

UNBLEMISHED

Beautypreneur Stories



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Preface

With a swift dash of her brush, a Beautypreneur hides a blemish for her client. What you see, is a face that covers up its imperfections. Yet, when you see a face that's hiding flaws, you know there is more than meets the eye. And so, we encourage our BPs tell their stories as they have lived them, with their highs and their lows, with their wins and their losses. Here is a collection of stories from the lives of our gorgeous Beautypreneurs - UNBLEMISHED in every way.

For us, the Beautypreneurs have been a big inspiration for each and every one at Dhriiti. We have heard their stories of change, their tales of courage, their narration of resistance and resilience, their voice of pride and their celebration of success and failure alike.

This book is really special to us at Dhriiti, as we celebrate the power of Women Entrepreneurship showcased by each one of our Beautypreneurs. We bring here 21 stories of Beautypreneurs who are inspiration for many young women in their communities. And we believe that this book will inspire many more girls and women with their simple but extraordinary stories.



Ashwinder

“औरत की कमाई खानी है, तो मैं घर में न बैठूँ?” Ashwinder’s husband had no objections to his wife learning the skills of a beautician. However, he was very clear that he wouldn’t let his wife step out to work! Ashwinder knew she had to begin her journey with getting her husband to join her own team.

“जिसके साथ रहना है, पहले उसको मनाओ ! चार पैसे सभी को चाहिए! जब पैसे कमाओगी, तब husband को समझ आएगा!” Says Ashwinder, as that’s what she exactly did. For a husband who wouldn’t let his wife step out of the house, her husband accompanied Ashwinder to the first Chai-Garam meet at the Dhriiti Office. It was his first experience of meeting other women like his wife. Little did he know that it was Ashwinder’s quiet way of introducing her husband to the stories of women who yearned for an identity of their own. From a man who disapproved of his wife’s small earnings (Rs 20-Rs 30 for a service), he understood the value of small gains. He allowed Ashwinder to begin working at home. With Dhriiti’s backing and the BP program fuelling her efforts, Ashwinder persevered. She began training girls under her and as the money started rolling in Ashwinder’s confidence in herself grew. Her husband was not oblivious to the small changes in her personality. Ashwinder’s wardrobe was undergoing a gradual change, she was beginning to groom herself. “I’ll stop everything,” he threatened, however as Ashwinder’s earnings increased, he realised that there is merit in supporting his wife.

Today, Ashwinder has a salon of her own. Her husband has invested in it. He agrees that his wife is doing an incredible job of running a salon and a house. All that she needs is a little wind beneath her wings. Today, Ashwinder is a changed woman. She is confident, she is independent, she is a decision maker of her life and her business.

Ashwinder’s story is not an unusual one. The journey towards self-realisation begins by taking claim of one’s life. Ashwinder realised that she couldn’t conquer the world unless she had her husband’s support. For a woman may be tied down with her family’s expectations of her, however true liberation happens when they realise her need to have an identity. Ashwinder’s brush strokes have covered up all the inhibitions of her family. Her wardrobe has changed, and so has her walk outside her home, all her husband supports her salon and celebrates the new Ashwinder that she has become! Did this happen in a day, definitely not! Is this something that every woman aspires for? Absolutely yes!



Fatima

Fatima's everyday struggle was to open her salon! She lived far from the salon and on most days she failed to keep steady operational hours. Fatima had two small children at home who were a priority. An entrepreneur's journey begins with a negotiation with the self.

When we spoke to Fatima, she said, "I always wanted to open a parlour of my own." The first parlour she opened was 30 minutes away from her house, a distance that Fatima would usually cover on foot, unless she had money to spare on local transport. For a BP who was struggling to keep her salon open for optimum business hours, every expense was worth saving.

So what was keeping Fatima from opening her salon on time everyday? For that you'd have to walk in her footsteps to reach her home where Fatima left her two small children behind. As their primary caregiver, Fatima was often torn between her children and her love for her work as a beautician. And so, for Fatima to run her salon she had to negotiate with herself first! The perennial work-life balance is really universal for women & their careers. It was important for Fatima to value her skills and abilities. It was equally important for her to value her own dreams & aspirations despite her priorities as a mother. For us, a woman becomes a BP first in her head. Once she has the right attitude and self-belief of "I am an Entrepreneur", then she is better equipped to handle the multiple identities of being a wife, mother, daughter and sister. Under Dhriti's mentoring, Fatima discovered the value of training. Over a period of time she realised that training was a profitable and sustainable way of earning.

Today, with her earnings, Fatima has opened a salon closer home. She trains girls in beauty services and also hires some of them to work in her salon. She hopes to open an academy, someday, people would go to Fatima to learn the skills! Her children are still small, only 9 and 12. She dreams of venturing out of the confines of Sangam Vihar. She dreams of opening a salon-cum-boutique with her husband who is a tailor in Lajpat Nagar.

"अब तो बच्चे छोटे हैं। जब बड़े हो जायेंगे तब अच्छी जगह पे salon खोलना है। अब अपने काम पर confidence है, बस यहाँ से बाहर जाकर काम करना है!"

No dream is small, as long as you steer steadily towards it. Fatima gives us hope that a woman can manage her priorities well. That she can manage home & business with as much dexterity as she can use her hands skilfully while delivering a treatment.



Qaisar

Qaisar is 41 years old. Her older son is 19, and she is eagerly waiting for her son to get married so he brings home her daughter-in-law. Qaisar is not looking at dominating another woman, she is looking to set an example of how one woman can encourage another to chase her dreams.

The eager learner that she is, Qaisar wanted to chase her dreams of being an independent & earning woman. However, dreams were not easy to chase. Her family resisted each of her dreams and subjected her to abuse & trauma for years. It was Qaisar who kept her dreams alive despite the odds.

