

SHE... WE CHERISH

International Women's Day



With a lot of personalities in an industry, few have authenticity and strength to shine. One of such people is Nayana Karunaratne. She is an esteemed presence in the beauty industry and she has earned her name as a respected professional not just because of her skills and expertise but also because of her strict discipline, significant courage and strictness of values and ambition that can only be characterized as her determination to work and achieve success in her life.

Her career started when she was fourteen years old when she went with her mother to a wedding. There she first was introduced to the art of bridal beauty. Curiosity and interest which the young girl felt when she saw the bride being made ready led to an invitation by the celebrated beautician Janet Balasuriya to take her next beauty course when Nayana had her first lesson. It is on this chance that Nayana made her first official moves into the

world of beauty when she was fifteen years old and made the daring move of dropping out of school to follow her dream.

But this was not the way that was embraced. The given decision made her mother disappointed and angry at first. But Nayana did not give in, however, to the opposition. This was one statement by her mother which caused her a permanent impression: 'You must become world-class qualified. These words came to be a challenge and a guide. Nayana later proved that expectation and made her mother proud of her excellence, discipline and achievement.

Interestingly, she too had a great passion for dancing and had to make a tough decision between two loves. The resultant effect of this was that beauty became her vocation. She was born in a family of academic professionals, and she was the so-called "star" of the family in regard to taking a creative and entrepreneurial career. Her mother and Janet, who became her mentor and employer give her much credit regarding the success she achieved. The influence that Janet had was not only professional advice, but she was inspirational as well, being a powerful woman who was a mother to five kids and was able to establish her career.

Nayana received a foreign exposure because of training and experience in foreign countries such as England. She feels that humility is the hallmark of the truly world-class professionals, which she believes in strongly. She has

Nayana Karunaratne: A Journey of Passion, Discipline and Purpose

gone through a lot of hardships, personal and professional, since setting up her first salon on March 1st, 1980. However, she also stresses that challenges come on a daily basis and the only thing that is important is to know how to deal with them in a wise and calm manner.

She is straightforward and honest, and she has been attacked quite a number of times. Others have claimed that she is too forthcoming or that her association should work in other ways. But she does not betray her uprightness. She



give guidance, children would get lost and the society should come forward to take the role of mentoring them.

Being a wife and a mother, Nayana understands that life is always about good and bad. She is analytical in every situation, and reacts patiently, respectfully and understandingly. She is a firm supporter of modern

technology in education, with such innovations as artificial intelligence, but values and character should be placed at the forefront.

When looking into her past life she is happy to mention that her moral values were very strong due to her family. She wishes strongly that as much as mothers are nurturing, the fathers also have a deep responsibility in planning the life of their children. According to her, it is necessary to support each other in the family to be successful.

She is telling the younger generation that it is not hard, but rather very deep to nurture honesty, respect, character, and knowledge. She ends meekly by stating that she is a life long learner, which she not only learns through books, but through life.



thinks that honesty may be misunderstood, but in the long run, it is a way of gaining respect. Instead of getting discouraged with the opposition, she dwells on solutions and positive thinking.

A particularly heart-touching story that she shared was of a young student who was a university graduate and who had got into negative habits. She helped him change his attitude and get back on a disciplined way through encouragement, prayer and maintain a positive outlook at all times. She is of the opinion that in case parents fail to

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2026

"GIVE TO GAIN"



International Women's Day is celebrated every year on 8th March to honor the achievements of women and to remind the world about the importance of gender equality.

The theme for International Women's Day 2026 is "Give to Gain." This theme teaches us that when we give support, respect, opportunities, and care to women and girls, everyone in society benefits. When women grow stronger, families, schools, and communities also grow stronger.

In Sri Lanka, women play an important role as mothers, teachers, leaders, doctors, farmers, and workers. Supporting women means giving them equal chances in education, safety, leadership, and decision-making.

On this special day, we can show our respect by:

- Encouraging girls' education
- Respecting women's opinions
- Helping women in need
- Saying thank you to mothers, teachers, and women leaders

When we give, we gain a better and fairer world.

Ms. Harshini Perera
Teacher
Lyceum International School Nugegoda

"The Green Runway"

A Zonta Club II of Colombo Initiative for Zonta Yellow Rose Month



programs, and Awareness campaigns addressing Violence Against Women and Emotional Abuse.

The Green Runway will showcase a creative collection featuring Dumbara Weaves, natural dyes, traditional materials, and heritage crafts thoughtfully adapted into contemporary designs. Presented by Sarita, Nelun Harasagama, AOD, Moratuwa University, Lili Natural by Subodha, Dona Couture by Omali. The program promises to be both inspiring and enjoyable for all who attend, while offering the opportunity to support initiatives that empower women across Sri Lanka.

sponsors: Commercial Bank (Gold Sponsor); LCME and University of West London (Silver Sponsors); Abans and AIA Insurance (Bronze Sponsors), along with valued well-wishers and print partners Daily Mirror, Sunday Times, Hi, and Sirkatha.

By attending The Green Runway, guests become part of a meaningful journey—celebrating sustainability, supporting women entrepreneurs, and strengthening communities. Tickets Available at "Fringe by Nayana", Grand Floor, Marino Mall, Colombo 3.

The yellow rose, Zonta's longstanding symbol of friendship, invites us each year to pause and celebrate the remarkable women and girls whose generosity, resilience, and leadership bring our mission to life. It is also a moment to reflect on Zonta's enduring commitment to empowering women and building a more equitable world.

stories reflect trust in Zonta's vision and confidence in the power of collective giving. As Zontians in Sri Lanka, we were privileged to lead a program supporting entrepreneurial women whose livelihoods were adversely affected by Cyclone DITWAH. Initiated in December 2025, this collective effort helped more than 25 women rebuild and restart their businesses, enabling them to move forward with renewed hope and independence. Each of these women stands as a powerful inspiration.

In celebration of Zonta Yellow Rose Month, Zonta Club II of Colombo will present "The Green Runway", a special program highlighting environmentally conscious and sustainable products. The event will be held on 29th March at Cinnamon Grand, from 10.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

Together, donors, beneficiaries, and awardees form the living legacy of Zonta's impact. Their

Funds raised through The Green Runway will help extend this important initiative and strengthen the club's ongoing service and advocacy programs. These include Menstrual Care initiatives, Cancer Comfort Cushions, Safe Drinking Water projects, counselling and youth development

Zonta Club II of Colombo gratefully acknowledges the generous support of its



SHE... WE CHERISH

International Women's Day



"We as women are capable of every labour. We have the capacity for resilience and diligence in our work that allows us to do anything. I am very proud to be a woman and to have the capacity to continue whatever I want. You have to hold on to your inspiration and stay motivated throughout the process to achieve that goal. It's only your willingness that will take you forward, not anyone else's. If you have a target, then you must fight to achieve it."

By Imaaya Perera

Taking the beauty industry by storm, British Cosmetics is set to remain a staple in Sri Lanka's cosmetics landscape. Focusing on the wellness and care of customers over the rising demand for quick fixes and tawdry workmanship within the industry. After speaking with Ms Nirosha Jagodaarachchi, CEO and Co-founder of British Cosmetics, we gained deeper insight into the company's operations. Identifying her goals and aspirations for the future, as well as the key factors she considers in maintaining a global brand like this. Taking note of her passion and tenacity as she spoke about her initial vision for the company and her hopes for its future, and acknowledging the challenges she and other female entrepreneurs in the same repertoire face. "I've been doing this professionally for 25 years. After I finished my A/Levels, I went into merchandising - at a time when the garment industry was **the thing** - and wellness and appearance have been a passion of mine ever since."

At a time when appearance and wellness were far less pronounced than today's trajectory, Ms Nirosha learned from a young age to appreciate the value of caring about one's appearance, taking inspiration from her mother. She identified the demand for a resurgence in the beauty industry, transforming it from a mere cosmetics industry into a broader, more wellness-oriented brand focused on quality and care. As much as we like to think otherwise, appearances matter, and we must work to cultivate ourselves, maintaining a fresh and healthy image that is both empowering and transformative. This has less to do with daily cosmetic use and more with the ongoing improvement of one's health and wellness through skin care.

"I was really inspired by that note, bordering on the slogan to **look good and feel good.**"

Having received her education and training in beauty culture in both Sri Lanka and London, Ms Nirosha stated that this accumulation of both local and international training helped her understand how to gauge the exact quality of the product and the exact formulas that go into it. This allowed her to take an active and informed role in the product design process, ensuring that each item met international standards.

When discussing the groundwork of the business, Ms Nirosha outlined the key factors she believed helped her, as an entrepreneur, establish such a well-endorsed and sustainable brand.

"We are all inspired by the brands of the world; any profession is like that, we see success and become inspired by it. Not only imitating that success, but also individualising it, takes a lot of commitment, resilience, and determination. All that glamour you see in the front is but a facade compared to the effort and work put in behind the scenes. It's very important to acknowledge the grind and stay motivated throughout the process. This will help you endure any challenge that comes your way."

Leaning into the topic of challenges, she spoke at length about the many personal obstacles she herself faced as a rising entrepreneur in Sri Lanka. She spoke about the many changes in the industry over the years, particularly the transparency in brands' ethical practices. She emphasised the importance of this clause and how crucial it is to maintain a good reputation in business. She stated that brand transparency is not simply the assurance that an item is good, but rather good governance in the workforce that ensures authentic, verifiable products. 25 years ago, this was not exercised at all. While this is slowly improving now, she said it wasn't the case in those days, which posed a challenge for her as she attempted to rectify it through her own brand.

Furthermore, she also spoke about the significant underrepresentation of women

"LOOK GOOD AND FEEL GOOD"

THE PROCESS BEHIND THE GLOBAL BRAND

MS NIROSHA JAGODARACHCHI



"We are accountable for our own product. We must have confidence to promote it."

"British Cosmetics is the parent company. We have many different umbrellas under it."

holding senior leadership roles in the industry, making her job as CEO a pivotal shift in the patriarchal dynamics of the workforce.

"Only a limited number of women would have been there at the time as female entrepreneurs, and it is not easy. I am, however, blessed to say that I have a reliable support system that has helped cushion the impacts of the challenges. It is very important to remember that running a business is a team effort. My husband and colleagues have always been very supportive of me, and through their support, I can achieve my goals."

Ms Nirosha was not afraid to emphasise the importance of foundational labour before achieving success. Recalling how she used to pick up her own orders and transport inventory to stores during the early years of the business. From billing, customer care, and managerial tasks, she spoke about how this hands-on approach allowed her business to expand sustainably, ensuring consistent results rather than the quick-fix attitude adopted by many other companies.

"British Cosmetics is the parent company. We have many different umbrellas under it. We have nail studios, the academy, and manufacturing. Our

hope as a company was to standardise the international brand in the Sri Lankan market. We are the forerunners of nail technology in the country. Even now, our nail practices are some of the best in the world due to the training we receive from some of the best people in the world."

Having travelled abroad and seen firsthand the opportunities of the global market, Ms Nirosha identified the gap between our local manufacturing and international products. This

cultivation of global knowledge and the integration of international standards are passions she has pursued through her work with the academy. She recounted the resistance encountered when these innovative products were introduced to the market, highlighting the importance of continued growth and adaptability within the industry if it hopes to maintain any standing in the global market.

"What I want to do is expand this knowledge right throughout the country. There is still a significant gap between standards, and the country is even more of a vacuum. This is a growing market, and as a very small part of it, we need to ensure growth and improvement in standards if we wish to expand any further in the future."

She went on to talk about her own products and the manufacturing process behind their success. Stating that every product is a year-long process, perfected and tested by her and her staff before it is even accessible to any marketing platform for promotion. Detailing their attention on case studies, manufacturing design and understanding the science of a product coupled with consumer demand.

"We don't take any shortcuts when it comes to the process. In terms of professionalism, product development, and staff and education, we always ensure the quality of our work. It's lengthy, but I've never been inclined to mushroom things at any point in my career. This is the only way you can ensure long-term sustainability and not just short-term popularity."

The beauty industry in itself has both its pros and cons. Influencing our body image and perspective on attractiveness. As a major brand, Ms Nirosha spoke about the importance of transparency and authenticity in advertising and commercialising certain products and lifestyles. Highlighting the fact that it is their duty as a part of the industry to promote a healthy and sustainable body image for their consumers to move away from toxic beauty standards that are both harmful and demoralising.

"Awareness is a key factor when it comes to this. When promoting a certain way of living, quality must never be questioned. This does not mean only the result is put under a microscope; it also means ensuring the entire manufacturing process complies with standards. This is where good products come out. This is a good note for celebrities and influencers who are endorsing brands. As a company, we ensure that all products advertised through influencers have been tested and used by them before they promote them to their viewers. This ensures maximum authenticity and safety for all consumers."

