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THE UNCONVENTIONALS

Conservation architect
ABHA NARAIN LAMBAH

ACHIEVEMENTS: Abha is the youngest member of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) heritage committee and runs an independent conservation consultancy firm. Besides that, she is the principal of The Bombay Collaborative, a firm of architects involved in conservation and urban design.

STARTING OUT: With an MA in Architectural Conservation from the School of Planning and Architecture, Abha is one of the few people fighting to preserve the heritage of colonial structures of our country. "These buildings created centuries ago are like priceless works of art. They are part of the public interface and need to be taken care of," she says.

CHALLENGES: Being a conservation architect requires perseverance and patience. She recalls, "Working on a 15th century mud structure in Ladakh without proper sanitation at that altitude was quite an experience!"

BALANCING WORKLIFE: Instead of shuffling between work and family, Abha merges the two. "The Ladakh project lasted for three years; I used to take my child as my backpack!" she recounts.

—Sonu Bohra

DJ/ scuba diver/ pet groomer
DONABELLE ZUZART

PROFESSION: The joy of entertaining people drove her to become Goa's first lady DJ and her love for animals inspired the idea of pet grooming. "And diving is just a passion. Words cannot express how beautiful life is underwater," muses Donabelle—DJ, pet groomer and amateur deep-sea diver.

ACHIEVEMENTS: At 18, Donabelle was the youngest female DJ to perform at Bacardi Blast. She is also compiling an album of her own tracks.

STARTING OUT: "My mother is a professional pianist, so music is in my blood," says Donabelle. She started her DJing career at 17. "My parents have always given me the freedom to learn through experiences and that helped me to try different things, sometimes even risky ones," she states. Donabelle is also an active animal rescue worker. "I started professionally grooming pets last year," she adds.

FUTURE PLANS: "I definitely want to pursue my musical career further, come out with an album and travel the world playing at all the world famous clubs. I also want to open a pet grooming spa in the near future."

—Alisha Fernandes

PROFESSION: A wildlife biologist and researcher, Nandini confides, "I design a study, apply for funding and collect data on field, which takes me to exciting places like the tropical forests of Arunachal Pradesh. I then have to communicate my findings to the outside world in the form of scientific peer-reviewed publications."

Wildlife biologist
NANDINI VELHO

ACHIEVEMENTS: "Educating local communities and watching them appreciate wildlife and the environment is my biggest achievement, and even though this profession doesn't pay well, it is immensely rewarding," she says.

STARTING OUT: From a very young age, Nandini's family exposed her to the wonders of wildlife, travelling to different wildlife sanctuaries and nature parks. "My family has been very supportive and they never let me feel like I'm far away from home. Even birthdays are never spent alone because they always travel to wherever I am."

CHALLENGES: Preconceived notions about the 'wild west' of India because of how it is projected in the news made her really uneasy at first. "I realised it's the lack of information that contributes to this notion," she says.

FUTURE PLANS: "I want to get my doctoral degree in wildlife biology so that I can go out and engage in the real world of wildlife conservation."

—Alisha Fernandes

Paraglider
ANITA MALIK

PROFESSION: Part-owner and business head of Temple Pilots, Anita is a professional paraglider. "Although I enjoyed my corporate career, I always knew that wasn't my calling. I quit my corporate life and started Temple Pilots with my husband who was my instructor," smiles Anita

ACHIEVEMENTS: "Setting up a structured and registered paragliding school in India remains my biggest achievement." Anita has also organised paragliding tours in India and abroad.

STARTING OUT: Neither a B.Sc in Electronics, nor a postgrad degree in Business Administration could satiate Anita's adventure bug. "I signed up for a paragliding course and was smitten by the simplicity of the sport," she confesses.

CHALLENGES: Anita's toughest challenge was to transform people's doubts into confidence. "Paragliding is so much more than just the skill of flying; one has to eventually work on the attitude."

—Ruchika Vyas

PROFESSION: Rohini says, "I love the fact that sailing is an eco-friendly sport and deals with dynamic elements like wind and water, making it very exciting."