“मैं खुद भी पार्लर नहीं गयी थी! कभी जाने की जरूरत ही नहीं पड़ी!” She says. When she joined Dhriiti and met other enterprising Beautypreneurs, something stirred inside her. “सोये हुए ढेर को जगा दिया। सबने सिखाया की उठो, बाहर जाओ। 19 साल अकेले घर से बाहर नहीं गयी थी। आज इतनी हिम्मत आ गयी है की अब मैं fashion designing का कोर्स भी कर रही हूँ।” However this transformation was not easy.

It took Qaisar more than 19 years to convince her husband to allow her to open a parlour. Coming from a traditional Muslim family, her community didn't regard beauty services as a respectable profession. There was resistance from all, however Qaisar managed to open a home parlour. And as the money started to flow in, perceptions changed.

“औरत की इज्जत बढ़ती है अगर वो कमाती है। यह मेरी 19 साल की सीख है, कि Husband कमाए और मैं सँहूँ। दो-चार पैसे मैं भी कमा लूँ तो रौब भी बढ़ता है और husband की respect भी मिलती हैं।”

Qaisar joined the Beautypreneur Program 6-8 months after she started her parlour. In the past few months that she underwent the program, her salon has gone from being a passion to a business she is raring to grow! Qaisar took help from her son to use Facebook to enter a bridal competition. “दुल्हन सजाने का बहुत गौक है, तमन्ना है की अपने हाथों से सुन्दर दुल्हन सजाऊँ।”, says Qaisar. She eventually won the competition!

Today Qaisar meets BPs younger than her, girls smarter & more energetic than her. In her vicinity too there are other salons, but she is not worried. Qaisar feels that all girls should be independent and liberated, something she wants for her future daughter-in-law & herself.

“जब खुद सांस बनूंगी, तब सारे रिकार्ड थोड़ दूँगी! मैं नहीं मानती की मेरी उम्र है! जब तक हाथ पाँव हैं, तब तक काम करूंगी।”

When Qaisar says that she is like a lioness who has woken up, we believe her, because that's what we really hope this project does to women.



Sadhna Jagdish

“मैं customer से घबराती थी। पता नहीं क्यों लेकिन अगर कोई कुछ पूछे तो मैं जवाब नहीं दे सकती थी।”

What brings confidence for a Beautypreneur? Would you call it experience, or skill? Sadhna Jagdish had been in the profession for more than three decades, yet she lacked the confidence to speak to her customers. Sadhna knew that the journey from being a beautician to a Beautypreneur cannot be made with a tied up tongue!

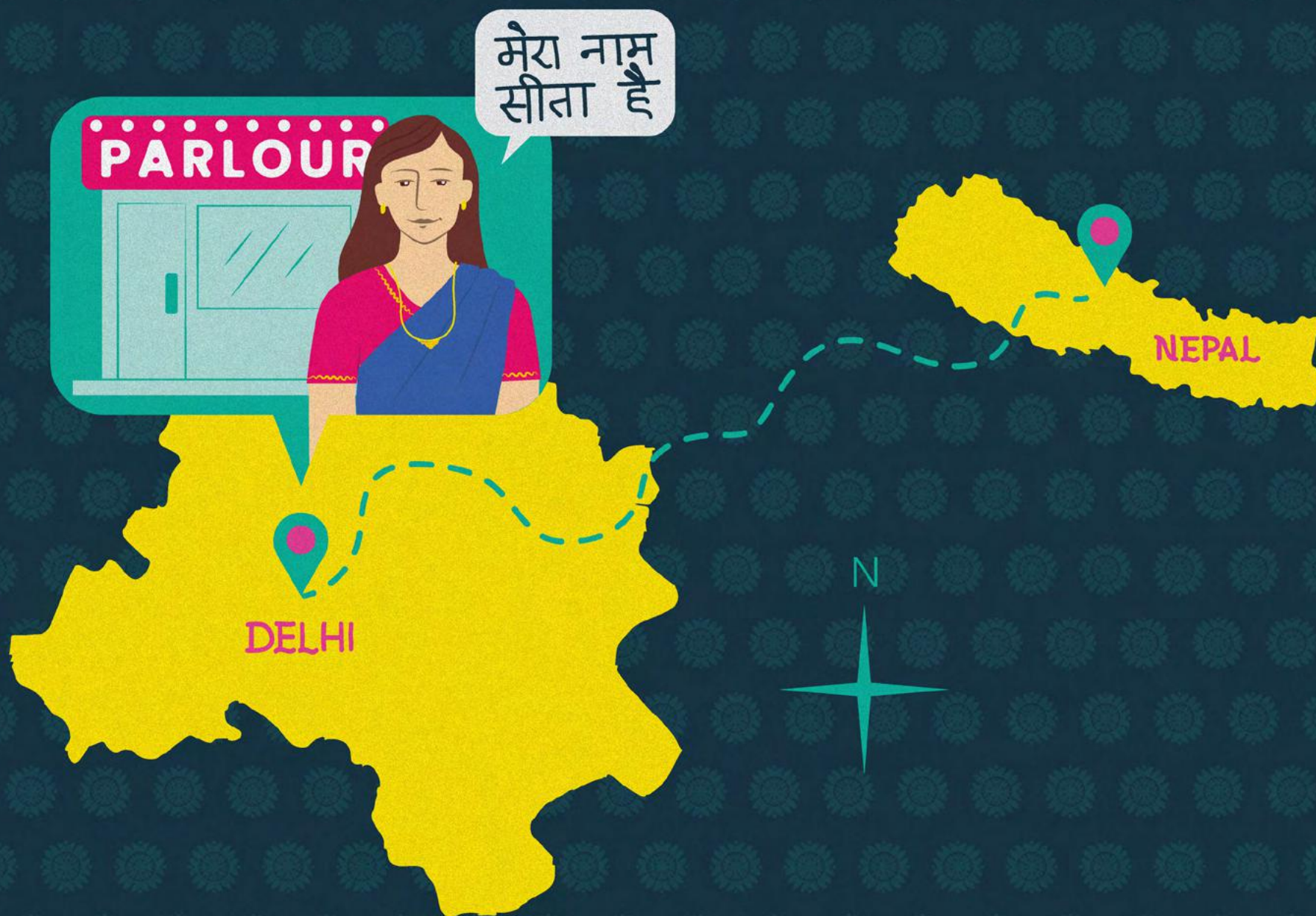
In 1985, when Sadhna Jagdish entered the field the idea of women stepping out for beauty services was still niche. Personal grooming was still a new idea for Indian women and not everyone spent money on their monthly hair cuts or facials. 'If a customer had Rs 10 to spare, she would think whether she would spend it on herself or buying an extra vegetable for her kitchen,' recalls Sadhna. Trained at Shehnaz Hussain and Habib run centres, Sadhna had picked up some fine skills. However, for the traditional girl from a Haryanvi family, speaking to her customers beyond the ghoonghat was the biggest challenge.