She added to this by saying, "I believe that there is no point in endorsing a brand that you yourself would never wear." Having said that, she herself has gradually built up to creating her look and skincare entirely around her own inventory.

"We are accountable for our own product. We must have confidence to promote it."

She concluded by advising any new up-and-coming entrepreneurs on their process. Acknowledging Sri Lanka as a booming hub of innovation and experimentation. She emphasised its obstacles, particularly those faced by women hoping to enter into any business. She praised the trajectory of new female leaders and the influence of women in business.

"We as women are capable of every labour. We have the capacity for resilience and diligence in our work that allows us to do anything. I am very proud to be a woman and to have the capacity to continue whatever I want. You have to hold on to your inspiration and stay motivated throughout the process to achieve that goal. It's only your willingness that will take you forward, not anyone else's. If you have a target, then you must fight to achieve it."

She criticised the lack of female influence in most workspaces, particularly in Sri Lanka, stating that her company is primarily women-oriented, with almost 75% of its staff female, most in top managerial positions, and hopes that this equation will continue with other corporates as well, maintaining a good balance of equality and inclusivity.

"We as women need to recognise our value in spaces such as this. We have such a capacity for greatness, and all we need is a little push to understand our value. This new culture of awareness and women's empowerment within businesses will always be an aspiration of mine and something I will always continue to endorse. I strongly believe that being a woman in business will always be a strength rather than a weakness."



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Redefining Independent, Unstoppable Strength Through Passion, Purpose, and Perseverance

On this International Women's Day, we celebrate women who quietly rewrite their own stories women like Sherine Ratnam, the visionary behind Artistic Nail Studio, whose journey is a testament to resilience, courage, and self belief.



Artistic Nail Studio

by Sherine Ratnam



Sherine Ratnam
Managing Director

Sherine began her career at just 17, freshly qualified in beauty therapy, stepping into the industry with determination far beyond her years. Her early training under renowned beauty expert Nayana Karunaratne instilled in her a discipline that would later become the backbone of her success.

Moving to the Middle East as a young professional, she embraced the challenge of salon management, sharpening not only her technical skills but also her leadership abilities.

Returning to Sri Lanka in 2012

marked a turning point.

A meeting with Nilanthi Weerasinghe introduced her to the world of nail artistry an industry that would soon become her passion and purpose. Over seven years as a brand manager and educator, Sherine immersed herself in education, professionalism, and brand building. Yet behind the polished exterior were long hours, financial pressure, and moments of doubt. "Passion opens the door," she reflects, "but discipline and structure are what keep it open."

As a woman entrepreneur, Sherine faced the unspoken expectation to "figure it out quietly." Instead, she chose growth over fear, learning to ask for support while staying firm in her vision.

When she finally established Artistic Nail Studio, it was more than a business it was a space built on respect, opportunity, and empowerment. For Sherine, nail care is not just about beauty; it is about confidence. A perfectly polished set of nails can transform how a woman carries herself, turning a simple glance at her hands into a

reminder of strength and self expression.

Today, she empowers her team through training, mentorship, and financial independence, helping young women believe in their own potential. Her message this International Women's Day is simple yet powerful: believe in yourself, even when the journey feels slow and uncertain. Every small step matters.

Because when a woman chooses to stand tall, she does not rise alone she lifts others with her.



GLOW

YOUTHFULLY ON THIS WOMEN'S DAY!

Today's woman is unstoppable. She leads, nurtures, creates, and inspires—all while balancing the fast pace of modern life. Yet beauty today is no longer about perfection; it is about confidence, self-care, and feeling strong from the inside out. This Women's Day is the perfect moment to celebrate not just what women do, but how they feel—empowered, glowing, and proud of who they are. Health should be the number one priority in life. It also helps you enjoy life to the fullest.



In the rush of daily life, women tend to put themselves last. Careers, families, responsibilities everything else comes first. Skin care routines are rushed, meals are skipped, and rest becomes a luxury. Over time, this neglect shows up as dull skin, fine lines, wrinkles, dryness, and a tired reflection in the mirror.

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On International Women's Day, we celebrate women who do not simply follow opportunity but create it. Women who leave comfort behind, cross borders, and build something meaningful from vision alone. Nathalie Pujolle, founder of Baguette French Bakery in 2016, embodies that spirit of courage and reinvention. Raised in Nîmes, in the South of France, Nathalie grew up in a family where food was sacred. Meals were not rushed, they were gatherings. Fresh produce came from the family garden. Grapes were harvested for wine. Dishes like *gardianne de taureau* (bull wine stew) and *bouillabaisse* (rockfish soup) were prepared days ahead for celebrations that stretched from noon into the evening.



Nathalie Pujolle
Founding Director
Baguette (Pvt) Ltd

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Yet her professional path began far from the kitchen.

For two decades, Nathalie built a corporate career in finance in Tokyo, a global culinary capital where service and innovation are unequalled elsewhere. The structure, discipline, and exposure to international business shaped her strategic thinking. But despite stability and achievement, she felt something missing. One morning, looking at herself in the mirror before work, she realised she could no longer trade passion for security. In her forties, she made a decision many fear to make: she chose to begin again. She enrolled at Le Cordon Bleu, a French culinary school established in 1895, immersing herself in the precision of French pastry. It was humbling to shift from executive to student, yet it reignited her creativity and reconnected her to her roots.

In 2015, she arrived in Sri Lanka determined to establish the country's first authentic French bakery. The early years were intensely challenging. Sourdough bread, with its crusty exterior and natural fermentation, was unfamiliar to customers used to softer loaves. Pure butter croissants were sometimes perceived as overbaked, because authentic butter produces a deep golden colour. Nathalie understood she was not just introducing products, but educating a market.

She built the business from scratch: creating supply

chains, hiring local staff able to handle French techniques, testing recipes repeatedly, and listening carefully to customer feedback without compromising authenticity. Starting with just two employees, Baguette French Bakery gradually grew into a team of over thirty, including franchise outlets. Nathalie credits her early production team, especially her first hired baker, for standing by her during uncertain years and for still working at Baguette French Bakery today. Their loyalty became the backbone of the brand. Also Nathalie is blessed to have immensely helpful and supportive Sri Lankan friends who have always been there throughout her journey. The love of food has brought her wonderful human experiences and lifetime friendships.

Her leadership style is collaborative and performance focused. She works closely with her team, setting high standards while remaining approachable. Integrity, innovation, and accountability guide her decisions. She believes a business is only as strong as the people within it.

Importantly, Nathalie has built Baguette French Bakery as a space where women are respected, valued, equally treated and remunerated, and encouraged to grow. Female employees are given opportunities to learn, lead, and advance. At Baguette French Bakery, growth comes from commitment and consistency. Those

who show dedication, take ownership of their responsibilities, and demonstrate loyalty to the vision are the ones who rise. Gender does not determine opportunity, effort and commitment do.

For Nathalie, economic independence is a powerful tool for women. She understands that when a woman earns, she gains not just income but dignity, security, and a stronger voice within her family and community. She fosters an environment where women feel safe, heard, and professionally respected, supporting them with flexibility and fairness, especially when balancing work and family.

As a foreign entrepreneur in a male-dominated industry, Nathalie faced unique challenges. She often felt seen first as an outsider before being recognised as a businesswoman, yet she never allowed that to define her. Over time, as the brand gained recognition and trust, respect followed. The pandemic tested her resilience deeply. When lockdowns restricted movement, she personally delivered bread across Colombo. It was more about honouring commitment than maintaining revenues.

Word of mouth strengthened the brand during this period, and many customers still remember those deliveries with gratitude.

Today, success means something very different to Nathalie than it did during her corporate years. It means self-financing expansion, and being invited for collaborations. Most importantly, it means watching Sri Lankan customers embrace authentic French quality, a high sense of customer experience and service. Looking ahead, her vision remains clear: she wants more people across the island to experience traditional French bakery craftsmanship while staying true to the values that built her brand.

On this Women's Day, Nathalie reflects on the power of work in shaping women's independence. She honours her mother, who survived wartime hardship, raised three children while working full time, and later became an entrepreneur. She also admires courageous French women like Lucie Aubrac or Marcelle Henry, whose bravery during the Resistance symbolised quiet but unshakeable strength.

Her message to Sri Lanka is sincere: **educate daughters and encourage them to work. Economic independence strengthens families and society.**

Baguette French Bakery is more than a bakery. It is the story of a woman who dared to reinvent herself, who built a business through discipline and heart, and who continues to uplift women as she rises.

By Raviesha Ranathunge

Bonjour



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Nathalie Pujolle
French Founding Director
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SHE... WE CHERISH

International Women's Day



AN UNSTOPPABLE WOMAN WHO TRANSFORMED HER DREAMS INTO REALITY



Nilanka Deshani Alwis
Founder

“Ladies, never settle for disrespect, being undervalued, or anything that hinders your growth. Be authentic, be fearless, and honor yourself. Let your own strength inspire you, because self-love is your greatest power. Step into spaces where you are celebrated, not merely tolerated.”

Nilanka Deshani Alwis is living proof that passion, perseverance, and self-belief can transform dreams into reality. As the Founder of Foodie by Deshani Alwis, launched in 2016, she turned her lifelong love for cooking and baking into a thriving culinary venture, inspiring countless women along the way.

Before embracing entrepreneurship, Deshani built her career in the corporate sector. While she excelled professionally, she felt a quiet yet persistent calling to create something of her own. From childhood, she possessed a natural flair for cooking and baking, but it was her courage to

pursue that passion despite challenges that truly set her apart.

Corporate life was not without its trials. She encountered individuals who attempted to undermine her and faced environments where her potential was questioned. Rather than allowing these experiences to discourage her, she used them as fuel to strengthen her resilience and sharpen her sense of purpose.

Motherhood became her driving force, not a limitation. As a proud mother of two, Deshani skillfully balanced family life while building her

business from the ground up. A constant pillar of strength throughout her journey has been her husband, **Mr. Tharindu Ranaweera**, whose encouragement and steadfast support played a significant role in the growth of her business. His belief in her vision empowered her to move forward with confidence during both challenging and triumphant moments.

Starting with nothing more than her knowledge and passion, Deshani steadily expanded her expertise and offerings. Today, Foodie by Deshani Alwis presents an impressive array of culinary delights from cakes, biriyani, and yellow rice

to cookies, teatime treats, preservative foods, and comprehensive catering services. Each creation reflects her dedication, creativity, and heartfelt commitment to excellence.

Along her journey, there were voices of doubt that questioned her ability to succeed. Yet Deshani chose to listen to her inner strength. She firmly believes that her achievements stem from self-confidence, self-motivation, and self-love. **Her greatest role model is herself**, the woman who endured mental, physical, and emotional challenges and emerged stronger.

Nilanka Deshani Alwis is more than an entrepreneur; she is a symbol of courage, resilience, and empowerment. Her story is a powerful reminder that when a woman believes in herself, no obstacle is insurmountable and that true success begins with honoring your own strength.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: THE STRENGTH WE CARRY EVERY DAY & THE SPACE WE DESERVE

THERE IS SOMETHING POWERFUL ABOUT A WOMAN WHO KEEPS GOING

Not the loud, dramatic kind of power we see in movies. Not always the kind that makes headlines. But the quiet, everyday strength that wakes up before sunrise, packs lunches, answers emails, manages expectations, calms storms, and still finds the energy to smile.

International Women's Day is not just about celebration. It is about recognition. It is about pausing for a moment to truly see women not as roles, not as titles, but as human beings carrying invisible weights with remarkable grace.

Every woman has a story. Some are stories of ambition and achievement. Others are stories of survival. Some are stories of rebuilding after loss. Many are stories that will never be fully told.

A young girl learning to believe her voice matters.

A mother balancing the dreams she once had with the dreams she now carries for her children.

A professional fighting twice as hard to prove she belongs in the room.

A caregiver who gives and gives until she forgets what rest feels like.

Strength in women is often misunderstood. It is not the absence of fear. It is moving

forward despite fear. It is holding yourself together in public and allowing yourself to break down in private and still rising again the next day. It is choosing dignity when faced with disrespect. It is choosing growth even when comfort feels safer.

International Women's Day also reminds us that progress did not happen overnight. Rights were not handed over politely. Opportunities were not always offered kindly. They were fought for sometimes loudly, sometimes quietly by women who refused to accept limitations placed upon them.

Because of them, doors opened. Because of them, conversations began. Because of them, young girls today can dream a little bigger.

Yet, beyond movements and milestones, what makes women extraordinary is something much simpler. It is resilience.

The ability to adapt when life changes suddenly.

The ability to nurture others while still trying to nurture oneself.

The ability to rebuild after heartbreak, failure, or loss.

The ability to love deeply, even after disappointment.

