



Edition

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Feminine Fortitude

Stories of Strength from Nashik's Leading Ladies



Feminine Fortitude

Stories of Strength from Nashik's Leading Ladies



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR UNDERSTANDING AND CONTINUED SUPPORT.

SINCERELY,

FEMME FORWARD EDITORIAL TEAM

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"Dear Readers,

As we prepare to embark on another captivating journey through the pages of Voice Vista magazine, I am honored to introduce you to our latest edition: 'Feminine Fortitude'.

As the Chief editor of this esteemed publication, it has been a privilege to witness the evolution of Voice Vista and the incredible stories we have had the opportunity to share. From our inaugural issue, 'Femme Forward', to the captivating narratives in 'Pedal Passion', 'Kankavali', and 'Vinayaki Gudde', each edition has been a testament to the diverse voices and experiences that make our magazine unique.



In 'Feminine Fortitude', we delve deeper into the lives of remarkable women who have overcome obstacles, shattered glass ceilings, and made a significant impact in their respective fields. From groundbreaking entrepreneurs to visionary leaders, this edition celebrates the strength, resilience, and unwavering determination of women everywhere.

As a Chief-editor, my role is to ensure that each story is crafted with care and precision, allowing the essence of each woman's journey to shine through. It is my hope that the stories featured in 'Feminine Fortitude' inspire you, uplift you, and remind you of the incredible power that lies within each and every one of us.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated team of writers, photographers, and designers, whose passion and creativity bring the pages of Voice Vista to life. And to you, our cherished readers, thank you for joining us on this journey and for allowing us to share these inspiring stories with you.

Here's to celebrating the indomitable spirit of women and the transformative power of feminine fortitude.

Warm regards,

Dr Anagha Naik

Chief Editor,

Feminine Fortitude



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"Dear Readers,

As we journey through the fifth edition of Voice Vista magazine, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude and excitement. Since our humble beginnings in March, each edition has been a testament to the incredible stories and voices that define our publication.

From our debut issue, 'Femme Forward', to 'Pedal Passion' showcasing the inspiring journeys of cyclists, and 'Kankavali' and 'Vinayaki Gudde' exploring diverse themes, our magazine has been a canvas for celebrating uniqueness and resilience.

Now, as we unveil 'Feminine Fortitude', I am thrilled to present a collection of stories that illuminate the strength and grace of women who have excelled in their respective fields. Through this edition, we shine a light on the remarkable achievements of these trailblazers, inspiring others to pursue their dreams with courage and determination.

'Feminine Fortitude' is more than just a title; it is a celebration of the indomitable spirit that resides within each woman. From entrepreneurs and artists to leaders and innovators, the women featured in this edition embody the essence of resilience and perseverance.

I am deeply grateful to our contributors, whose passion and talent breathe life into the pages of Voice Vista. To our readers, thank you for embarking on this journey with us and for allowing us to share these inspiring stories with you.

As we continue to evolve and grow, let us embrace the power of feminine fortitude and celebrate the extraordinary women who shape our world.

With warmest regards,

Pooja Prasun

Founder & Owner
Feminine Fortitude



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अध्यात्मिक, पौराणिक, ऐतिहासिक वारसा लाभलेले नाशिक शहर आता मेट्रो सिटी कडे वाटचाल करत आहे. 'गोल्डन ट्रॅंगल' चा भाग होत असलेल्या नाशिक नगरीतील स्त्री शक्तीचा नवनवीन क्षेत्रात स्वतःला सिद्ध करतानाचा काटेरी वाटेवरील सोनेरी प्रवास म्हणजे 'Feminine Fortitude' हे मासिक.

प्रतिकूल परिस्थितीवर धैर्याने मात करत पारंपारिक क्षेत्रासह आधुनिक क्षेत्रात स्वतःचं वेगळं स्थान निर्माण करणाऱ्या महिलांचा हा सन्मान. या कर्तृत्ववान महिलांनी प्राप्त केलेलं यश याचंच फक्त सेलिब्रेशन न करता या महिलांनी त्यांच्या अंगी विकसित केलेलं धैर्य, बुद्धीचातुर्य, करूणा असे अनेक गुण यासह सामाजिक बांधिलकी जोपासण्यासाठी जाणीवपूर्वक केलेले प्रयत्न समाजासमोर मांडण्याचा आमचा छोटासा प्रयत्न. येणाऱ्या पिढीसाठी 'Feminine Fortitude' चा हा अंक नक्कीच मार्गदर्शक ठरेल अशी आम्ही आशा बाळगतो.

The Voice Vista Portal च्या माध्यमातून दर महिन्याला आम्ही विविध संकल्पना आणि विषय घेऊन नियमितपणे आपल्या भेटीला येत आहोत. 'Feminine Fortitude' हा पाचवा शब्दगुच्छ आमच्या वाचकांच्या हाती देताना आम्हाला मनस्वी आनंद होत आहे.

जर्नलिस्ट सुनिता चौहाण
संपादिका (मराठी अंक),
Feminine Fortitude



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ADV ASHWINI DESHPANDE

"Amidst the tapestry of challenges and triumphs in the realm of social justice and women's empowerment, Advocate Ashwini Deshpande stands as a beacon of hope and resilience. With a fervent dedication to dismantling systemic barriers and championing the rights of marginalized communities, her unwavering commitment to creating a more just and equitable society shines brightly. Today, we have the privilege of delving into the profound insights and experiences of this tireless advocate, as she shares her journey, aspirations, and vision for a brighter future."

1: What inspired you to dedicate your career to women's empowerment?