“In those days, there weren't too many treatments to choose from. We had limited products and services to offer. Yet, if someone asked me a question, I'd not know what to say!” Recalls Sadhna. Her husband had helped her set up her salon, yet the challenge was to own it and take charge of its destiny!

In one of her earliest monthly meetings at Dhriiti, Sadhna had crumbled down to tears when someone asked her to introduce herself. However, when she was asked to give a demonstration, her hands worked beautifully without any fear. In Sadhna, we realised, is a tactful beautician who lacks the confidence to unravel the Beautypreneur inside. The team worked with her slowly, inviting her to take momentary leads during monthly meetings. When other women clapped and cheered for her, Sadhna felt the power of a community. Sadhna began taking more initiative, she realised that to step ahead she had to catch up with the times. While she picked up technical skills, Sadhna also readied herself for her first ever Seminar! When the day arrived, Sadhna conducted a seminar with 75 attendees! Once the word spread, she conducted a paid seminar with 30 attendees!

Sadhna's wardrobe has changed. She has lifted the ghoonghat. She is comfortable with western wear and ready to move with the times. The Sadhna of today is a different avatar from her past. She looks back at her journey with a tinge of nostalgia and regret, “अगर आप confident नहीं हैं, तो आप कामियाब नहीं होंगे। पहले खुद पर ही confidence नहीं था, तो दूसरो को कैसे confidence दिखाएं ? अगर यह होता तो आज 2-3 parlour होते मेरे!”

That this is not the journey with others, is what we hope all Beautypreneurs learn from her!



Seeta

“मैं खुशबू को बदबू और बदबू को खुशबू बोलती थी।” says Seeta with a laugh! At 17, Seeta travelled to Delhi from Nepal. She was not just an outsider but also unversed in the ways of the big city. Her husband had been working in the city and their families felt that if he married a Nepali girl, she would convince him to visit his village every year. However, that was not to be! In fact it was her husband who kept her away from her family for several years.

Seeta as a Nepali bride relied on her husband to help her navigate through her new world. She was learning to call Delhi, home, but she didn't speak Hindi. Since her husband had limited time to spend with her at home, he forbade her from venturing out. And so Seeta spent several agonising years in her home with no one to talk to.

“Back home, I was used to seeing mountains. Now all I could see was water tanks from the roof of my house in Delhi,” she recalls. By the time she became a mother Seeta grew restless, she was aching to get out, meet people and do something that gave her a purpose. Her husband was against a job and yet, despite the odds, he allowed her to work part-time in a salon. That's where Seeta learnt the skills of a beautician.

“I worked 8 hours to earn Rs 3000 a month. The money was not enough and the work got tougher over the years. I would earn her Rs 4000 a day! When I asked for a raise, Didi asked me to leave,” says Seeta with a hint of pain.

Even while she was earning money, Seeta had to continue to negotiate with her husband. She knew she had the potential to earn more, for it was she who ran her Didi's parlour. That's when she decided to open her own parlour. And she did, but that's when her troubles took another turn.

“Didi spread rumours about me in the vicinity. She told people that I had Cancer and that the doctors had said I won't recover. She sent goons to chase me down the street. I was afraid to step out alone,” says Seeta. Her husband didn't believe her. He felt that she was making up these imaginary threats, but he hardly knew that the gentle hands that gave a caressing massage were also capable of creating a storm in a competitor's business.

This is where Dhriti helped Seeta. While she focussed on her salon, Seeta stuck to the work that she knew best. While word-of-mouth and efficient skills helped Seeta retain her loyal customers, she remained being generous to her trainees.

“Most of the girls in Lado Sarai are trained by me. They offer discounts and more offers than me, but that's okay. I know where I am,” she says with confidence. Seeta is a changed woman. She sends money to her family in Nepal & visits them once a year. Her customers wait for her to switch on her phone once she crosses the border. “Why do you have to go to Nepal? Stay with us, they say! Everyone waits for me to return so they can return to my parlour,” laughs Seeta.

20 years later since she came to Delhi, Seeta is a confident woman who has navigated through the city and established her salon with pride. Now it is her husband who has taken a leaf out of her life. He has quit his job and started a Chinese fast food outlet. While he tried to navigate through running an enterprise, it was Seeta who ran the house.

We have discovered that resistance has the potential of converting to inspiration, all you need to do is keep doing your own thing!



R Rachna

In the 13 years that Rachna had taken a break from the beauty business, she had got married and started a family. She may not have returned to a salon until it became the only way to handle an abusive marriage and the depression that she was into. She wanted to take the responsibility of raising her children. When she finally decided to step out she began with a refresher beautician course. But where was the business plan?

“शादी के पहले अपने पससे तैयार करो। ज़िन्दगी में पढ़ाई से ज़्यादा skills चाहिए। अपने पैरों पर खड़ा होना चाहिए।” At 34, Rachna is still in the prime of her life. However for a life that has seen tremendous struggle, turmoil and depression Rachna is wiser than her years. When Rachna decided to take charge of her life, her first door opened towards a career as a beautician. She upgraded her skills by taking a new course, convinced her husband to loan her Rs1.5 lakhs in her salon, and got started.

