

# The Tribune

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

## Women of worth

Three women, each from a different milieu and academic background, epitomise the spirit of the new-age professionals. Ready to take on challenges head on they show a way to carve a niche in a man's world



Through sheer perseverance and talent, Bimla Devi (extreme left) is an inspiration for her village, the weaving community, and artisans worldwide

### Artisan

#### Knotting glory

From the dusty roads of a sleepy Aaspura village in Raja carpet in Frankfurt, Germany, that is the distance travel Devi. This simple and non-assuming village belle may not have fancy degrees up her sleeve but she sure has mesmerised the world with the magic of her fingers.

Her story: A fighter who braved not only financial constraints due to her humble family background Bimla Devi also stood strong against the cruel blow of destiny when she lost her husband at a time when she was pregnant with her second child. With almost negligible education and virtually no means of sustaining her children, she turned to the traditional art of carpet weaving 15 yers ago.

What began as a means to cope with her pain, saw her become a part of the Jaipur Rugs family 10 years ago. This organisation is devoted to providing a better future to women carpet weavers from the under privileged sections of society. It works with close to 40,000 artisans in 600 village providing families with sustainable livelihood at their door steps. It was at Jaipur Rugs where she went from hand-knotting rugs using CAD maps to place her knots accordingly, to now, designing her own rugs from scratch. Of course, her first AO rug, Kamal, has gone off to win several awards including the German Design Award recently catapulting her to the league of world's best designers. Interestingly for her award-winning rug, the main inspiration was the commonly found village snack — shakkarpara.

Mentoring others like her: After returning from Frankfurt she went to Bikaner for a women-empowerment programme and is helping train and provide advice for a large group of women on focusing on quality of their work, ensuring they keep their promises of timely delivery, and taking ownership of both mistakes and successes. After her experience, she believes these are all qualities of good entrepreneurs and leaders.

A word of advice: Put in 100 per cent effort into whatever you choose to do and never lose confidence whatever the circumstances.

### Social Worker

#### All for a cause

Giving back to society and making a difference in the lives of those in need is a mission that is closely aligned with the nurturing and caring instinct of a woman. But it was the fire to contribute constructively and bring about change in the mindsets of people that drew Chandigarh-based Tajinder Kaur to social work. An accomplished Gurmat and Vaar singer, Tajinder had been invoved in social work since her college days. But not ready to confine herself to any particular area, she has kept the horizons of her work broad. Working with women from different strata of society she has been arranging legal and psychological aid for victims of domestic violence, physical abuse, acid victims. Apart from this she also organises events to instill confidence in women from the fringes. With her bold and motivating persona and tagline “Be the heroine of your life and not a victim”, she has been instrumental in launching projects for girl education, self-defence, plight of NRI brides etc over the years. Fashion events organised under the banner of Glitterati Fashion offer a platform to married and older women to showcase their talent.

Challenges: Getting cooperation from the official machinery is a major issue in cases of physical abuse. “Money is another major hurdle as without adequate financial support it is not possible to carry out all these activities”, she adds while sharing that she had found a way to use her hobby of singing to generate funds for her social work projects. She trains women in singing traditional and Punjabi folk songs that are popular in wedding functions.

### Entrepreneur

#### Jewel in the crown

She was the first woman in her family to have acquired a professional degree when she got her BTech in software engineering. Later, she also won a full scholarship from the University of Pittsburgh to research in the field of optical networks and joined, a high tech start-up in the US. But, to achieve her career goals Jagriti Shringi chose the completely different field of hand-crafted costume jewellery for her venture. Difficulties faced in picking up Indian jewellery for friends and acquaintances during their stay in USA, she and her husband saw an opportunity to start a company that would provide good quality products at affordable cost. From here started the journey of Voylla, one of the biggest jewelery brands at present.

“I have always been interested in fashion — especially in the way you could use technology to enhance the fashion experience”, she shares.

Though she had ventured into the entrepreneurial world alolong with her husband, yet for her the challenges and the risks were no less as the couple used their savings to make their dream a reality. She has been shouldering responsibilities in the venture with aplomb. Currently, as the CTO and CMOs in the industry, she takes active interest in product design, social media and creative campaigns as well. “One of my prized projects at the company, has been Studio Voylla, the line of premium, handcrafted jewellery, inspired by traditional art and crafts”, says Jagriti.

Challenges: At Voylla, the major challenge was to create a disruption in a largely unorganised market. We were one of the first brands to create and handcraft original designs, and we defied conventional wisdom in doing so. It has been a task to keep up with high standards of production and design differentiation in a market flooded by cheap Chinese imports and ‘me-too’ brands. The online marketplaces have also been affected by discount-driven marketing strategy, affecting consumer behaviour. Our strategy to go omni channel and stick to our core promise of creating affordable, exclusive hand-crafted jewelry has been our USP”.

On Women's Day: It is a day for reflection and action. To think about our journey so far and to set our sights on the future. To have meaningful dialogues with all the stakeholders in the empowerment of women, to work towards creating a healthy, happy society where women are secure, happy, healthy and lead a life of dignity.