In today's world, women are entrepreneurs, engineers, artists, teachers, leaders, athletes, scientists, and policymakers. But they are also daughters, sisters, friends, partners, and mentors. And often, they are many of these things all at once.

The modern woman carries ambition in one hand and responsibility in the other. She dreams big but worries quietly. She supports others even when she herself feels uncertain. She celebrates others while still working on believing in her own worth. She shows up for everyone else, even on days when she feels unseen.

International Women's Day should not be reduced to flowers and social media captions. It should be a reminder that equality is not a favour, it is a right. Respect is not optional, it is fundamental. Opportunity should not depend on gender, it should depend on ability, commitment, and passion.

But beyond what the world owes women, there is something women owe themselves.

Compassion.

Patience.

Belief.

You do not have to be perfect to be powerful.

You do not have to be fearless to be brave.

You do not have to carry everything alone.

If there is one message to hold close on this day, it is this:

Your voice matters.

Your dreams are valid.

Your rest is important.

Your boundaries are healthy.

Your journey does not need to look like anyone else's.

And here is my advice to every woman reading this:

Do not shrink yourself to fit into spaces that were never designed for you. Expand. Speak. Take up space. Invest in your growth. Protect your peace. Celebrate your progress even the small, unseen victories. Stop apologizing for wanting more. Stop doubting the strength that has already carried you this far.

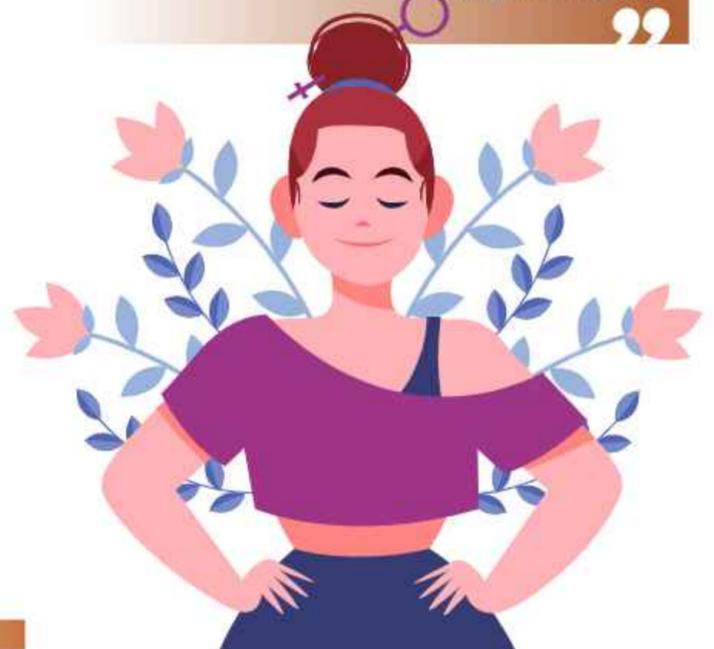
When the world feels heavy, remember that you come from generations of women who survived far worse and still found reasons to hope. That same strength lives in you.

You are not just part of the story.

You are the strength that keeps it moving forward.

By Raviesha Ranathunge

SUPERWOMEN FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHT





Bandaragama

WHERE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS MEET SRI LANKAN LEISURE

“

A short distance exit in Bandaragam Colombo, tucked away in the calm surroundings near the Southern Expressway, lies a destination that is quietly redefining leisure in Sri Lanka. Pearl Bay is not just another leisure park, it is a carefully envisioned project born from passion, precision, and a desire to give Sri Lankans a world-class experience without ever having to board a flight.”



Mr. Gribson
CEO & Executive Director

The story of Pearl Bay begins with the vision of Mr. David Pieris, President of the David Pieris Group of Companies. His ambition was simple yet bold: create an international-standard leisure destination in Sri Lanka that offers the kind of experiences people would normally travel to Dubai, Singapore, or Malaysia to enjoy. What began as an FIA/CIK-certified karting circuit soon evolved into something much bigger.

Karting, while thrilling, appealed to a niche audience. Families accompanying racing enthusiasts needed more ways to spend their time. That realization sparked the expansion into a full-scale leisure park, culminating in SplashBay the water-based attraction that has now become the heart of Pearl Bay.

Construction began in 2018. Like many large-scale developments, it faced delays due to the pandemic and global economic challenges. Yet, resilience prevailed. On January 26, 2023, Pearl Bay officially opened its gates to the public a milestone marking years of meticulous planning and execution. What truly sets Pearl Bay

apart is its commitment to international standards. The park was developed under the guidance of TÜV NORD, a globally recognized certification body that worked closely with the team for five years, advising on everything from slide positioning to safety protocols. The water slides were manufactured and commissioned by Arihant Industrial Corporation Limited, a leading Indian company known for installing water parks across Europe. Every detail from structure to supervision reflects European safety and quality benchmarks.

SplashBay spans four towers, two pools, and 16 water slides catering to varying thrill levels. Among its standout attractions is an 88-meter gravity drop slide delivering a six-second adrenaline rush, a 120-meter loop-hole slide, and a 40-meter mat racer slide. A dedicated kiddies' water play structure ensures younger visitors enjoy their own safe adventure zone.

But safety is more than a checklist at Pearl Bay. It is a culture. The park employs 36 Sri Lanka Life Saving Association-certified lifeguards, many of whom bring overseas training

experience. Every morning before the park opens, the maintenance team physically inspects each slide, walking from top to bottom to check for even the smallest irregularity. Nuts, bolts, surfaces nothing goes unchecked. Before guests enter, the operations team tests the slides themselves.

Water quality is monitored every hour exceeding the international norm of three-hour intervals. Onsite testing ensures optimal hygiene, while preventive maintenance safeguards both guests and staff. Swimsuits are compulsory, and clear grooming guidelines help maintain cleanliness and safety standards throughout the park.

Pearl Bay's appeal, however, extends beyond water thrills. Spread across 23 acres, the park comprises multiple activity zones. SpeedBay houses the karting track, along with The Paddock Restaurant a two-storey dining venue with track views and seating for 220 guests. Its multi-purpose hall is frequently used for birthdays, meetings, and corporate functions.

TargetBay features a five-lane air rifle shooting range, while ArrowBay offers archery experiences for both beginners and enthusiasts. YumBay is home to Titan Restaurant, which seats 300 guests and serves everything from burgers and fish and chips to pastas, set menus, cakes, and desserts, all prepared under strict hygienic standards and Halal-certified practices. The recently introduced WellnessBay has added Garra Rufa Doctor Fish therapy, offering a relaxing and revitalizing fish pedicure experience.

Increasingly, Pearl Bay has become a preferred venue for corporate outings and team-building events. With the capacity to host up to 3,500 guests and on several occasions accommodating groups nearing 4,000 it stands out as one of the few venues in Sri Lanka capable of managing large-scale exclusive reservations. Companies are drawn not only by the facilities but by the curated team-building programs that include group challenges, archery competitions, shooting contests, and structured recreational games alongside regular park access.

Importantly, Pearl Bay maintains a single pricing structure for both locals and foreigners, making it accessible and inclusive. Partnerships with 12 banks provide discounts ranging from 25% to 35%, while group bookings benefit from further tailored pricing. Annual passes also offer unlimited access and exclusive perks throughout the year.

Behind Pearl Bay stands the strength and credibility of the David Pieris Group of Companies a trusted Sri Lankan conglomerate with over 30 years of excellence across multiple sectors. Operated under David Pieris Racing & Leisure Pvt Ltd and David Pieris Leisure Pvt Ltd, Pearl Bay reflects the Group's broader philosophy long-term value creation rather than short-term profit. The venture was never solely

about revenue it was about building infrastructure that nurtures talent, enhances lifestyle, and raises national standards in leisure and recreation.

Today, as Sri Lanka steadily rebuilds its economy and social vibrancy, Pearl Bay represents more than entertainment. It symbolizes confidence, a belief that world-class experiences can be created right here at home. Families come to unwind, children take a break from demanding school routines, and corporate teams rediscover camaraderie in an environment built on safety, service, and shared joy.

At its core, Pearl Bay is driven by a simple but powerful idea Sri Lankans deserve the best and they deserve it here.

David Pieris Group of Companies



Powered by David Pieris Group of Companies

Pearl Bay Leisure Park

WOMEN'S DAY SPECIAL

5 DAYS CELEBRATION!
MARCH 8, 10, 11, 12 & 13
GIVE JOY. GAIN MEMORIES.

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BUY 2, GET 1 FREE WATERPARK TICKETS
EXCLUSIVELY FOR LADIES!

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SHE... WE CHERISH

International Women's Day



THE UNSTOPPABLE JOURNEY OF A WOMAN

BY SHARADHA DE SARAM

International Women's Day is celebrated each year on March 8. This year's theme, "Give to Gain," highlights the value of generosity.

Whether we interpret it as giving in cash or kind, volunteering time, or sharing one's skills, each act of generosity creates a positive impact on individuals, communities, and organizations. When we gain, we are inspired to give again, setting in motion a cycle of empowerment and growth.



For Sasikumar Padmini, as for many women disadvantaged by gender, gender bias was something she accepted as both a cultural and social norm. Growing up as a young girl in the hill country, she often heard others dismiss her as useless simply because she was a girl. The turning point came when she married. On receiving his very first salary, her husband placed it in her hands and said, "Take my salary and do the best for our family" - a gesture of empowerment that Padmini had not previously experienced. That simple act strengthened Padmini's self-belief. From that moment on, there was no turning back. When women are entrusted with responsibility, they thrive—and their communities

rise with them.

Padmini was first introduced to the trustees of The Sunshine Charity in 2013, when she was selected as one of four women to participate in an Organizational Development Grant programme aimed at strengthening systems, structures, and policies within the Human Resource segment. She showed remarkable commitment and enthusiasm at every workshop she attended. At the end of the two-year programme, she secured employment as a child-carer at a small-town day care facility in the Central Province.

As the Sunshine Day Care expanded and enrolment grew, the

trustees interviewed Padmini for the position of Assistant Teacher. What followed was a steady progression: teacher training workshops, a course in pre-school education at the Open University in the Eastern Province, and eventually a Diploma in Early Childhood Development and Preschool Education awarded by the Centre for External Degrees of the Eastern University. Her journey became unstoppable. When the Sunshine Day Care formally registered as a pre-school, Padmini was appointed Head Teacher.

Padmini's is an exemplary journey and a remarkable story worthy of celebration on International Women's Day.



Being awarded the Advance Certificate in in Preschool Education from the Open University, Batticaloa in 2023



Receiving the Advance Certificate in in Preschool Education from the Open University in 2025



Receiving an award from the former Governor

"GIVE TO GAIN

THE JOURNEY OF A COMPLETE WOMAN"



From Chance to Craft: A Journey of Creativity and Determination
Sometimes the most remarkable journeys begin with the most unexpected encounters. What started as a chance meeting with a high-profile exporter in India turned into the beginning of a unique entrepreneurial story—one that proves passion and determination can overcome even the absence of prior experience.

With no background in the field, she stepped into the world of textiles driven purely by curiosity and courage. Inspired by the beauty and potential of handcrafted designs, she began experimenting with distinctive prints on 100% cotton fabric. What followed was a journey of discovery, persistence, and creativity.

Word of her work

soon began to spread, not through formal marketing channels, but through the power of friendship and personal networks. Friends and well-wishers shared news of the elegant cotton creations, and gradually a wider circle began to take notice. The appeal was simple yet powerful: unique prints that could bring a sense of charm, warmth, and sophistication to everyday living spaces.

Her creations focused on home essentials that combine practicality with aesthetic appeal. Beautifully designed tablecloths became the centerpiece of dining tables, complemented by matching serviettes, placemats, and kitchen towels. Together, these pieces transformed ordinary dining spaces into inviting settings filled with color and style.

Beyond their practical use, these



items also emerged as thoughtful and elegant gift choices—perfect for housewarmings, celebrations, and special occasions.

What makes the journey even more inspiring is that it has largely been the effort of a single individual. Building a

small but distinctive brand, maintaining quality, and nurturing customer relationships required dedication and resilience. Every step—from design and production to promotion and sales—was shaped by perseverance and a belief in the beauty of handcrafted simplicity.

Today, what began as an accidental introduction to a new industry has evolved into a fulfilling entrepreneurial venture. It stands as a reminder that opportunity often arrives unexpectedly, and when embraced with courage and creativity, it can lead to remarkable destinations.

It has been a long journey—one marked by determination, learning, and the quiet satisfaction of turning a simple idea into something that brightens homes and lives.