Working with Dhriiti within the Beautypreneur program was the doorway that Rachna was looking for. There were other parlours in her Dakshinpuri neighbourhood in Delhi, so she learnt to use Facebook, WhatsApp to reach her customers. She designed pamphlets, and discount cards to attract and retain them. As the money started flowing in, Rachna focussed on the next step. She started training other girls to supplement her income. As the weeks rolled by, Rachna gradually understood the value of financial planning. She worked closely with her mentors in the program to design an advanced curriculum and a business plan to take her ‘academy’ ahead, make it into a brand name, increase her enrolments and income. Her aim is simple, “कम पैसों में beauty skills सिखाना है।”

While Rachna deals with the increasing competition around her, there are days good and bad. She has gradually returned her husband’s borrowed money and now handles her finances by herself. In her we now see a woman who has grown wiser, smarter and stronger.

Financial competency for a Beautypreneur comes in various stages. From understanding the profitability of daily activities, to drawing salary to keeping record of a projected cash flow to decide future strategies; we ultimately hope that our BPs are able to draw sound business plans for expansion needs.



Veena

From a profession that is seen as a hobby or a means to deviate one's mind, to a mind shift towards being a supplementary income, Veena was miles away from calling herself a Beautypreneur. How do you cover the journey from being a beautician to a Beautypreneur? Moreover how do you convince a woman to make this journey during the course of a program?

"अपनी कला को सबके सामने निकालो ! यह कोई गलत काम नहीं है! आज डॉक्टर और टीचर भी घर से काम कर रहे हैं। हम क्यों नहीं?" For Veena to say this with confidence to other beautypreneurs says a lot about the journey she has made. Veena opened her home-salon 4 years back. However, working from home put her salon on the slow burner. She was not regular, she didn't keep stock of her earnings, there was no plan or a vision. The latter comes later, only when a woman realises that her effort is yielding results and she is gaining something out of it.

When Veena joined the Beautypreneur, the first thing she saw was the number of younger girls who were beating the odds to make a living. Veena's life was much easier compared to them. This small stimulus made her value the importance of earning. Veena put her heart into her business and began taking stock of her income and expenditure. She started maintaining the log books, keeping a close watch on business trends, particularly the demand in her Janakpuri neighbourhood.

Veena conducted seminars that helped her get the word out in the vicinity. As the word spread Veena started making home visits to customers who were willing to pay a premium for the comfort of a salon at home. Veena now rides on a Scooty that she has bought with her earnings and her next aim is to buy a car for her family.

The first step towards building a financial competency is to understand the profitability of daily business. For Veena to take her work more seriously it was imperative that she understand what she could gain by building on her activities. **पैसे का हिसाब** for Veena was a grey area and so learning to maintain log books to map her daily income and expenditure changed her business incredibly.



Manjulata

When Manjulata first learnt the skills of a beautician, she was a young girl. When she got married, she gave up her skills and settled down with her family. Years later when she picked up the tools again, she realised that her grip on her skills were not as firm as her closest competitor!

Manjulata would have never thought of herself as a Beautypreneur if not for a personal loss. In order to help her divert her mind, Manjulata's husband asked her to go back to a skill that she had learnt years ago. She had done a beautician course and even worked in a parlour before marriage. However domesticity and years of being out of practice had dulled her confidence. When Manjulata decided to begin her journey again, she needed a little confidence.

Manjulata's husband helped her to rent a shop near her house and set up her parlour. This was the easiest part. "इस एक काम से मुझे खुशी मिलती थी! Beautician का काम ही आता था, तो इसलिए दोबारा से काम शुरू किया।" However, from working in someone else's parlour to setting up one's own, this was a new world for the beautician. The beauty industry had steadily moved ahead and Manjulata soon realised that her customers were asking for specific services, some of which she didn't know! Manjulata joined the Beautypreneur program to unlearn & relearn skills she had. The program also gave her a chance to expand her horizon and learn business skills that she didn't have before.

"काम को आगे बढ़ाने के बारे में सोचनी लगी" Once she was in the fray again, Manjulata truly diverted her energies and attention to utilising the Beautypreneur pick technical and business skills from either hands. On the one hand if she practiced her hand at Keratin and hair smoothening, on the other hand she learnt to market her services to her customers.

For Manujalata, her parlour is a safe space that lets her forget her trauma. In a good month Manjulata earns Rs 18,000 - Rs 20,000, but not everybody does this for money.



Rajesh Tomar

When a young Rajesh learnt beautician skills more than 22 years back, she didn't know the circumstances under which the skills would come handy. She wouldn't have gone down the path of a beautypreneur if not for a sudden & dramatic change in her married life.

8 years back, Rajesh's in-laws asked her husband to leave home with his family. Living in a joint family meant the flow of economics would run through a common pool of money. When Rajesh and her husband set up their new home, they had to find new means of survival. This is when Rajesh recalled her skills, the ones she had learnt in her youth. In the beginning she worked for an NGO, but when that closed down, she found it difficult to find a job.

“शादी-शुदा औरतों को को काम नहीं देना चाहता था! पार्लर में काम करने के लिए अपने आप को presentable रखना था!”

It was then that she took a loan of Rs 6 lakhs to set up her own parlour. While her husband helped her pay the EMI towards the loan, Rajesh focussed on running the parlour. When she joined the Beautypreneur program in 2019, Rajesh was focussed on increasing her revenue.

Rajesh's parlour was running under a loan that she had to pay for. She also had to ensure that her customers through her door! But they weren't coming. There were other parlours in the vicinity and there was competition. Rajesh began by taking charge of her shop. She set up a board and displayed the latest offers she ran. She went door - to - door informing her customers about her parlour and the schemes she ran.

Rajesh also learnt to handle disappointments. She realised that her helping hand could leave her parlour with his customers in tow. She learnt that ethics is important in her industry more than anything else! Rajesh stayed relentless. She tapped into the PG's in her vicinity of Laxmi Nagar, sharing her pamphlets and numbers.

