



ADC Mumbai Mix



Pg 19 We give you the low-down on a few great celebrity fashion lines

ADC Pg 20 We tell you what to expect from the GAP's latest summer clothing collection

Afternoon Despatch & Courier

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FOR THE WOMEN OF TOMORROW

Our greatest strength is the ability to rally for a cause. This Women's Day, the **Mumbai Mix Team** speaks to women in the city about equality and much more

PLEDGE FOR PARITY

The theme for Women's Day this year as set by United Nations happens to be #PledgeForParity, which has been chosen to accelerate gender equality. And this year, both men and women can pledge to take a stand and help achieve gender parity — whether that involves helping women and girls achieve their ambitions, calling for gender-balanced leadership, respecting and valuing differences, developing more inclusive and flexible cultures or rooting out workplace biases.



>> The theme for Women's Day this year is #PledgeForParity and aims to spread awareness about equality

established in my field, I don't face this inequality." Ayushi adds, "Until I was a slightly established brand, vendors would usually ask to speak to my father or elder brother before confirming my order. While this was quite unfair, I look back and laugh about it now."

Surrounded by positivity

Niharika Jhunjhunwala, the founder of Sugarbox, has learned how to shut out the hurtful, negative comments. She says, "Luckily for me, I have been surrounded by positive people who motivate me to excel further. I was brought up in a liberal family, where I was taught to be a strong-headed, independent woman. I am able to condition my feelings. When people try to make me feel small, I push those thoughts away and concentrate on excelling in fields that matter." We think this is something that every woman should be able to do.

WOMEN WHO OWNED 2015

- Kiran Gandhi famously ran the London Marathon without a sanitary napkin while she was menstruating in early April 2015.
- The first ever all-women contingent participated in India's Republic Day parade.
- The crew of the film *Angry Indian Goddesses* showed the country that female characters can be complicated and dynamic.
- Kangana Ranaut refused to endorse a popular fairness cream because it promoted unrealistic beauty standards.
- Imperator Furiosa (from the movie *Mad Max: Fury Road*) — we know she's not a real person, but she still OWNED IT!
- All the women who can now join the Indian Air Force and defend our country with their male counterparts as per a rule passed early in October.
- Hillary Clinton is in the running for the President of the USA, and is unafraid in the face of evil (read: Donald Trump).



It's Women's Day and girls, you know that it's a day dedicated to you. But, before the celebrations begin, let's look at the power the day commands. We're not going to bore you with the done and dusted details about how this day came to be or the socio-political movements taking place around the world, but we are going to talk about this year's theme — parity. We spoke to women around the city about the biggest challenges that women face today and asked them to tell us how we can inspire the next generation of women leaders. We also asked them what advice they would give their younger selves!

PARITY ON A PEDESTAL

That's this year's theme. Equality for women has been championed for the longest time, but do women truly feel as though they're on equal ground? Read on to find out.

Professional disparity

Deepali Patole, who works in the HR department at Ziqitza Healthcare Limited, tells us that she doesn't think inequality is as rampant as it used to be, but has been on the wrong end of the scale a few times herself. She tells us, "People sometimes assume that women cannot handle certain professional aspects the same way that men can. When the time comes to select someone for a powerful position, most people support men. They think women won't do justice to their jobs because of the responsibilities that they handle at home."

Dr. Farah Ingale, consultant physician and diabetologist, and Ayushi Shah, owner and head chef of Icing on Top, both echo that sentiment. Dr. Farah tells us, "I have been practicing for 30 years. Earlier, female doctors were called 'sisters'; priority was given to male doctors. People used to feel that male doctors were more knowledgeable. However, now that I am

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We are getting there

Sonia Notani, head of products, training and remote channels at IndiaFirst Life Insurance, says that she doesn't feel different or unequal. "However, I can sense the vast opportunity that lies in front of me as opposed to what the previous generation had! We can make choices at our own behest. I am very comfortable with my role at work and in society at large and do not feel any sense of displacement or inequality."

Equality is in our hands

Monica Suri, general manager at Le Meridien in Kochi, says that feeling different and being treated differently are two very different things. "First, we never refer to ourselves as female or women associates — we are not a category. We are leaders who are women, so let's focus on task, not gender. I believe in leading with the power of language, cultivating relationships, building teams that release the energy and potential of others, developing flexible and fluid management systems, and building an inclusive organisation."



>> There are certain things that we need to stop telling young girls so that we can move forward on equal footing



THINGS WE SHOULD STOP TELLING YOUNG GIRLS

The world toughens us up. But, it can also make us bitter and leave us desensitised. However, we shouldn't impinge our thoughts and values on anyone else, least of all the positive and energetic minds of young girls. Here are a few things that we should stop telling young girls (right now).

- What they can or should wear
- What career is best suited for them as women
- That they need to do certain things to be beautiful or better looking
- "A boy hurts you because he likes/cares for you."
- That they can't have it all — a healthy professional life, love, a fun circle of friends
- "If someone buys you something, you are indebted to them."