SHE REWROTE

HER OWN PRESCRIPTION: A WOMEN'S DAY

Story of Rejuvenation, Resilience, Culinary Genius & Empowering Women to Rise Again

On most evenings, by five o'clock, the lights come on and the doors open. By nine, sometimes even earlier, the response from customers has been so overwhelming that the most popular items are quickly snapped up. Children pose excitedly with glossy, structured desserts shaped like Capybaras and bunnies. Families sit around tables where dosa is plated with the elegance of fine dining rather than the familiarity of a street-side staple. Henna cones glide across small hands while mothers watch with quiet smiles.

To the casual visitor, it looks like a trending café riding a viral wave. But Festive Corner is not just a food story. It is a woman's story, one shaped by ambition, interrupted dreams, marriage, motherhood, risk, reinvention and a refusal to remain defined by circumstance.

This Women's Day, it is worth telling the story behind the brand: not simply as an entrepreneurial success, but as a deeply human journey of a woman who once studied medicine and today manages one of Colombo's most talked-about culinary spaces. **She is Shamsheera Rameena.**

Seven years ago, there was no outlet. No viral desserts. No influencer buzz. There was only a three storey home and a young woman determined to make something meaningful out of her skills. The third floor of that house became a bakery. Orders were taken through Instagram under the name "Shamshee_ram_getsbaked." The service ran 24 hours. Customers would arrive at odd hours to collect doughnuts, brownies and coffee etc. Mini doughnuts became a quiet favourite. Word travelled through social media and neighbourhood networks. What began as a home-based hustle slowly evolved into a steady business. Yet behind the baking trays and sweet glazes was a young woman whose life had once been directed toward lecture halls and hospital corridors. Academically driven and deeply committed to her studies, she completed her BSc and Master's degree and began her MBBS. Medicine was not just a qualification, it was a dream encouraged by her mother, who believed wholeheartedly in her daughter's potential.

But life unfolded differently. Marriage came. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted plans. Pregnancy reshaped priorities. Academic pursuits were paused. For many women, such transitions can feel like quiet endings. For her, it became a redirection. She speaks about it without bitterness, only clarity. "One day, if life allows, I may return to it," she says. "But right now, this is where I am meant to be." Marriage also introduced her to a new language; the language of food. She admits she was never deeply involved in cooking while growing up. Yet her husband was particular about taste, especially traditional flavours prepared in precise ways.

Instead of feeling intimidated, she observed carefully. She studied her aunt's cooking techniques, memorising the exact balance of turmeric, mustard seeds and tempering methods. She replicated flavours with discipline and patience. Today, her husband openly says he enjoys her cooking immensely. Extended family members request her mutton curry and prawn curry. Elder relatives quietly pack takeaway portions before leaving. What began as an effort to learn for love gradually transformed into confidence in the kitchen.

The leap from home baker to entrepreneur gained momentum through event stalls across Colombo from BMICH to Havelock City and Galle Face. At these stalls, she worked alongside with her assistant baker **Fathima Rumaihiza**. Meanwhile, Shamsheera and Rumaihiza added a splash of colour and creativity to the event, sharing their artistry through intricate henna designs and lively face painting, much to the delight of the crowd.

A pattern began to emerge. Customers who came for henna purchased desserts. Those who came for desserts stayed for face painting. That simple observation sparked a powerful idea. There was no proper outlet in Sri Lanka that combined food with festive activities. Why should henna be limited to religious occasions? Why should celebration depend on a calendar? Why couldn't an ordinary weekday feel joyful? That vision became Festive Corner. To her, the meaning of Festive Corner is simple yet profound: every day, when you walk in, you should feel like you are celebrating something. Even if it is not a festival, you can celebrate and enjoy things like you would during one. The space was designed to make ordinary days feel extraordinary through food, colour, activities and atmosphere.

Opening the outlet came with restrictions. Competing vendors had already secured rights to certain menu categories months before. Cheesecakes and brownies, once her signature items were limited. Instead of viewing it as a setback, she chose innovation. She began researching global dessert trends and discovered structured L.A. style desserts were not yet available locally. Around that time, the Capybara pudding dessert, inspired by Korean trends and viral in Los Angeles and India, caught her attention. The first week after opening was slow. Rather than waiting for foot traffic to improve, she decided to create momentum. Custom moulds had to be commissioned because none existed in Sri Lanka. It was a bold risk, taken not from abundance but from belief.

The Capybara dessert went viral. Influencers featured it. Crowds followed. Some evenings, the shop becomes a lively meeting place within hours. Yet what distinguishes her is not the viral success but her understanding of everything perfectly.

Instead of celebrating early profits, she and her husband chose to reinvest everything upgrading the kitchen, improving systems, strengthening branding and refining packaging. Even dosa, often considered a simple staple, is being reimaged and plated with elegance. Premium box-style packaging is being introduced to elevate the experience further.

Festive Corner is also built on inclusivity. In a multicultural society, she is mindful of religious sensitivities. Beef items are displayed separately. Utensils are not mixed. The kitchen respects diverse practices. The menu remains Halal. Her goal is simple: everyone should feel comfortable walking in.

Behind the scenes, family remains central. Her sister-in-law, Fathima Rumaihiza, plays a vital role in baking and production, ensuring quality and consistency. Her mother-in-law contributes chutneys and traditional flavours. Her sister adds artistic vibrancy.



Mr. Mohammed Ramzan Mohammed Ruwaideen
Mrs. Shamsheera Rameena

Her husband supports experimentation and logistics. Festive Corner is not just an enterprise, it is a family ecosystem powered largely by women.

As Women's Day approaches, her story reflects the journeys of many Sri Lankan women whose ambitions are reshaped by marriage, motherhood and circumstance. It highlights that success is not always linear. That empowerment is not always loud. Sometimes it is found in the quiet decision to adapt rather than abandon. She does not deny that the medical dream mattered. It still does. But she also understands that identity is not singular. A woman can be academically accomplished and creatively entrepreneurial. She can pause one dream and nurture another without losing her strength.

Today, when customers gather under warm café lights and children smile with henna decorated hands, they may see only the trend and the aesthetic. What they may not immediately see is the resilience behind it, the long nights, the financial risks, the reinvestment decisions and the emotional courage required to rebuild a life's direction.

This Women's Day, her journey stands as a reminder that empowerment is not defined solely by titles or professions. It is defined by resilience, by reinvention, and by the courage to create joy for others even while rewriting your own story. Dreams may change form. Plans may be interrupted. Life may redirect. But when a woman refuses to give up on herself, even an ordinary day can become festive and even a paused dream can rise again in a different, equally powerful way.

Shamsheera took a quiet, grateful breath to thank her beloved husband Mohammed Ramzan Mohammed Ruwaideen, for standing beside her every step of the way. She spoke of his encouragement, love, support and belief in her dream; little things that, she said, made all the difference in turning a simple idea into a thriving culinary space.

In a celebration of International Women's Day this year, Shamsheera Rameena, the visionary



Viral Jiggly Capybara



Chicken Nachos



Prawn Varuval Dosa



Jiggly Bunny



Chicken Momos



Mango Illusion Delight



Raspberry Cloud



Mango Cake Slice



Milo boba



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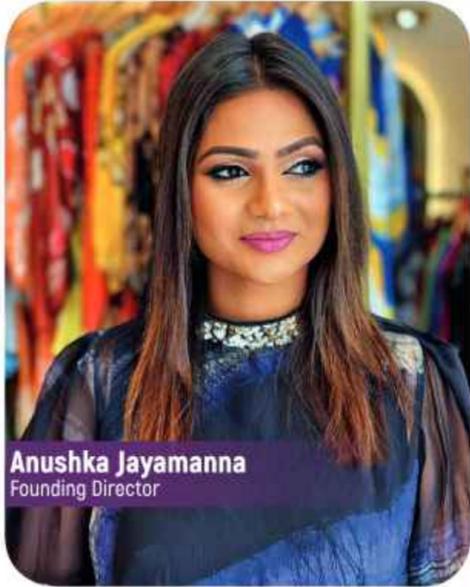
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Miniature Baked Doughnuts



Mini Cheesy Cuppies



Anushka Jayamanna
Founding Director

From a young age, Anushka was naturally drawn to fashion. She quietly carried a different dream in her heart: she did not want to confine herself to a single role or settle for a life without creative expression. After her marriage she joined her husband's company and worked there as an accountant for 17 years, gaining life and professional experience that later shaped her work ethic and sense of discipline.

Although she fulfilled those responsibilities with dedication, her true calling remained with fabrics, colours, textures and silhouettes. She wanted to design; she wanted to create something meaningful; and, most importantly, she wanted to build something of her own. That desire slowly transformed into reality. With no strong industry connections and very little guidance, Anushka took her first steps into the fashion world. She was new to the field and had to learn everything from scratch, including marketing her brand on social media. It was not an easy beginning.

"I didn't know anyone when I started,"

She recalls, **"but I always believed I should grow what I begin."** That unwavering mindset became the foundation of Elegant Closet. Rather than letting inexperience hold her back, she moved forward with determination; within three and a half years, her small idea evolved into a recognized and trusted fashion name. Elegant Closet stands proudly by its philosophy: **"Where Fashion Meets Tradition."** Anushka wanted to design clothing that respects cultural roots while embracing modern elegance. In an industry that often focuses on shrinking sizes and standardized cuts, she chose a different path. She designs for real women, with real bodies, offering customized alterations to ensure every client feels confident and comfortable.

For her, fashion is not about forcing women into trends; it is about designing garments that enhance who they already are. She insists that the colours in her photographs remain true to life, refusing misleading visual enhancements, because trust between designer and client is fundamental. Working with luxurious fabrics such as velvet, georgette, pure silk, silk modal & silk cutlong etc. Anushka constantly experiments with textures and silhouettes. She introduces fresh creations at pageants and organizes regular photoshoots to showcase her latest collections. For her, staying stagnant is not an option; every day is an opportunity to create something new. Her vision is simple yet powerful: to continuously innovate while preserving elegance and tradition.

A turning point in her career came through pageants and the relationships that followed. She thanks Mr. Chandimal Jayasinghe warmly for

always supporting her; his encouragement and the chance to work with his pageants opened doors that profoundly shaped her trajectory. Through that collaboration she designed stage wear and costumes for major events from Mrs. World and Mrs. Sri Lanka pageants to CJ Awurudu Kumara and Kumariya costumes and those platforms gave her work national and international visibility. She also had the opportunity to do an Elegant Closet photoshoot with Tshego Gaelae who was crowned Mrs. World 2024, which further elevated her brand's international visibility.

Behind the success of Elegant Closet is a dedicated team: factory staff, showroom assistants, tailors and creative collaborators who work tirelessly in the background. "There is a big crowd behind me," Anushka often says, acknowledging that her journey has never been solitary. She values teamwork deeply and believes that, together, they can overcome any challenge. At home, Anushka balances multiple roles with quiet grace. She is a mother of two and a devoted wife to Mr. Rajikajayamanna, who works in the construction industry. Managing family life and business responsibilities is not always easy; there are days when she cannot answer every call or reply to every message immediately. Yet she prioritizes quality, commitment and responsibility in everything she does, and with the support and understanding of her husband and family she continues to pursue her dreams without neglecting her personal responsibilities.

For Anushka, fashion is also a tool for empowerment. She actively supports women who participate in pageants and events by offering styling and photoshoot assistance, helping them build confidence and public presence. She believes that every woman whether a business owner, professional, homemaker or mother deserves the opportunity to shine. International Women's Day, for her, is a reminder that women should never remain idle or underestimate their potential. She encourages women not to be afraid of starting something, even from home, and stresses that determination, quality and self-belief can carry a woman a long way despite financial struggles or societal pressures.

Her message to women is heartfelt and sincere: do not be afraid, do not limit yourself. Balance your responsibilities, believe in your abilities and maintain the quality of whatever you create. Success is not defined by titles but by courage, consistency and confidence. Anushka's story is a testament to the power of perseverance: from learning the ropes of marketing to dressing contestants and styling final costumes on national and international stages, she has kept moving forward because she refused to let beginnings dictate ending.

ELEGANT CLOSET

Where FASHION Meets Tradition

Elegant Closet is a brand born out of passion, courage and a deep belief that fashion should celebrate individuality while honoring tradition. In the ever-evolving world of fashion, where trends change overnight and fast fashion dominates the market, Elegant Closet stands as a label rooted in authenticity, craftsmanship and individuality. Founded by Anushka Jayamanna, Elegant Closet is more than a fashion label, it is a journey of courage, creativity and a commitment to empowering women through design.



Today, Elegant Closet continues to grow, guided by a clear vision and unwavering passion. What began as a young girl's dream has transformed into a respected fashion brand rooted in authenticity and creativity. Through hard work, resilience and an unshakable belief in herself, Anushka Jayamanna has built more than a business; she has built a story of empowerment, tradition and elegant strength, one design at a time.