ACHIEVEMENTS: Touted as India's number one woman sailor, Rohini

Sailor
ROHINI RAU

has won two Asian Gold medals. She is now the first Indian woman to win an international bronze in an Olympic class (*Laser Radial*) at the Izola Spring Cup, Slovenia in 2009.

STARTING OUT: "I started sailing competitively at the age of 11. This adventure sport equally challenges the mind along with a lot of physical activity," says Rohini. Her parents are members of the 100-year-old Royal Madras Yacht Club and she started training when she was barely a year old.

CHALLENGES: There is no money in the sport of sailing. "It's male-dominated, so being a woman is a challenge in itself," states Rohini. "I sail the cheapest Olympic class of boats—the Laser—which costs Rs. 4.5 lakh for the hull and Rs. 60,000 for the sail, and all the equipments have to be imported. So for an Olympic campaign, you are looking at spending nearly Rs. 45 lakh a year. Not many people can support it. Thankfully, my parents really supported me."

—Alisha Fernandes

Mountaineer
KRUSHNAA PATIL

PROFESSION: Mountaineer Krushnaa Patil is the youngest Indian woman to climb Mt. Everest and considers mountaineering to be a journey.

ACHIEVEMENTS: It's surely the high of being on 'top of the world' that keeps her going. "Climbing the world's highest peak has been my life's greatest achievement," says Krushnaa.

STARTING OUT: Having a supportive family helped Krushnaa in nurturing her innate passion of climbing. "I had to pay Rs. 20,000 for the Satopanth expedition and my father happily paid for it," she says.

CHALLENGES: "Traversing through rough terrains continuously for 22 hours at a height of 20,000 feet, followed by a 16-hour walk back to the base camp from the summit, cold feet and torrential downpour were just some of the extreme challenges I faced during the initial days." Even arranging for sponsorships was a hassle. "My father decided to take a loan of Rs. 25 lakh, which was unavailable through sponsorships," Krushnaa recalls.

FUTURE PLANS: "I want to make films on mountaineering like *Vertical Limit*."

—Srilagna Saha

iDiva Cuppa time Contest

Cappuccino, latte, espresso: Learn more about how to make your favourite brew at home along with some delectable savouries from The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf's team of experts.

Answer these simple questions to be a part of iDiva's first coffee workshop at one of the city's most popular coffee destinations, CBTL, at Linking Road, Bandra (W) on Friday, August 20, 2010 between 2 - 4pm

- 1) Where did Cappuccino originate from?
 a) Italy
 b) India
 c) France
- 2) Your original coffee quote (within 50 words).

Send in your entries at the earliest to divaprint@gmail.com with the subject-line 'Cuppa time'. **25 lucky readers will be contacted shortly.**

For further queries, call 9819273894.

PROFESSION: Mountaineer, skydiver, B.A.S.E jumper, Archana has taken multitasking to a level unknown. Now, also a DJ, she confides that skydiving still stays close to her heart. "I was looking for an extreme sport. So, I did my

Skydiver
ARCHANA SARDANA

first skydive at the age of 35," smiles Archana.

STARTING OUT: Inspired by an interaction with Navy Skydivers, Commander N. Rajesh Kumar and Lieutenant Commander Mahesh Birajdar, Archana decided to undergo training in Accelerated Freefall Training at the Perris Valley Skydiving School in California. "Skydiving is an unconventional career only in India. During my last trip to USA, I witnessed the 'Jump for a Cause' (for Breast Cancer awareness), where 181 American women participated to make a world record formation in the air."

CHALLENGES: In spite of her eagerness to take up this extreme sport, Archana didn't receive any support from the Aero Club of India, corporates, Army-Airforce-Navy Skydiving teams or even the government. "I've spent more than Rs. 15 lakh to reach where I have. In the bargain, my wedding jew-



ellery, car and personal savings are gone. However, with no civil drop zone in India, the Aero Club of India and the military skydiving teams didn't even permit a jump to keep my United States Parachute Association licence, so I switched to B.A.S.E. jumping. Today, I've become India's first woman B.A.S.E. jumper."