Rajesh's parlour and her business was beginning to get steady. She started to enjoy the monthly meets where she met many other women like her. “अपने लिए जीने का time मिला,” she said.

When COVID-19 hit the beauty and grooming industry, it hit Rajesh more than the others. For months, she tried her best to manage her parlour. However, in the long run, she had to close it down.

“शरीर कहता है बैठ जा, दिमाग कहता है चल चल! I am not selling my goods yet. I will keep them. I will open up again,” she said.



Archana

“रोज़ 2-4 घंटे समय निकालो और काम करो। रोज़ाना काम से अच्छी कमाई हो जाती है।” That’s the advice 24 year old Archana gives other BPs.

Archana was in class 12th when she underwent a beautician’s course. Just like she learnt computers as well. However, it wasn’t until she met a friend’s sister, a few years later, that she took it seriously. Initially, Archana was not allowed to work in a parlour. Her mother resisted and opposed the idea for a couple of months. However, when Archana refused to relent, it was she who took the idea to her husband. Archana by then had been working in a parlour to polish her own skills.

While Archana had savings worth Rs 90,000 to invest of her own, she took some help from her father to open her own parlour. By the time Archana joined the Beautypreneur Program, she had just about started to understand the journey of a parlour owner. Even though she had worked in a parlour before, working with Dhriiti she learnt to play it out with her strengths.

“I have learnt to make packages, draw customers & build relations with them. Location is the key to a parlour. Even now there are other parlours in the vicinity, some much older and known than mine. However, there are customers who are reluctant to go into someone’s home parlour. That’s where I have an advantage,” says Archana.

Archana has learnt the merits of branding. Outside her parlour bears a board reading, “NAME OF PARLOUR”. Recently, when she started training girls, it was her board that drew customers. Seeing her, the neighbouring parlours have also started putting boards outside their parlours.

At 24, Archana is independent. She has a boyfriend, but doesn’t want to get married yet. She is very clear that work comes before everything else for her. In fact, she doesn’t want to get married into a family where she has to take permission to work! “पहले अपना दुकान लेना है। अब्दादी नहीं करनी, काम को आगे बढ़ाना है।” she says. Archana’s boyfriend has invested in a parlour that she is managing for him.

While Archana has her age in her favour, she is wise enough to learn from the experiences of others. “कुछ भी दिक्कत हो तो दीदियों से पूँछ लेते है। यहाँ न को डर है न को competition!” Says Archana.

There is a sense of optimism and confidence in Archana. Something tells us that Archana would be a good bridge between the young and old BPs.



Gudia

When Gudia was in class 10th, she worked part-time as a helping hand at a neighbourhood parlour. It was during these days that she developed a knack for the trade. Although young in age, Gudia was quick to understand that this is where her talent lay and where she could make a livelihood.

In 2014, soon after she finished her 12th, Gudia joined an ITI course to learn advanced beautician skills. She also opened a parlour at home so she could practice her skills while at it. By the time she completed the course in 2017, she had set up a parlour outside her home, was training girls during the weekend and running the parlour during late evening hours from 8pm - 10 pm on weeknights. It was this mix of training, learning, working that helped Gudia learn on her feet using her hands all through the day!

In 2019, Gudia met Bharati, one of our BP in her training institute. When Gudia joined the BP program, she was already a few steps ahead of others. However, there were still many things she learnt during the course of the program. Gudia, until then, had focussed purely on the technical skills of the trade. For the first time, within the Beautpreneur program, she learnt how to calculate her earnings. "पहली बार अपनी कमाई देख कर दंग रह गयी!" She said! With her revenue scaling Rs 1,10,000 a month, Gudia realised there is a lot more that she can do with her business than she was actually doing!

Gudia runs her parlour in the conservative area of Khajuri Khaas. She relies completely on her good customer relations to draw business. She believes that it is her good communication and consultation skills that draw her customers to her. Even while she moved her parlour, her customers continued to make the extra walk to reach her.

At 24 years, Gudia is sharp and quick. She understands the business and she fully utilises the opportunities before her. While almost everyone has been adversely affected by COVID-19, Gudia is one of the few who has bounced back with optimism. During the lockdown months, she continued to train girls on WhatsApp. With a 2 hour class, Gudia taught a batch of 7 girls in a batch with complete ease.

Gudia is focussed and determined. She wants to create a brand and set up an academy. While we see all the tools and ingredients towards her plan, we believe Gudia will continue to inspire and instil confidence in other BPs.



Manju Chaudhury

Manju advocates the parlour business for women who want to run their homes and business with ease. Manju opened her salon 12-13 years back. She learnt from another lady at whose parlour she worked for a while.

When we met Manju we felt she had moulded her life and her parlour business around her home and her vicinity. Prahladpur was a deserted and forested area in the beginning. There were only a few parlours and not too many customers in the early days. There were only 4-5 customers a day. Working with Dhriiti, the Beautypreneur program showed her the potential of her parlour. She began by setting up a board and using word-of-mouth to spread the word about her new programs.

Initially, she was reluctant to teach because she didn't give a certificate of sorts. However, now she is a little more open to the idea. A single-woman show, Manju was also reluctant to hire girls in her parlour since there weren't as many customers. "काम खराब नहीं होना चाहिए!" She says.

In Manju, we see a woman who has suddenly woken up to the merits of running a parlour with vigour. She was quick to learn new skills like keratin, airbrush and makeup. She also says that she has learnt to speak to customers. "Now the customer knows everything, so we have to follow greater precautions." She says.

Manju believes that to run a parlour, one needs to be righteous and honest. Though she meets young parlour girls and other BPs through the program, she feels one needs to keep a check on oneself. "बदनाम भी हो सकते हैं, ईमानदारी से काम करो!" She adds.