No. 194, Thimbrigasyaya Road, Colombo 05
0771 079 448
Social Media



ELEGANT CLOSET



MAMA'S BROWNIE

WHERE LOVE BECAME A BRAND AND WOMEN RISE TOGETHER



Seema Shazan
The Proprietor of Mama's Brownie

"Seema Shazan
The story of an empowering woman who turned challenges into triumphs, inspiring others with her courage, vision, and unwavering spirit."

International Women's Day is not just about celebrating achievement. It honors the quiet strength of women who begin with love and turn it into legacy. Few stories capture this spirit as beautifully as that of Mama's Brownie.

Her journey did not start in a factory or storefront. It began in a small kitchen at home, where a mother baked brownies for her daughter. That simple act of love quickly became unforgettable. Her daughter called them "Mama's brownies," and that affection grew into a name and eventually a brand: Mama's Brownie. Encouraged by her husband Mr. Shazan Hafeez, her constant pillar of support, she found the confidence to step forward. He believed in her when she doubted herself, helped her navigate challenges, and celebrated every small victory.

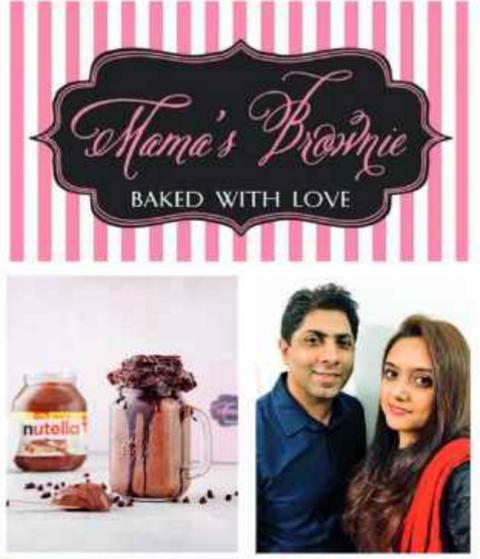
From these heartfelt beginnings, Mama's Brownie grew into a beloved brand with outlets in Colpetty, Havelock Mall, and Nugegoda. Beyond walk-in customers, she now takes bulk orders for celebrations and events. With Uber and PickMe delivery, her creations travel far and wide, spreading warmth and love in every

bite. Yet her true success is measured differently. She welcomed women who had never worked before, some carrying silent struggles or heavy burdens.

She offered more than jobs. She offered guidance, skills, and hope. She quietly supported families, helping women manage responsibilities that once felt overwhelming. When a young employee faced motherhood with fear, the bakery adapted around her, creating space where work and childcare could coexist harmoniously.

Her philosophy is simple: "If I rise, we rise together."

Her days begin before sunrise and often stretch past midnight. Between family and business, expectation and ambition, she continues steady and determined. From a mother baking for her daughter to leading a brand that uplifts other women, her story reminds us that a woman's power is not only in what she builds, but in how many she carries forward. And the story does not stop at brownies. Mama's Brownie has now expanded into savory delights, offering burgers, fries, submarines, and more, bringing the same love and dedication to every bite.



CROWN AND CONFIDENCE

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT HIGH TEA

What began as a simple dream has today grown into something far greater: a strong, supportive community of over 500 women. Reaching this milestone fills me with immense gratitude and happiness, both personally and professionally. Seeing how this vision has evolved reassures me that the need to empower women was real and meaningful, and it motivates me to continue this journey with even more commitment and purpose.

The idea for **W.E by Rishh** was born from a deep realization. In Sri Lanka, many women lack basic support, guidance and encouragement, particularly when it comes to personal growth and business. One night, as I struggled to fall asleep, a thought stayed with me: why wait for someone else to create this support system when I could begin it myself? With that conviction, I reached out to a family friend who is also a sister to me, **Mrs. Anfal Arshad of Nina Skincare Sri Lanka**.

I also reached out to Mrs. Fazliya Rameez, who was very interested in my concept. With the guidance and support of **Mrs. Fazliya Rameez, directress of a well known academy in Colombo - Talent Hub Culinary & Skills**, our community started growing and rising. Both Mrs. Fazliya and Mrs. Anfal have been the heads of this empowerment and prominent Team Leaders of W.E and a backbone to me, supporting and coordinating every decision we make together to uplift and empower women. This is a clear example, that when women collaborate together, magic happens. **W.E by Rishh** has always focused on practical empowerment rather than motivational alone. It is a safe, non-judgmental space where women can learn, network, promote their

businesses and receive genuine guidance. Empowerment here means access to knowledge, confidence, community and opportunities while uplifting women emotionally, professionally and spiritually.

This year marked a special turning point for the community. Traditionally, our events were either free or ticketed only to cover basic costs, with no sponsors involved. For the first time, we opened sponsorship opportunities, and the response was overwhelming. Many women-led businesses were excited to collaborate, gain visibility and grow together, making this edition especially impactful.

The event itself was designed as a relaxed high-tea gathering with a warm, comforting atmosphere. With the New Year season bringing both exhaustion and reflection, the aim was to create a calm space that refreshed minds and encouraged women to start the year with confidence and positivity. I am deeply grateful to my husband, **Mr. M.S. Muhammed**, for his unwavering support throughout the entire process. My sincere thanks also go to **Mrs. Hirunika Premachandra** for graciously accepting my invitation and gracing the event, my dedicated team members **Ms. Aanisha Azad** for handling registrations and **Ms. Aqeela**, Founder of Dreamation Designs, for coordinating with sponsors and managing arrangements. **A special thank you goes to Mrs. Anfal Arshad, Founder of Nina Skincare, whose continued belief and support as the title sponsor have made her a true pillar of strength to this community from**

day one. **W.E by Rishh welcomes women from all walks of life: business owners, teachers, bakers, mehendi artists, doctors and aspiring entrepreneurs. Regardless of profession or life stage, every woman who joins this community is valued, included and supported.**

Some of the most touching moments come quietly, through phone calls from women sharing their successes and including me in their prayers. I strongly believe in the power of prayer, and knowing that my work has touched lives on both a personal and professional level reassures me that this journey has real purpose. There have also been moments when women, inspired after my motivational talks, went on to start their own academies and businesses. Seeing someone choose change after receiving guidance is incredibly fulfilling.

Many women face challenges such as unsupportive family environments, lack of digital knowledge, low confidence and emotional struggles. Through motivational sessions, guidance and free or non-profit workshops, **W.E by Rishh** continues to uplift, educate and emotionally support women through these obstacles. The strength of the community lies in how its members support one another. Women from different industries step in whenever help is needed, and some have even built their entire projects using services sourced within the group. One such member has now opened her own shop, made possible through the growth and support she received from the **W.E** community.

As the platform grows, imitation has naturally followed. While this can be discouraging at times, I am constantly reminded of my husband's words: "Original is original wherever you go." Others may copy ideas, but they can never replicate the vision, intention or purpose behind **W.E by Rishh**.

The journey ahead is guided by a bigger dream to empower women across the entire island. My goal is to conduct free workshops throughout Sri Lanka and establish district-level teams that support women locally, creating a strong nationwide network of empowered women whose voices are heard.

To every woman reading this, my message is simple: do not wait until you feel fully ready. Confidence grows after you take the first step. Even the smallest action can lead to meaningful change. Empowerment is not only about moving forward yourself, but about ensuring another woman rises because of you because when you help solve someone else's problems, it always returns in the most beautiful ways.



"TO EVERY WOMAN MAKING A DIFFERENCE AT HOME, AT WORK AND IN THE WORLD TODAY WE CELEBRATE YOUR COURAGE, RESILIENCE AND UNSTOPPABLE SPIRIT."

HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

-Rishma Farhan (English with Rishh)-



Directress- Royal Academy - Colombo 09
 Founder- The American Federation of Festivals, Sri Lanka/USA
 Executive Director- Royal International Pre School & Elocution
 Managing Partner- Royal Creamery- Colombo 09
 Founder- W.E by Rishh (Women Empowerment)



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SHE... WE CHERISH

International Women's Day



This Women's Day, we celebrate the power of a shared vision. The story of Maureen Fernando and her daughter, Staria, is a testament to how a family's commitment to the earth can evolve into a movement of regenerative living.

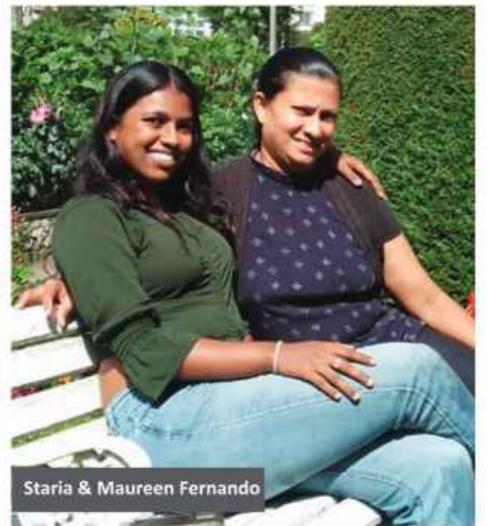
ROOTED IN PURPOSE, GROWING WITH COURAGE: THE FERNANDO LEGACY



Maureen and Dilanda Fernando with the community members



Maureen, Dilanda, Jetaime, Staria Fernando



Staria & Maureen Fernando

The Foundation: An Ecological Blueprint

The journey began with Maureen's husband, Dilanda Fernando. A visionary in his own right, Dilanda looked at a neglected rubber estate and saw a future beyond industrial farming. He envisioned a thriving food forest, self-sustaining ecosystem designed to restore soil health and invite biodiversity. While Dilanda's dedication provided the "roots," it was Maureen's leadership that blossomed this foundation into tangible solutions for a modern world.

From the Skies to the Soil

For years, Maureen navigated the world as a cabin crew member for SriLankan Airlines. Her life was defined by the fast-paced world of international aviation. Yet, in 2017, she chose "courage over comfort." Stepping away from the skies, she moved her children, Staria and Jetaime, to the estate to support the transformation of the land.

The estate became more than a home; it became a living classroom. Through homeschooling, Maureen and Dilanda ensured their children learned

sustainability through lived experience. Staria and Jetaime spent their formative years cultivating medicinal herbs and restoring soil, lessons no traditional textbook could provide.

Turning Waste to Wealth Drawing from the herbs grown within Dilanda's landscape, Maureen founded Seth CEYLON, a women-led social enterprise specializing

in Personal and Home Care. To maximize their eco-impact, the products are formulated as solids or concentrates, drastically reducing water weight and carbon emissions.

True circularity is woven into their packaging; Seth CEYLON rescues PET bottles and transforms fabric scraps into reusable packaging solutions. Their "Waste to Wealth" model also collects kitchen and citrus peels from local

cafes diverting waste from landfills to create:

Eco-Enzyme Home Care: Biodegradable, chemical-free cleaners.

Natural Personal Care:

High-quality formulations rooted in Ayurvedic knowledge provided by Staria, who now bridges the gap between heritage and modern science.

The Catalyst of Care:

Collaboration Over Control Maureen believes climate action requires a shift in leadership. She advocates for the "nurturing aspect" of women, the ability to influence through collaboration rather than control. By guiding families and local networks, Maureen and Staria have built a bridge to the community.

"Women have a natural

gift for nurturing. By leading through collaboration, we bring everyone; men, women, and children together. There is an old saying: 'If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.' We are securing a healthy future by going together." — Maureen Fernando

A Journey Best Shared

Seth CEYLON is more than a brand; it is a resource. If

you or your community are seeking support in managing waste or transitioning to toxic-free living, Seth CEYLON is willing to be part of your journey. They invite you to get connected and join a network dedicated to making a meaningful difference, together.



THE ART OF CONFIDENCE: EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH AESTHETIC MEDICINE

International Women's Day is a celebration of resilience, achievement, and the many ways women choose to define themselves. As an aesthetic physician, I see a unique side of this journey every day. At Luxskin, my mission isn't just about "fixing" features; it's about restoring the confidence that allows a woman to show up as her best self in every room she enters.

The Power of Self-Perception

In the heart of Colombo, I have built a sanctuary where science meets artistry. Running a clinic independently is a challenge I embrace daily, supported by an incredible team of female nurses. Together, we understand that cosmetic medicine is rarely about vanity. It is about a woman looking in the mirror and seeing a reflection that matches the vibrant, capable person she feels like on the inside.

Precision in Age Reversal

True beauty lies in subtlety.

My approach to age reversal focuses on natural results that enhance, rather than change, a person's identity.

* **Botox and Dermal Fillers:** These tools allow us to soften the lines of time and restore lost volume with clinical precision.

* **Threadlifts:** A non-surgical way to provide structural support to the face, offering an immediate lift and long-term collagen stimulation.