ACHIEVEMENTS: India's first woman B.A.S.E. jumper, Archana is also the first Indian to fly the national flag in US skies.

FUTURE PLANS: "I want to do the Everest skydive with the Indian flag in October 2010, for which I am trying to generate the Rs. 7 lakh required, and the B.A.S.E. jump from the Pitam Pura TV tower in New Delhi to introduce B.A.S.E. jumping in India," concludes Archana.

—Ruchika Vyas

Milliner
SHILPA CHAVAN

PROFESSION: A milliner (someone who makes and sells hats), Shilpa says, "When I started making headpieces, Hemant Trivedi suggested, "Why don't you study millinery?" Back then, I didn't even know what that meant," she narrates. As fate would have it, known as Little Shilpa, she became India's first milliner.



ACHIEVEMENTS: The maverick milliner of Mumbai and proprietor of Little Shilpa, Shilpa dons many roles—costume stylist, jewellery designer and installation artist. Her innate art was refined at Central Saint Martins, London, after which she trained under British milliner Philip Treacy. Shilpa is single-handedly responsible for reviving India's history of headgears.

STARTING OUT: Her choice of career was not logically planned, but she knew that she would do something creative for pleasure rather than money. Shilpa marvels, "I haven't planned anything I wanted to do; it just happened!"

CHALLENGES: "My pieces are like a canvas. They personify an aspect of my visual influence from observation to execution." And so long as she's commissioned to use her own hands—"I hate depending on tailors"—to create something crafty to wear, she's happy.

FUTURE PLANS: "I'm working on my accessories line, installations and retailing in select stores."

—Sonu Bohra

PROFESSION: A magician, Maneka is the daughter of renowned magician P C Sorcar. "This profession is beyond any means of earning bread and butter; it's my religion!"

Magician
MANEKA SORCAR

adds, "Magic has to be learnt, it cannot be taught. There is no school for it. An individual has to be born with the capability and let experiences renovate that capability; the more you add to it, the more magnificently it shines." Maneka always dreamt of being in an unconventional career, so magic it was!



ACHIEVEMENTS: Maneka's art work is an achievement by itself. She says, "Every performance is one step towards my dream show."

STARTING OUT: Maneka is the first lady representative performing magic from the 9th Sorcar *gharana*. It was the environment she grew up in that pulled her into this profession. Maneka recalls her first magic show at the age of three, "It happened by accident when a reporter was interviewing my father, I asked him if he wanted to see magic and he said yes. That's when I showed him the trick called 'Water of India'." She

CHALLENGES: In a male dominated world, making a mark as a female magician is not easy. "Anyone having flair in science would understand magic."

FUTURE PLANS: "I am concentrating on my upcoming project *Mayavigyan*—it's a magic show with a huge team and my sisters," she concludes.

—Anuradha Dutta & Srilagna Saha

Wiccan
REV. SWATI PRAKASH

PROFESSION: A decade in this line of work, Swati is a practising Wiccan, astro-tarot-past life therapist, and intuitive and magical trainer. "A witch is a master of everything," she laughs.

ACHIEVEMENTS: Swati started Magick in end-2008, India's first Wicca store. She also developed the first Asian tarot deck displayed at the Museum of Tarot in Italy.

STARTING OUT: Swati was 10 when she received her calling. "I was a withdrawn child and was always seeking answers to life: Why am I here? What is life all about? No school teaches you that. One day, while preparing for my exam, I had a strong intuition and heard a voice. It was noon, I was alone and I was guided to perform a spell." That was a start to something that Swati would grow up to do—practise and promote Wicca. Her father, Col. Prakash, also supported her.

CHALLENGES: "The toughest challenge was to educate people about Wicca." Swati elucidates, "People believe Wicca deals with dark forces. In reality, it deals with repelling darkness and bringing positive energy." She also feels that spiritual professions should be recognised as an industry to make it more organised.

—Aindrila Mitra

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