Meena Kishore

Way back in 1995, Meena Kishore was in 11th class. Girls back then weren't allowed to work anywhere and hence the school encouraged girls to take up arts or commerce along with a vocational course like sewing or beautician. Meena knew she could learn sewing anywhere and so she went in to enrol herself in the beautician's course. Like every other teenager, in every generation, Meena wanted to look pretty! She kept it as a secret from her family, until her mother discovered it. Meena was still far from actually working in a parlour!

When she got married, her husband had very little knowledge of the industry. Meena's mother-in-law and sister-in-law looked down at her skills and completely disapproved of the beauty industry. Between 2001 - 2011, Meena and her family lived in Chandigarh. Once again, she took the opportunity to brush up her skills, however, even she was not allowed to work.

That is how it would have been, until the financial condition of the family severely suffered. This time, it was her husband who said, "Start with anything that you know!" And so, began Meena's tryst with her parlour. Meena took a 3 lakh loan to set up her parlour. Up until then, she had no knowledge of running an actual parlour. So, for the first 6 months, she was literally taken on a ride! She hired a trained girl to run her parlour. Very soon, she understood that Meena had neither the experience nor confidence to run the parlour without her! While the young girl extracted her price, Meena continued to suffer!

It was during this period that she met Kusum from Dhriiti. Meena, calls this the encounter that changed the course of her life and her parlour. While Meena joined the Beautypreneur program, she learnt new skills for the first time in her life. As she took charge of her parlour, she realised there is so much she has in her own hands. She learnt technical, marketing and financial skills at one go. She went on to earn about Rs 40,000 in a good month, enough to run her house when it needed her.

"ज़मीन आसमान का फर्क है!" Says Meena, recollecting her days when she started. Today, her husband and children support her. With her family behind her back, and knowledge on her side, Meena is more confident than we have ever seen her!



Radha

There are three words that we use to describe Radha. She is strong, she is feisty and she is resilient! Radha is someone who has rebuilt her life and with it, her identity with her parlour business. Married at 23 years old, Radha divorced her husband three years later. She refused to return to her parent's home in Uttar Pradesh, instead she stayed in a rented house, close to her relatives in Delhi. It was during the early days of struggle that she worked doggedly to make money in the property business. When real estate went for a slump, Radha decided to move on to do something that was more permanent and sustainable.

As a single woman, Radha knew she was vulnerable to society's allegations. Anyone could literally point fingers at her and question her character. In that way, the beauty industry was safe. "कोई जँगली नहीं उठाता ladies line में!" She said. For the first 3 years, she ran a parlour in Jaitpur. While she had learnt the skills way back in 2010, she knew she wanted to begin training. She got in touch with Godrej and discovered the Beautypreneur Program through them.

Radha attributes some integral learnings to the program. While hygiene is at the top, she feels she has learnt customer engagement and management. "मेरी ज़बान कड़वी है। पार्लर में customer को बोल देती थी, चप्पल बाहर खोल दो। Customer कभी नाराज़ भी हो जाती थी। अब ज़बान में मिठास आ गयी है। अब वही बात अच्छी तरह बोल लेती हूँ!" She says. Radha has also learnt to understand her customers and cater to their needs. She has learnt marketing skills, especially WhatsApp, that has helped her manage her business.

The association with Godrej has also helped. Radha feels that the Godrej certification draws more girls to her parlour, since other parlours don't give that. Undeterred and fearless, Radha is unafraid to begin again. While a recent spat with a competitor caused her to shut down her parlour, she knows she can set up again, anywhere! She is equally confident of her personal life now. While she is open to a second marriage, she knows she won't compromise again. "Clear करके चलेंगे! किसी के लिए parlour बंध नहीं करेंगे! एक बार धोखा खा चुके हैं!" She says with a flourish.



Rukmini

Rukmini owes her dreams to two women in her life, her mother who paid for her training and her mother-in-law who supported her to kick start her parlour. It was until 2001 when Rukmini's husband suffered a financial loss in his tailoring factory, that Rukmini decided to step in. After her mother paid for her training in Bharatpur, Rukmini returned to New Delhi to work in a neighbourhood parlour in Sheikh Sarai. After the initial days of practice, it was her mother-in-law who suggested that Rukmini offer door-to-door services to women.

Back in the days, Rukmini started working as a beautician out of desperation. "किसी चीज़ की पहचान नहीं थी, कोई सलाह देने वाला नहीं था, कोई godfather नहीं था!" She recalls. So while she offered door-to-door beauty services during the day, she returned to her husband's cosmetic shop to her one-chair parlour. There in the shop, she had a corner to herself where she attended her customers between 4pm - 7pm everyday. Her twin boys were in school most of the day and returned to her shop during the evenings after their tuitions. That's when the family headed home.

Rukmini would continue to be happy with her one-chair parlour, had it not been for the Beautypreneur project. For the first time she realised that she could dream big! Attending the BP meet was an eye-opener for her. "पहली बार लक्ष्य मिला, जैसे मानो कुँए से मेंढक निकला हो!" She says. Rukmini learnt several news skills that she realised would be beneficial for her dynamic enterprise. She learnt to keep good customer relations, keeping note of special dates during which a customer might want. Quite rightfully, Rukmini has also learnt to understand her customer's needs than constantly sell services. While in the beauty industry, Rukmini also learnt to maintain herself and look well presented at all times.

At other times, the BP network has benefitted Rukmini greatly. Where her own niece didn't help her in putting makeup together, it was fellow BP who stepped forward to help Rukmini. At another time, another BP took her along as a workshop companion to learn hairdressing skills. For the first time in 16 years since she started in this line, Rukmini feels she is not alone.

Sometime in early 2020, Rukmini's parlour & her husband's shop temporarily shifted areas, however, due to COVID-19 lockdown, Rukmini and her husband returned to their earlier space. When times are tough, they realise it's best to stay at a place where people know them. While Rukmini nurtures the dream of opening her own independent parlour, she also hopes to have enough money to open a shop for her husband. However, for the time being, Rukmini has decided to take a step back. Given the times that we are in, Rukmini has decided to focus on her twin boys.