THE BIGGEST HURDLE?

Creating a conducive environment

Arushi Verma, the co-founder of FitPass, a service that gives you no-contract access to gyms and fitness centres, says that there needs to be a more supportive environment for women; and we couldn't agree more! "This will create more women decision makers who can mentor, guide and facilitate younger women entrepreneurs."



Fear of failing

Riddhi Gupta of House of Wow, tells us, "There are several reasons that women are afraid of becoming entrepreneurs or, for that matter, taking up serious professions. The biggest change could be to become fearless. Most people are scared of failing — and this is indeed a factor because it can affect a woman's family. However, fear can be a good thing too; it keeps you from making decisions that could be too risky." She also thinks that access to proper education is lacking for underprivileged women.



Disproportionate division of labour at home

Tanya Satish, an environmentalist and entrepreneur, tells us, "A fundamental flaw is that men don't share equal responsibility at home. Women have to juggle parenting and other household responsibilities while working. If we give married women more incentives, and put more emphasis on men helping out at home, we will certainly have more female leaders."

The question of opportunity

Ipsita Das, general manager, expansion — west from Uber India, says that the problem lies in our minds. "Women have the ability to rise up the ladder, but there is the question of opportunity. It is the stereotype against women that takes several opportunities away from us." To solve this issue, she says, women should be given more opportunities and allowed flexible work timings to balance work and home life.



The mindset of society

Fatima Agarkar, an educationist, tells us, "The corporate world is already recognising that women are great multitaskers and more women are emerging as leaders. However, the mindset of society as a whole also needs to change. We should discard our traditional thoughts for more progressive ones and only then will we see a change."



INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

Dispel your self-doubt

Actress, producer and director Divya Khosla Kumar has an inspirational message for all young women. "Stop doubting yourself!" she says, "You truly can do anything you want. Make smart decisions that honour your heart, your future and your sense of self. Know that you have what it takes for whatever it is you want to do. Confidence is a quality that you can find in yourself no matter how shy or uncertain you are. You discover it by taking one small step at a time; have faith that you can truly accomplish whatever you want with persistence, the right belief and determination."



talent and skill than just flesh and skin. We must remember this and live life without any fear or phobia about who will say what. Everyone need not be a leader or a celebrity, but you can be master of your life and lead both family and society. You have to show the desire to perform and you will get the support that you deserve."



GOING BACK IN TIME

If you had the chance to give yourself advice or hone a skill that you need now (a sort of time-adjusted insurance policy, if you will), what would that be? We asked women what they would like to tell their younger selves.

Absorb all that you can

Actress Divya Khosla Kumar has some golden words of advice here too. She says, "I wish I spoke more to people who were older and wiser than I was — my grandparents, whom I respected and looked up to. Their lives are living history. So, I have a message for all the young people out there: take advantage of their wisdom and history, and grab the opportunity for advice from your elders while you can!"

Baleful biases

Falguni Peacock from the fashion designer duo Falguni and Shane Peacock says, "I wish I knew that no matter how much effort women put in, they are always judged and victimised." But, she maintains that society's mentality towards women is changing and today, we are more open to accepting women in positions of power.

Management skills

Adhuna Bhabani, founder and creative director, BBlunt, thinks time management is an important lesson to learn. She tells us, "If there is something I wish I knew on my career path, it would be time management skills — for a better work and life balance."



Patience is a virtue

Icing on Top's Ayushi says, "Patience. Back then if I had the patience that I have now, I think I would have made better deals and thought more long-term rather than short-term. That being said, I'm pretty sure that five years later I'll look back and say I wish I had more patience five years ago."

"It's okay to be different"

Aarathi Arambhan, curator of MeSoHappy and The Captain's Table, tells us, "It's great to think out of the box. Always take risks while being firm and sticking to your principles. Even though people may doubt you, always keep your head held high and know that with a clear conscience and hard work, that you will always get results, even if the wait is long."



Sarah Gonsalves, co-founder of SS HOMME, also has similar thoughts. "Young girls must stand for what they believe in and achieve their own personal goals. Of course, they will come across several road blocks — gender bias could be one of them — but, it is their own strength and set of beliefs that will help them achieve the most."

Chase your dreams

Karishma Chawla, a Mumbai-based nutritionist, tells us that when you're busy chasing down a big dream, smaller ones come true as well. Her advice? "Believe in your dreams, take chances, take responsibility of your life, always be ready to help and love unconditionally." Good advice indeed.



Ignore the negative comments

Sugarbox founder Niharika says, "Be confident enough to stand up for what you believe in. People talk because they can talk. Learn to ignore negative comments and strive to become the best you can."



The world is your oyster

Sonia Notani has a few inspirational words. She tells us, "Women should not shy away from taking on responsibility and building the necessary support systems that help us leverage ourselves. The ecosystem responds to our needs only if we state them clearly."

Beauty fades

Dr. Jayashree Todkar, bariatric and laparoscopic surgeon has a different kind of insight. She says, "A woman has much more