*; Rang Radha Krsna ke Sang, published by AdiDev Press. The picture book is a great primer on Radha and Krishna for young readers. Previously, Jaipuria had written Anmol Kavitaen, Hindi nursery rhymes for children between 5 and 8 years. "They give impetus to the intrinsic joy and playfulness in little children, besides exposing them to values which any home or school would like to nurture," she elaborates.



In 2014, Jaipuria began studying the Bhagavad Gita along with her study group called 'Quest'. What started as a joint study organically turned into talks on the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads and evolutionary science as expressed in the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Besides this, she also runs Navsrijan, an English medium school for under-served children in Lucknow to mainstream out-of-schoolchildren. "If you have a strong conviction about what you are doing, the Universe comes forward to set things right," she concludes. *