"They are teenagers now. I want to spend most of my time with them. I will wait for them to finish their 10th, till I open a new parlour," she says.



Bhawani Devi

We believe that it is Bhawani's childhood that has made her so strong-willed and confident. Bhawani spent a difficult childhood in Patna where she raised her brother and younger sister since she was 12 years herself. By the time she got married and came to Delhi, she had resolved to make a success of her own life, no matter what.

While she learnt beautician skills 7 years ago, she didn't really work at a parlour initially. Instead she worked with a NGO where she trained other girls. However, the work at the NGO was also not ideal. While she had a training target to meet every month, her earnings were disproportionate. Bhawani left the NGO with a flash and a bang! However, it was her goodwill that made her students reach out to her.

It was one of her students who told Bhawani about 'Kusum Madam'. She reached out met Kusum in her home. It was a meeting, Bhawani says, that changed her life. While Kusum helped her find the first tools to set up her first parlour, Bhawani realised that training girls to work in a parlour and running one are completely different!

With a fire in her belly and the will to chase her dreams, Bhawani turned out to be a quick learner. She learned quick marketing skills, as she designed visiting cards and vouchers for her customers. She went door-to-door talking to the neighbourhood ladies about her parlour.

While Bhawani's parlour became popular, so did the detractors raise their heads. Newer parlours came up that offered similar services with lower prices. Despite the competition and threats from anti-social elements who want her to close her parlour, Bhawani is unshakeable. Here is what she has learnt so far and recommends others, "खेल mind का है! mind को समझ के चलो! खुद का business कभी डुबाता नहीं! दूसरों के काम से better अपना काम करो।"



Meena Gupta

You don't need lakhs of money to open a parlour. If you ask Meena Gupta, she would tell you that you could start one, in your home with an investment as low as Rs 2500! While Meena learnt the skills in 2013, she did it only for herself. Even then she didn't see how she could open a parlour of her own. Meena's husband worked in the transport business and wouldn't allow his wife to step out of the home to work.

Meena borrowed some money from her parents, bought a mirror, a chair, some basic tools and products. She started her one-chair parlour, right from her own home. For the first several months, Meena reinvested the earnings from the business back into it. Within a few months, she recovered her investment and was beginning to make profits.

It was with Dhriiti and the Beautypreneur Project that Meena learnt that there is a lot that she can do from her home. Meena learnt customer engagement, and the benefits of bundled services. Her first seminar got her 83 new contacts, many of who became her customers. Since her parlour was small, she completely relied on word-of-mouth. Her customers shared good reviews and this naturally got more customers. Today she has a steady stream of 50-60 customers who approve of Meena's work.

Meena feels she is untouched by competition. Her customers are loyal to her and they have helped in her growth. Today she has earnings of her own. She decides where and how to spend her money. With an additional source of income in the house, there are fewer arguments between her and her husband. "अब (पैसे) मांगने की ज़रूरत नहीं पड़ती।" she says with a sense of calm and confidence. "कला को बाहर निकालो। छोटे investment से काम शुरू करो।" she adds, highlighting the simple recipe for her success.



Noori

Noori studied till class 9th until an illness caused her to leave school and studies. Somewhere along the way, an interrupted childhood perhaps caused her to doubt herself. By the time she got married, Noori had limited skills. She showed an interest towards learning beauty skills and so her husband and mother-in-law encouraged her to enrol for a 6-months course. Noori began learning and working at the parlour. However, after several months, when she was not paid for her services, Noori's husband suggested she open a parlour of her own.

In 2012, Noori set up her home parlour, with a plastic chair, a mirror and some basic products & kits. Someone gave her a drier. Her investment was not more than Rs 10,000. She made a small board and put it outside her home. This brought her customers and Noori was content.

By 2017, Noori was ready to take her parlour out of her home. Once again, it was her husband's suggestion. While Noori had worked diligently on her skills and garnered trust in her customers, she was suddenly not so sure about the idea! She was worried about the rent and increased costs. Her husband and her mother-in-law told her to be fearless. They realised that customers were still hesitant to come into someone's homes. They also felt Noori was holding back and not really pushing the boundaries of what she could really do! They told her that if she opened a parlour outside her home, she would have the opportunity to learn and grow. She would need to adapt to customer demands and learn new skills that would help her new parlour grow.

Noori did the simple math. At home, she earned close to Rs 3000 a month. In a parlour she had to earn that much and more to manage the rent. However, Noori knew that it was going to be tough. She was hesitant to speak to customers. She felt her lack of English skills also raised doubts in her customer's minds.

By the time Noori joined the Beautypreneur Program, she was ready to seek help. During the course of the program she gained confidence through technical skills and other business management and marketing skills. Noori understood the importance of communicating with her customers. Her work grew not just for the work of her hands. Instead, it was about the way she spoke to her customers. She learnt about seminars and training. With every activity, Noori started to own her business and her life. There were other little changes too. Noori started keeping a log book to keep a check on her earnings and spendings. She also started traveling alone, something that she never did until then.

For a brief while when Noori fell sick, her parlour closed down. The earnings dipped and the rent piled up. However, just as soon as Noori could get back on her feet, she opened the parlour for a few hours, sometimes even late in the evening. For Noori, her mother-in-law is a source of inspiration. While she worked in people's homes, she always encouraged Noori to work independently.

Noori has steady plans for her parlour. She wants to now focus on her customers and add to the numbers. She wants to add a chair, employ a girl and help her grow like her. She wants to earn to help in her children's education. She wants to contribute to buying a house for the family in a better location.



Sapna Mishra

When Sapna was 8 years old, her brother married to bring home a wife. Sapna's new Bhabhi was from Mumbai. She had done a beautician's course and was very pretty. At 8, Sapna understood that working in the beauty industry made you look pretty! All those years, Sapna still recalls her sister-in-law's beautiful face, marking it as that exact moment when she decided to become a beautician herself.