Advanced Modalities: Science Under the Skin

We live in an era where we can achieve remarkable results without the downtime of surgery. At Luxskin, we utilize cutting-edge technology to tighten and tone:

* **HIFU & MNRF:** These skin-tightening modalities work deep within the dermis to firm the skin and refine texture.

* **CoolSculpting & EmSculpt Neo:** Confidence extends beyond the face. By offering advanced fat reduction and body toning, we help women feel empowered in their own skin.

The Future of Rejuvenation: Biostimulators

The most exciting frontier in

my practice is regenerative aesthetics. We aren't just masking aging; we are teaching the skin to heal itself. Using the latest techniques like Salmon DNA (PDRN), Exosomes, and customized Photofacials, we focus on cellular health to create that "lit-from-within" glow that no makeup can replicate.

A Message for Women's Day

As a female entrepreneur in medicine, I know that when a woman feels confident, she becomes unstoppable. Whether it's a young professional seeking skin clarity or a mother reclaiming her body after years of sacrifice, my goal remains the same: to provide a safe, expert space for women to invest in themselves.

This Women's Day, let's celebrate the right to feel beautiful, the power of choice, and the incredible strength of women supporting women.



Dr. Dinela Samarajeewa (Dr. Dineli)
Lead Aesthetic Physician
MBBS - SRI LANKA (SLMC REG NO 38496)
Founder of Luxskin





RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

Success should be measured not by the position we reach in life, but by how we overcome the challenges that we face. One such individual who greatly personifies this saying is budding entrepreneur Shyara Seneviratne, CEO of Starforce HR Ltd and Director of Para Freight Inc. Her story is one rooted in resilience and determination, a tumultuous journey filled with trials and tribulations. Her path has proven to be more than a showcase of obstacles; it is also a transformative story spanning years of corporate build-up and planning. Taking inspiration from her Sri Lankan heritage and culture, Ms Shyara has crafted an influential name for herself in the world of human resources and fashion, one a skill and the other a passion. She was gracious enough to sit down with us and recount her life story, taking us through the years of drawbacks and hindrances to the stunning business-savvy persona she is now. Acknowledging her influences and thanking those who have helped shape her as both a person and a businesswoman.



"I left Sri Lanka in 1989 and moved to Canada with my family. It was a challenging experience to relocate to another country during such a transitional age. Everything was different: the culture, the people, the prices. However, my father managed to look after us, and my brother and I handled things quite well. Everything about it was both daunting and exhilarating. I attended the University of Toronto for higher education, where I studied Human Resources, and that is where my vision for my own company began to develop."

Ms Shyara talked about how she became pregnant shortly after, with her daughter, Shyann. She remembered the turbulence of those early days of her career, trying to balance motherhood responsibilities with her entrepreneurial dreams. She spoke about how her partner at the time passed away quite young, leaving her a single mother fighting through it alone. She recalled that time as a blessing rather than a hindrance, which brought her empowerment and purpose.

"I'm a proud single mother. It was difficult, of course, but fulfilling. My children are my world. I have two: my daughter, Shyann, and my son, Ashain, studying criminal law and business law, respectively. I am very proud of them and owe much of my success to their influence."

She recalled how, not long after earning her degree, she started working at an agency for human resources, 'On Time Personnel'. She worked there for ten years before

entering into a three-year partnership. She mentioned that this was a particularly difficult period for her, as there was a quite Machiavellian environment surrounding it, which eventually ended. She reflected on how much of a setback it felt like and how much she relied on her own grit and self-belief to push forward. This proved to be rewarding when she launched her own company in 2019.

"I started my own company in 2019. Initially, it was just a few of us, and it certainly wasn't without its challenges. Especially with the COVID-19 pandemic's

global impact looming in the face of our startup."

The company had to be closed down in 2020 due to the virus's global upstaging and economic impact. However, true to the philosophy of success, Ms Shyara used all her strength and resilience to push forward and ensure the company's revival and longevity.

"I was working day and night to bring in new clients to prevent the company's deterioration. Finally, in 2021, I moved to a new office and hired my own internal staff, around six of them at the time, before finally moving to a bigger, more spacious office. I worked around the clock, with very little time for anything else, but it was all worth it in the end."

She elaborated on this by reflecting on the patriotic environment of the corporate world and how that in itself will always pose a challenge for aspiring women in business.

"Even in Canada, there is a significant lack of female representation in the workplace. There is little understanding of our

boundaries and preferences, especially since most offices tend to cater more to men than to women. Even as a single mother, there is hardly any support or basic decency for women, which urgently needs to change."

She discussed the considerable time and energy invested in ensuring the highest-quality service. She recalled the countless hours spent visiting sites to verify that the labour services the company provided met the required standards. This meticulous attention to detail propelled her company into becoming a global hub for human resources. Para Freight Inc. has been based in Canada and Dubai since its inception in 2023. She shared her current efforts to expand the business in Sri Lanka and reflected on the positive and negative experiences they have encountered. Mentioning that she had recently been scammed by a real estate agent, she explained how such experiences can discourage people from pursuing international investments.

"How can we expect to invest in Sri Lanka when these sorts of incidents occur?"

She emphasised the importance of remaining vigilant in the corporate world. She also shared that her tentative experiences have made her realise how cautious you must be when navigating it all, both as a woman and as a foreigner seeking entry into the international market. She discussed how such experiences discourage people from investing in a country, emphasising the need to promote more transparency and authenticity in the workplace. Despite this setback, there have been some positive developments, including her finding a suitable real estate agency, 'Dina Ali Realty', which has been a real blessing throughout the process. She spoke about how advantageous it is to have a good support system backing you, particularly in other countries. She wanted to mention a few close friends who have been a vital part of her journey.

"My friend Rosie Senanayake has been indispensable as of late. She's always been a dear friend and an ardent supporter. She has always

come through for me. I owe a lot to her."

Ms Shyara also spoke at length about her other passions and interests. Revealing her deep love for fashion.

"I've always loved taking part in fashion shows, even judging Mrs World Sri Lanka in 2025. I would like to thank Chandima Jayasinghe for inviting me to serve as a judge for it. As well as for helping me with many other fashion-related endeavours I've wanted to pursue."

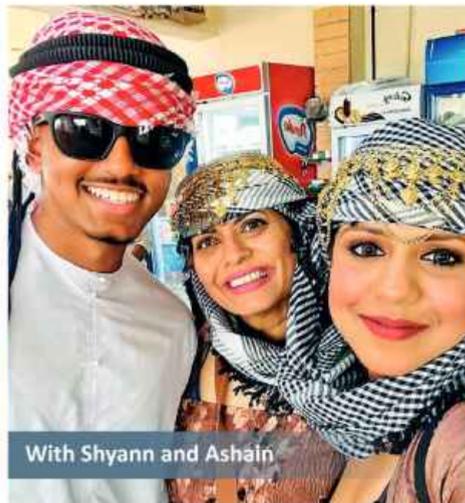
She spoke about her hope of continuing to pursue this passion in the future. Stating that human resources may be her profession, but fashion will always be her passion. And on how each event and idea is transformative and is the makeup of who we are as idealists.

"We can always try no matter what. There's always something new to learn, to experience. There is no easy way around growth. It takes time and effort, but the result is always worth it."

By Imaaya Perera



Shyara Seneviratne
CEO of Starforce HR Ltd and Director of Para Freight Inc.



With Shyann and Ashain



With Mrs Rosy



Mrs Srilanka World 2024
Ishadi Amenda, Mrs world 2024 Tshego Gealae





FROM CHANCE TO CRAFT: A JOURNEY OF CREATIVITY AND DETERMINATION

Sometimes the most remarkable journeys begin with the most unexpected encounters. What started as a chance meeting with a high-profile exporter in India turned into the beginning of a unique entrepreneurial story—one that proves passion and determination can overcome even the absence of prior experience.

With no background in the field, she stepped into the world of textiles driven purely by curiosity and courage. Inspired by the beauty and potential of handcrafted designs, she began experimenting with distinctive prints on 100% cotton fabric. What followed was a journey of discovery, persistence, and creativity.

Word of her work soon began to spread, not through formal marketing channels, but through the power of friendship and personal networks. Friends and well-wishers shared news of the elegant cotton creations, and gradually a wider circle began to take notice. The appeal was simple yet powerful: unique prints that could bring a

sense of charm, warmth, and sophistication to everyday living spaces.

Her creations focused on home essentials that combine practicality with aesthetic appeal. Beautifully designed tablecloths became the centerpiece of dining tables, complemented by matching serviettes, placemats, and kitchen towels. Together, these pieces transformed ordinary dining spaces into inviting settings filled with color and style.

Beyond their practical use, these items also emerged as thoughtful and elegant gift choices—perfect for housewarmings, celebrations, and special occasions.

What makes the journey even more inspiring is that it has largely been the effort of a single individual. Building a small but distinctive brand, maintaining quality, and nurturing customer relationships required dedication and resilience. Every step—from design and production to promotion and sales—was shaped by perseverance and a belief in the beauty of handcrafted simplicity.

Today, what began as an accidental introduction to a new industry has evolved into a fulfilling entrepreneurial venture. It stands as a reminder that opportunity often arrives unexpectedly, and when embraced with courage and creativity, it can lead to

remarkable destinations.

It has been a long journey—one marked by determination, learning, and the quiet satisfaction of turning a simple idea into something that brightens homes and lives.





The Genderless Profession

Life as an entrepreneur



Ms Anuradha Malimage Herath
Founder and Managing Director

Java Lounge is a leading coffee chain that is easily recognisable in Sri Lanka. From its great coffee, memorable designs and appetising food, it stands to remain as one of the leading and most sustainable authentic coffee houses in the country. With 13 years of customer care and service under her belt, Ms. Anuradha Malimage Herath, Founder and Managing Director of Java Lounge, sat down with us to give a detailed appraisal of her experience as an entrepreneur. Recalling her earliest motivations and detailing her current ventures, which keep her inspired and revered as one of the foremost business entrepreneurs.



Focusing on quality and authenticity over bulk success. "What inspired me was my passion for business. I am a coffee lover as well as a food lover, and that has always been what I wanted my company to be centred around. "After living in the US for 10 years, she recalled how that exposure to different cultures inspired many of her favourite food eccentricities and motivated her to introduce these flavours to the Sri Lankan community. "I learnt a great deal of coffee knowledge from these global communities and wished to integrate them into the local food culture. I initiated every available product in Java Lounge. Having drawn inspiration from these international cuisines. "She spoke about how, despite being one of many coffee branches in the country, Java Lounge has always been a staple for its quality coffee. She stated that back in 2012, when the company was founded, she had identified a demand for a premium,

Proudly stating that, though it is a Sri Lankan brand, it still has the capacity to reach an international scale. Referring to her plans for future outlets in the Maldives. "We set our sights on the Maldives due to its huge coffee customer base. We are planning 15 new outlets this year, 8 of which are already secured. We are also hoping to develop the entire look and feel of the new centres. After 13 years, we hope that by initiating these changes, we will continue to work and grow as a company. Continuously improving and refining our brand "She spoke extensively about her new venture, "Chocolate Heaven. " As a chocolate lover herself, she is truly passionate about this new pursuit. She spoke about being adamant about the project's authenticity and even took the time to understand the manufacturing process firsthand to ensure quality products for her customers.

world-class experience for all coffee lovers. "We pride ourselves on providing a true quality experience with our coffee. It is a South American and South Asian blend from Indonesia that is continuously being built upon. When running a food business, it's important to consider that even the smallest changes to your recipes can completely turn people off from consuming them. Which is why it is so important to consider the quality of your work and maintain standards."

Ms Anuradha spoke in detail about how, in any business, quality always comes first. This goes past the product itself and into how the business as a whole is marketed and presented. Keeping a brand distinct and sustainable even amidst competition. "Quality of food always matters, but so does the atmosphere of the shop you walk into. You need to take the time to create a homely and comfortable environment that draws people in. It's that vibe that you feel when you step into a place that guarantees you loyal customers. " She spoke in great detail of her hopes for future expansions and philanthropic projects.

"I went to PRIMA and did a customised course and learnt all about it before I started the chocolate section. Otherwise, if the chefs tell me one thing, I need to believe them. This way, I too can take an active role in the creation process and ensure that I am as confident in the process as I am in the product." Ms Anuradha initiated "Chocolate Heaven" for customers to receive customised catering in an easily accessible manner. This proved highly in demand, particularly close to Valentine's Day. She spoke about how this new project was a solo venture and that she hopes it will inspire emerging entrepreneurs. Particularly, women. She also spoke about how the shop endorses a gift greeting card-making business run by a single mother, and she hopes to continue supporting and uplifting other small businesses through her own brand. She spoke about her own struggles as an entrepreneur in a largely male-oriented workspace and the challenges she faced. "Being in a workforce with a 95% male staff is difficult to say the least. Not that there is



a lack of respect, but that there is always that distinct gap between perspectives. I myself am a charismatic person, and that has helped me manoeuvre through preconceptions and other impediments to maintain a healthy professional image that is never questioned, regardless of my gender. "She recounted how in most meetings, she is the only woman present. This lack of inclusivity in the workplace remains a topic of discussion and something that must be rectified. She said that this goes beyond the inclusion of women in the world of business, but actually involves taking steps to integrate their ideas and opinions within the workforce. "There are so many instances where men will be talking about business, and the

moment I enter the room, the conversation is paused. That mentality of the corporate world, primarily being owned by men, is still prevalent and must change." She spoke about how we, as a developing society, need to stop evaluating professionals based on their gender and cultivate a more liberating perspective that judges our work on its own merits. Encouraging women not to limit themselves by their

gender and to focus more on what they have to offer as innovators.

"Forget about the 'woman' part of the title. Do not call yourself a 'woman entrepreneur' but simply an 'entrepreneur'. Do not limit yourself by your own definition of who you are. When you do that, there is nothing that you cannot accomplish by yourself

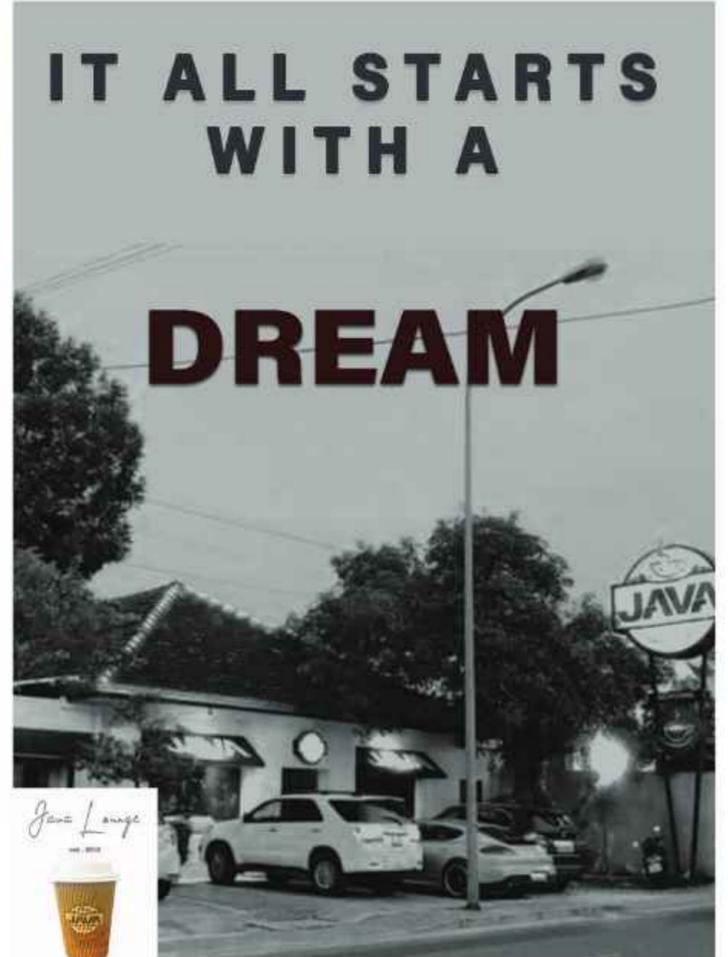
By Imaaya Perera



Newly Opened Java Lounge in Kiribathgoda



Mount Lavinia Team



SHE... WE CHERISH

International Women's Day



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

THE POWER OF WOMEN

WHO STAND FOR EACH OTHER

There is something deeply comforting about being understood without having to explain yourself. Many women know that feeling. The silent nod that says, I see you. The shared glance across a crowded room. The late night message that begins with, You are not overreacting. I understand.

International Women's Day is not only about awards, titles, or milestones. It is about these quiet moments of connection. The invisible thread that ties women together across generations and experiences.

For a long time, many women were made to feel that space was limited. That there was room for only one voice at the table. One leader. One success story. When you grow up believing opportunities are scarce, it is easy to compare. Easy to compete. Easy to doubt.

But something powerful happens when women choose to stand beside each other instead.

Women empower women is not just a slogan. It is a daily decision. It is saying her name in a room full of decision makers. It is sharing knowledge instead of guarding it. It is mentoring a younger woman simply because someone once helped you. It is clapping sincerely when she wins, even if you are still waiting for your turn.

That kind of support takes confidence. It takes security. It takes heart.

Feminine energy is often misunderstood. It is called soft, emotional, gentle, as though those qualities mean weak. Yet anyone who has watched a woman rebuild her life, care for others, chase her dreams, and still show up with compassion knows the truth. Soft does not mean fragile. Gentle does not mean powerless.

Feminine energy listens. It senses what is not being said. It leads with empathy. It builds trust. It creates space for growth. It understands that strength can be calm and steady.

Empowerment does not always look loud. Sometimes it is asking for the salary you deserve. Sometimes it is walking away from what drains you. Sometimes it is choosing rest without guilt. Sometimes it is finally allowing yourself to heal.

When women create safe spaces for one another,

walls begin to fall. Stories are shared. Fears feel lighter. In those moments, women realize they are not alone in their doubts or dreams.

Imagine a world where girls grow up watching women collaborate instead of compete. Where success is shared. Where support is natural.

On this International Women's Day, let it be more than celebration. Let it be commitment. Reach out. Encourage. Recommend. Support. There is space for all of us to rise.

Because empowered women do not just change their own lives. They change the lives of the women standing beside them.

By Raviesha Ranathunge



RESILIENCE AND SELF-REGULATION: THE ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET

MS NILUSHA DE SILVA



'Skrumptious Brownies' is a staple dessert company that has taken the food industry by storm in recent years and is run by Ms Nilusha De Silva, CEO and founder. For this Women's Day, we were fortunate enough to hear her thoughts on the multifaceted influence of women in business through her own journey in the industry. Taking us through the challenges she faced and the influences that shaped her.

"Business success relies on a combination of strategic, operational, and human factors, including strong customer focus, effective financial management, and adaptability."

She went on to explain that each setback experienced should be viewed as a learning opportunity rather than a failure. Allowing us to create an environment that allows for experiential learning.

"Tough times are temporary, but they build resilience that lasts."

She believes this mentality aided her throughout her career as an entrepreneur, navigating an environment that has yet to recognise and support women to their full capacity.

"My passion and my conscience. Having a meaningful 'why' - a goal

or a passion that is greater than yourself - will provide the courage needed to navigate any obstacle."

Though there is no distinct celebration for Women's Day in her own company, Ms Nilusha did not shirk away from emphasising the importance of the date. Stating her belief in the rhetoric of equality and the recognition of women of all backgrounds and professions, not just entrepreneurs.

"I believe becoming an entrepreneur is written in my destiny. However, if I had the opportunity to choose my destiny, I would've chosen to become a mother/housewife. I believe that a mother plays the most pivotal role in society, and there is no greater achievement for a woman than experiencing the joys of motherhood."

She spoke about her own obstacles and how they have changed her perceptions of her limits and capabilities. Acknowledging the effects of classism and sexism as a perpetual struggle within the industry and her own journey to overcoming them.

Taking the prejudicial statement and turning it on its head, viewing 'class' as something to do with one's state of mind rather than a materialistic face value persona.

"Class has nothing to do

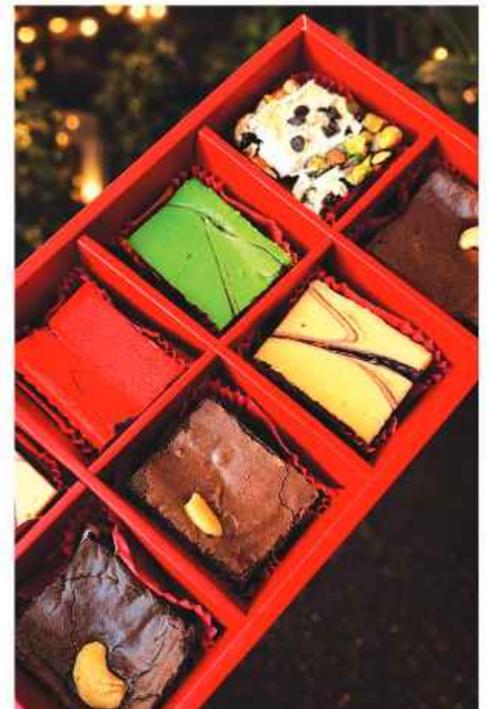
with the price tag on your outfit, the car you drive, or what part of town you live in. Class is about the dignity you carry yourself with and the level of respect you show those around you."

As a woman in an industry largely populated by men, she emphasised the importance of continually upholding the feminist mindset. Urging equal treatment not only

in how we support more female involvement in business, but also in how we treat those we work with.

"Though we don't celebrate Women's Day specifically, I believe that women and men are equal. When you have a mixed-gender team that supports each other, everyday is a celebration."

By Imaaya Perera



SHE GLOWS FROM WITHIN

THIS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, CELEBRATE CONFIDENCE THAT BEGINS INSIDE YOU

International Women's Day is a celebration of strength, ambition, resilience, and grace. It honors women who lead, nurture, build, achieve, and inspire — often all at once. But in the midst of caring for families, building careers, and chasing dreams, many women forget one important person — themselves. True beauty is not about perfection. It is about confidence. And confidence begins from within.

Beauty Is More Than Skin Deep
Modern life exposes skin to daily stress — pollution, sunlight, lack of sleep, and nutritional gaps. Even with the finest creams and treatments, skin can appear dull, uneven, or tired if it is not properly nourished internally.

Today, skincare is evolving. It is no longer just about what you apply on your skin — it is about what you feed it.

Experts agree that nutrition plays a vital role in maintaining healthy, radiant skin. When the body receives the right nutrients, the skin reflects it — through brightness, smoothness, elasticity, and vitality.

Because when your body is

supported from within, your glow becomes natural — not artificial.

Introducing GLOW — Complete Skin Nutrition from Within
Developed by Mega We Care, GLOW is a scientifically formulated skin nutrient designed to enhance beauty from the inside out.

Unlike ordinary topical products, GLOW works at a deeper level by supplying essential nutrients that support skin regeneration, strength, and long-term radiance.

GLOW contains 11 carefully selected plant extracts and marine proteins that work synergistically to improve:

- Skin brightness and even tone
- Softness and smooth texture
- Elasticity and firmness
- Overall radiance and vitality

Marine proteins and hydrolyzed collagen help maintain skin elasticity, promoting a firmer and more youthful appearance. Horsetail extract, rich in silicon, supports healthy skin structure, hair, and nails.

Powerful antioxidants including Vitamin C and Vitamin E help protect

against environmental stress and UV exposure. Grape seed and green tea extracts support detoxification and healthy circulation, while pine bark extract assists in improving uneven skin tone.

Tomato extract with lycopene contributes to protection against sun-induced skin



damage, while lemon bioflavonoids and natural beta carotene enhance brightness and clarity.

This is not cosmetic coverage.

This is complete skin nourishment.

Clinically Evaluated for Visible Results

The effectiveness of GLOW has been evaluated in clinical

studies conducted by the Spincontrol Institute, France.

Research findings indicate visible improvements after 8–12 weeks of consistent use, including:

Tomato extract with lycopene contributes to protection against sun-induced skin

• Brighter and more even-toned skin

• Improved elasticity

• Enhanced moisture levels

• Smoother texture with refined appearance

The results reinforce an important truth:

Long-term beauty is built

through consistent internal care — not temporary solutions.

A Simple Ritual. A Lasting Glow.
GLOW easily fits into your daily routine.

Two capsules a day — one after breakfast and one after dinner — help provide the essential nutrients your skin needs to maintain its natural radiance and resilience.

Small habit. Powerful difference.

Celebrate the Woman You Are
This International Women's Day, celebrate your strength.

Celebrate your journey.

Celebrate the skin you live in every single day.

Because when your skin is nourished from within, confidence does not need effort — it simply shines.

And that glow?

It belongs entirely to you.

MEGA WeCare
The Skin Specialists
www.megawecare.lk

The complete skin care nutrient

GLOW

For a Radiant & Glowing skin, every day

Clinically Proven by the Spin Control Institute, France

Price of a capsule Rs 160

GLOW Sri Lanka

GLOW contains 11 essential plant extracts and marine proteins to improve the color, complexion, brightness, softness and smoothness of the skin, in just 8 to 12 weeks time.

One capsule after breakfast and after dinner.

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Cultivating A GLOBAL LEGACY OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP

International Women's Day is a celebration of vision, resilience, and the power of female leadership. At the International Academy of Fashion (IAF), these values are woven into the very fabric of the institution. What began as a bold leap by founder Niroshani Leanage has evolved into a cornerstone of Sri Lankan creative education, proving that with passion and professional rigor, women can transform an entire industry.