Sapna underwent a course in Patna, where she grew up. However, it wasn't until she moved to Delhi in 2001 after her marriage that she started working in the field. Back in the days, Sarita Vihar was nothing more than a jungle. Every day in the morning she would board a bus to travel to Badarpur. There, she worked in a parlour for close to 7-8 years. While the owner of the parlour trusted Sapna to run her parlour for her, her husband was not very pleased. Sapna feels that he didn't really understand the parlour business as 'ladies line' of work. What bothered him was the distance she had to travel for work.

By the time Sapna delivered her second child, she was ready to open her own parlour. However, Sapna soon realised that though she had the technical skills of a beautician, she didn't have the optimum business skills. When rental became tough, Sapna started an embroidery unit in her parlour. This led to increased footfall and some steady revenue for her.

When Sapna joined the Beautypreneur program, she learnt several new skills. From new tools, to understanding the wants of her customers. On the one hand she learnt to create packaged deals, on the other, she learnt how to communicate that with her customers. She quickly understood that sometimes she had to show results before she could sell!

Sapna feels that her customers are more particular about their looks. That everyone wants to look pretty and presentable is a good thing. "फर्क तो पड़ता है। Cream लगाते हैं तो चेहरा खिलता है। मेरी छोटी बेहेन जो तीस साल की है कुछ नहीं करती। वो मुझसे बड़ी लगती है!"

While Sapna has been associated with Dhriiti only for a short while, there has been a significant shift in her approach towards her business. "In the beginning, I was reluctant to train girls. Why should I create competition? However, Dhriiti made me understand that I have 20 years of experience that none of the newcomers have!"

Sapna has turned fearless, and somewhat liberal view of the situation, "हम कब तक रहेंगे? आँखें खराब हो रही हैं। अब बच्चों से काम करना है!" She says now.



Babli Saxena

“जब सब कुछ बंध हो गया था, तब सिर्फ Dhriiti ने फोन कर के पूछा कि मैं कैसी हूँ।” says Babli. When Covid-19 brought changes to the world of our Beautypreneurs, Babli said, relatives and friends stopped enquiring.

Babli has been running a parlour since 2009. She borrowed Rs 45,000 to set up her parlour, buying furniture and materials. She hired 3 girls and set out to work with a simple plan. “6 महीने देखेंगे। जेब से पैसे नहीं जाने चाहिए!” Babli moved quickly. She managed to return the money within a year.

While she managed to get her parlour up and running, she also learned to stay happy with what she got. It wasn't until Babli joined the Beautypreneur program at Dhriiti that she realised there was a whole wide world waiting to be explored!

Up until she joined the program, Babli had never stepped on to a bus. Monthly meetings meant Babli travelled by bus for the first time. She also began making friends in similar business. Babli didn't know a single parlour owner until joining the Beautypreneur Program. “बाकी लड़कियों से बहुत सीखा है! बस पे चढ़ना भी, customer management भी!” She says.

Babli learnt the virtue of efficient bookkeeping, keeping count of every penny, every earning and expenditure. “हिसाब लिखने से ध्यान पैसें पर रहता है!” She also learnt the importance of learning new skills as a beautician. “Dhriiti ने सिखाया की कुछ नया सीखना चाहिए!” Babli went on to take part in make-up competition soon after joining the program in 2019. She also won it!!

With more than a decade in the business, Babli is now seeing the merit of being a woman's world. She now has a community where she belongs. A safe place where there are others who care about how she is doing. In her words, it's a place where no one ridicules another. She says, “कोई मज़ाक नहीं उड़ाता है। सही सलाह मिलती है।”

Everyone find their own reason to work into the parlour industry. Babli now sees this as an enterprise that fuels her own dreams while supporting others. “अब parlour बड़ा करने का मन है। अब बेटे की पढ़ाई करानी है। बेटी को कोई interest नहीं है parlour में। अब आगे भी काम करना है।”



Poonam

“मेरा एक सपना था, कभी मेरी भी तो चलेगी!” Says Poonam. One amongst 5 sisters and 2 brothers, Poonam belonged to a conservative Gujar family. Her first brush with a parlour was when her sister-in-law took her to a parlour for the very first time. She wanted to learn right away! By the time she was in class 9th - 10th, she had quit her studies.

Poonam's mother would have not allowed her to learn, had it not been for her absolute resolve. “मैंने दीदी के ढादी पर जूता चुराने के पैसे से parlour का काम सीखा।” Eventhen,shedidnohavethe permission to work full time. Poonam started working part-time in a neighbourhood parlour for a few hours.

Poonam waited to get married, so she could convince her husband to work. However, even her husband forbade her from stepping out of home. He allowed her to open a parlour instead. In her early days Poonam worked with neighbourhood ladies and friends. It was her early customers who supported Poonam's fettered dreams and she was ready to begin.

In May 2019, 15 years after her marriage, Poonam opened her parlour. By the time she joined the Beautypreneur Program she was still very new. Poonam learnt to keep account of her earnings and expenditure. She has expanded her network, to bring in more customers to her parlour. She has begun to understand that the customer is now more aware and somewhat demanding. “लोगों को पार्लर ज़रा local लगता है। कहते हैं interior का काम कर लो।” she says. She agrees that everyone wants to look goodthesedays. “अच्छा काम करते रहना चाहिए। Customer आते रहेंगे।”

A quick learner, Poonam says she does not lack confidence. “Confidence कल भी था! अपने आप पे विश्वास है।” Poonam has finally reached the time in her life when she makes her own decisions and we are eager to see where it takes her.

Project Achievements



644

Beauty entrepreneurs & professional reached



282

Beautypreneurs Selected



273

Beautypreneurs who completed the programme



4665

people trained by the beautypreneurs



3

trainings conducted for each beautypreneurs:
2 TOTs & 1 Financial



2

Regions covered by Dhriiti under BP programme: Delhi NCR and Jhansi



6

partner organisations trained & supported on the Beautypreneurs Curriculum

A few Thank You's...

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