A Visionary Foundation

The International Academy of Fashion was established with a singular vision: to nurture talent and elevate the art of fashion to a global stage. In 2000, Niroshani Leanage set out to turn fashion from a "pastime" into a globally recognized profession. Alongside Roshani Leanage, whose expertise in finance and production provided the academy's steady anchor, they built a curriculum that matched European standards while honoring Sri Lankan artistry. Today, the leadership team is further strengthened by Neloni Leanage, Director of Admissions and Student Affairs, whose international background has been vital in attracting a global student body to Sri Lanka.

Global Excellence with MOD'ART International

Central to IAF's success is its prestigious affiliation with Mod'Art International Paris, one of France's most distinguished fashion institutions. This partnership provides students with the European pedagogy, positioning IAF at the heart of the fashion capital. This global outlook is the cornerstone of the academy.

Today, IAF students are no longer bound by national borders; they are equipped with UK-accredited qualifications and French qualifications for fashion design offering various

levels from Diplomas to Postgraduate studies. With the O/L completion a student can opt for the OTHM level 3 Diploma in fashion design, with the A/L completion a student can opt for the Bachelor in fashion design and further up the Othm level 7 postgraduate level diploma in Strategic marketing is the newest addition.

Leaders Empowering Women

The true measure of IAF's success lies in its graduates. The majority of those who pass through our doors are women who now stand as leaders and trailblazers within the global fashion industry.

As entrepreneurs and creative managers, these alumnae are doing more than just designing clothes; they are building businesses that provide platforms for other women. By establishing their own labels and manufacturing houses, IAF and MODART graduates have created a self-sustaining ecosystem of female empowerment. They lead with authenticity and inspire the next generation to "create without compromise". A powerful professional engine for a nation's creative destiny.

At IAF, we don't just teach fashion; we cultivate the leaders who ensure that the future of the industry remains, globally connected, and profoundly impactful. Connect with us through www.iafedu.com or www.modart.lk



From left to right - Niroshani Leanage (Managing Director), Roshani Leanage (Chairperson), Neloni Leanage (Director Admissions and Student Affairs)



Staff of IAF and MODART International

EMPOWERING SRI LANKAN WOMEN THROUGH ENTERPRISE AND OPPORTUNITY

International Women's Day is more than a celebration for me — it is a reflection of the inclusive journey of women who quietly build families, businesses and communities with resilience and determination.

As a Sri Lankan woman entrepreneur being founder of the baby clothing brand Elegant Smockers, over the past 25 years, I have had the privilege of working closely with women from multiple backgrounds. In our business, the majority of employees are women. Many are mothers who successfully balance their household responsibilities and contribute financially to their families. They carry immense responsibilities beyond the workplace.

Though capable women represent a large portion of our population, female labour force participation still remains relatively low. There is immense untapped potential in our country for women who are talented, disciplined and creative.

Within my own organization, I have seen how financial independence transforms a woman's life. A woman who earns does not merely bring home a salary — she



Mazeena Deen Founder, Elegant Smockers

brings home confidence. She partakes in financial decision-making. She invests in her children's future. She stands taller.

As we grew our company beyond our borders with exports to the United States, it has elevated our production standards and

also enabled to widen our vertical reach to create additional employment opportunities for Sri Lankan women. Export growth is not just about business success — it is about widening access to income and skill development for the women who power our industry.

Empowerment should not be limited to those already within our workplaces. As business leaders, we carry the responsibility to constantly extend opportunities beyond our immediate communities and circles.

Our regular training programs for women outside of Colombo was structured to achieve this objective. Together with my team, we travel outside of Colombo to train and enable women in hand-sewing techniques. It provides opportunities to stay-at-home mothers with skill but no access to structured employment. Today, a number of them work with us from their homes, contributing in making beautifully crafted handmade pieces. They are now empowered to earn a meaningful income while enjoying the flexibility of time to care for their families.

This initiative has been a rewarding part of my journey. Women who once doubted their ability are empowered to add value in their work which builds self esteem and support their households financially.

Balancing entrepreneurship

and family life has its inherent challenges and merits. Like many Sri Lankan women, I too juggle with multiple roles during the day — business owner, wife, mother and mentor. There are moments of pressure and uncertainty. But there is also the deep purpose which fuels you through the process. Building our brand around a committed, motivated and ever supportive team has been the most rewarding aspect of my entrepreneurial journey.

Sri Lankan women possess remarkable resilience shaped by culture, adaptability and strength. Yet many hesitate to step into leadership or economic participation due to lack of opportunity or encouragement. My message to women is simple: start where you are. Skills can be learned. Confidence grows with perseverance and consistent action.

To organizations and policymakers, empowering women must go beyond symbolic gestures. Investing in training women, creating safe working environments and offering flexible earning opportunities is not mere social responsibility — it is pivotal to a country's economic progress.

When women thrive, families become stronger. When families are stable, communities prosper. And when communities prosper, our nation develops progressively.

This Women's Day, let us commit to creating tangible opportunities for the women of our beautiful nation. Sri Lankan women are ready. Let's commit to enable and empower them to hone their talents and bring out the best in them.



Team at Elegant Smockers

SHE... WE CHERISH

International Women's Day



NEVER
GIVE
UP
Passion

brought me back to what I love

For more than 40 years, I have been passionately involved in the world of fashion design. Throughout my journey, I have had the privilege of designing wardrobe and costumes for many talented film actresses, creating styles that celebrate elegance and individuality.

Over the years, I have also been part of several fashion shows,

working with some of the best professionals in the industry, including renowned choreographer Louching Wong, along with many other creative talents.

These experiences have been wonderful milestones in my career as a designer.

Life, however, is not always a straight path. I went through a very challenging time when I had to face cancer and undergo surgery. It was a difficult moment in my life, but with strength, faith, and a positive attitude, I found the courage to move forward.

Today, I am happy and grateful to say that I have returned

to designing again. Creating beautiful designs and seeing people admire my work gives me immense happiness and keeps me inspired every day.

Through life's journey, I have learned one important lesson: there will always be good times and bad times, but if our thoughts are clear and positive, we will always be blessed.

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Through life's journey, I have learned one important lesson: there will always be good times and bad times, but if our thoughts are clear and positive, we will always be blessed.

So I always believe in one simple thing: Stay positive, keep creating, and never forget to smile.



MEDICAL PRACTITIONER BY CHOICE... FASHION DESIGNER BY FLAIR... SOCIAL WORKER BY CONSCIENCE.



Dr. Lilamani Wijyaratna better known to most as Lala, is a General Practitioner who qualified from the Colombo Medical Faculty. Having served her mother land she moved to the UK and gained more experience in the National Health Service more commonly called the NHS. She then moved into a general practice and was a popular GP amongst many communities.

Having lived in the UK for almost 40 years, Lala returned to Sri Lanka to enjoy her retirement.

Educated at St. Bridgets Convent in Colombo Lala hails from a creative background. Her father, Donald Wijyaratna, was the founder of the legendary photographic giant Donalds Studio. Her Mother, Sushila, was one of the most fashionable ladies in Colombo in her day.

Fashion Designing came to Lala naturally. As a young lady, she designed her own outfits and to date her peers in the medical profession good humourdly refer to her as the most fashionable

Medical Officer on duty

in the General Hospital.

Lala has held 8 exclusive fashion shows on her own and a joint fashion show with the doyen of Sri Lankan fashion, the late Kirti Sri Karunaratne who was a close friend of the family.

Beyond designing her heart has been in social service and she founded the Sri Lankan Society International along with a group of friends. Together they engaged in several projects to uplift the lives of some fellow Sri Lankans.

As a creative she is keen to explore new technology and may well create a full length fashion show using a digital platform for our entertainment very soon.

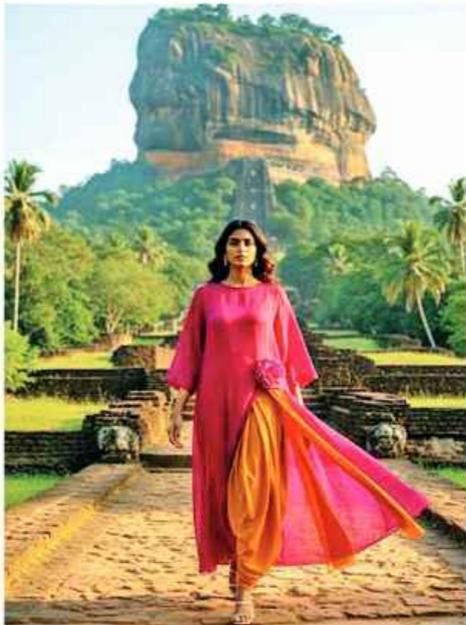
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Dr. Lilamani Wijyaratna



Elegance in motion



SHE... WE CHERISH

International Women's Day



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WOMEN REFRAME THE LIMITS PLACED ON THEM?

Each year, International Women's Day brings forward powerful global themes. This year, the United Nations has called for "rights, justice, and action for all women and girls" reminding us that structural barriers to equality still exist across many parts of society.

These conversations are necessary and long overdue.

Yet alongside these structural realities, there is another quieter dynamic worth examining: how women themselves interpret and respond to the limitations placed before them.

For decades, discussions around women's empowerment have focused largely on removing barriers, from unequal pay and limited representation to the career interruptions many women experience through caregiving responsibilities or motherhood. These challenges are real and

Reinvention.

deserve attention.

But what happens when women begin to reinterpret those very limitations in unexpected ways?

In many professional environments, progress is expected to follow a straight line. Careers are measured through visible milestones such as titles, promotions, and a steady climb upward. Deviation from that path often invites questions.

Women, however, frequently encounter a different kind of scrutiny.

Instead of being asked about their next promotion or leadership role, the questions directed at women often revolve around family life, children's education, or domestic responsibilities. Professional ambition, in many cases, is quietly treated as secondary.

For a long time, this dynamic has been seen entirely as a disadvantage, and in many ways it is. When women's professional aspirations are underestimated, opportunities can be overlooked and contributions

undervalued.

Yet sometimes that same underestimation produces something unexpected: space.

When fewer people are watching your professional trajectory closely, there is occasionally more room to step off the conventional path without constant judgement.

I began to recognise this subtle shift in my own journey. Many conversations directed at me were less about career progression and more about family routines or my child's academic exams. At first, it felt like a familiar reminder of how easily society can overlook a woman's professional identity.

But gradually I began to notice another side to it.

The absence of constant career scrutiny also created room to think differently about the direction I wanted to take. Without the pressure to demonstrate visible

" Sometimes the very limitations placed on women create the space where reinvention begins. "

progress at every step, I found space to experiment, reconsider my priorities, and quietly build something of my own.

Across many industries today, women are using similar moments of transition to reshape their professional paths. Career pauses, caregiving responsibilities, or stepping away from

traditional employment structures are increasingly becoming moments of

reinvention rather than simply interruptions.

Some women start businesses. Others pursue new qualifications, shift industries, or design careers that allow for greater

flexibility and independence. What once appeared to be a break in momentum can sometimes become the foundation for an entirely different kind of growth.



When expectations evolve collectively, reinvention becomes easier for everyone.

International Women's Day often celebrates visible achievements. But sometimes the more compelling stories lie in quieter transformations.

Not every turning point arrives in dramatic fashion. Some begin when a woman realises that the space others assumed she would simply occupy can instead become the space where she builds something entirely new.

And sometimes, that realisation is the most powerful gift one woman can pass on to another.

Gayani Punchihewa

Marketing and Communications Strategist

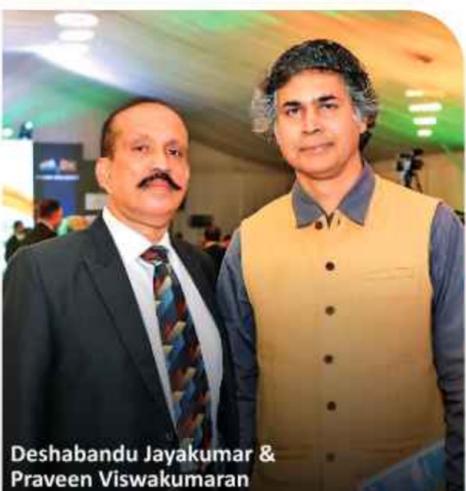
Founder, FireCircle by G



Dr. Mrs. Wasanthi Ratnayake with her husband Mr. Ajith



Mts Kailasapillai with the Hon. PM



Deshabandu Jayakumar & Praveen Viswakumaran



Supplement Coordinated by Kamini Mukunthan & Raviesha Ranathunge



Mrs. Yamuna Ganeshalingam, Mrs. Kailasapillai and Mrs. Renganathan