I had always aspired to address various social issues and contribute to their improvement through small initiatives. However, I had initially planned to pursue this path once my daughters became partly independent. In 2014, my husband suggested starting exhibitions. Instead of conventional themes, I envisioned showcasing art and handicrafts, a passion of mine, to provide a platform for talented yet underserved women artisans. This led to the inception of the Srujan Sadhana exhibition, featuring 70 stalls, 55 of which showcased art and handicrafts. Organizing this event made me realize the challenges faced by artists, inspiring the creation of Art Hub. Art Hub aims to guide, train, and empower artists, preserving our culture and traditions. This journey began with the Srujan Sadhana exhibition.

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2: You also work on combating harassment and sexual abuse. Could you explain more about that?

Growing up in a family that emphasized gender equality, and driven by my innate urge to confront injustice, I've been vocal about unethical practices. My involvement in a counseling committee at Gangapur police station in 2007 exposed me to issues of women's harassment and abuse. Subsequently, I initiated conversations on these topics with students and organizations. In 2013, I was invited to serve on the ICC/POSH committees of various corporates. Through counseling and advocacy, I've been working to raise awareness and address issues of harassment and abuse.

3: As someone deeply involved in legal advocacy, how do you navigate the complexities of supporting survivors of harassment and abuse while seeking justice?

One major challenge is the lack of seriousness toward the PoSH Act by many organizations, resulting in ineffective committees and fear of defamation. To address this, I choose to collaborate only with organizations committed to addressing these issues sincerely. Education and awareness play a crucial role; hence, I conduct sessions to clarify what constitutes sexual

harassment and involve men to understand appropriate behavior. Additionally, it's essential to identify genuine cases and avoid biases. I've encountered instances where false allegations were made, highlighting the need for thorough investigation and expertise in resolving complex cases.

4: Could you shed light on the initiatives and strategies employed by your NGO to support and uplift the needy, particularly women and marginalized communities?

Our NGO focuses on education and empowerment, adapting our activities to evolving social needs. We host annual award functions to celebrate women's achievements and encourage societal contributions. Initiatives like Srujan Sadhana exhibition and Art Hub empower women artisans, while educational projects aim to guide students and provide financial assistance. We've distributed school kits to encourage education and provided relief during crises like floods and the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, continuous efforts, such as eco-friendly initiatives and supporting talented individuals like Rutika, reflect our commitment to community upliftment.



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5: What role do you believe education plays in breaking cycles of poverty and inequality, and how does

your work with teaching deprived segments of society contribute to this cause?

Education is often misconceived as mere schooling or acquiring formal degrees. However, its essence lies in the enhancement of learning and the realization of our inherent potential. Education empowers individuals, making them cultured, refined, and adept at problem-solving. It serves as a potent tool in dismantling the shackles of poverty and inequality. Take Sitabai, for instance, an entrepreneur I had the pleasure of hosting at our women's award function. Despite lacking formal education, she ventured into business, demonstrating remarkable resilience and skill acquisition. Her success story underscores the transformative power of education, transcending conventional boundaries. In my work, I endeavor to nurture holistic development among disadvantaged segments of society. Through sessions that delve into diverse topics beyond conventional curricula, we aim to instill values of empathy, resilience, and problem-solving skills, fostering individuals who can navigate life's challenges with confidence and compassion.

6: Can you share a success story or memorable experience from your NGO's efforts that exemplifies the impact of education and empowerment on individuals and communities?

Success, in its myriad forms, is the culmination of concerted efforts and small victories that collectively shape meaningful change. One such instance was the Srujan Sadhna exhibition, where I facilitated the participation of 50 artists, spanning diverse age groups and backgrounds. Witnessing the youngest participant, a 13-year-old girl adept at quilling, and the oldest, an 84-year-old artisan, showcased the universal appeal of creativity and entrepreneurship. The exhibition not only provided a platform for showcasing talent but also inspired entrepreneurial aspirations. Subsequently, two women entrepreneurs launched successful ventures, propelled by their participation in the exhibition. Initiatives like the Art Hub and Radha Laxmi foods have garnered positive responses, creating economic opportunities and fostering community engagement. Through events like the women's day Award function, we celebrate women achievers and catalyze collective reflection and inspiration. These endeavors exemplify the transformative impact of education and empowerment on individuals and communities.



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7: In your opinion, what are the most pressing challenges facing women's rights and gender equality today, and how do you address these challenges through your advocacy work?

Gender inequality permeates every facet of society, from fundamental rights to economic opportunities and social norms. The insidious practice of female infanticide underscores the deeply entrenched biases against women. Despite strides in education and economic empowerment, women continue to face systemic barriers, from unequal pay to limited access to leadership roles. Empowerment extends beyond mere education or financial independence; it encompasses the creation of an enabling environment where women can assert their agency and autonomy. As an advocate for gender equality, I address these challenges through awareness-raising initiatives and advocacy efforts. By challenging societal norms and fostering dialogue, we strive to dismantle gender stereotypes and promote inclusivity. Through my work in soft skills training and PoSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) sessions, I engage with diverse stakeholders to foster a culture of respect and equality. It is imperative to cultivate empathy and understanding among both genders, transcending traditional roles and fostering a more equitable society.

8: How do you engage with local communities and stakeholders to raise awareness and mobilize support for your initiatives?

Engaging with local communities and stakeholders is integral to mobilizing support and raising awareness for our initiatives. Leveraging the power of mobile and social media, we amplify our reach and connect with like-minded individuals and organizations. Beyond monetary contributions, we value volunteering and active participation, recognizing the diverse ways in which individuals can contribute to our cause. Tailoring our approach to each initiative, we utilize a combination of meetings, phone calls, and social media outreach to garner support. Strategic partnerships with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and NGOs further enhance our impact and outreach. By nurturing a network of passionate individuals and organizations, we foster a collective commitment to social change and empower marginalized communities. Every individual has a role to play in advancing our shared vision of a more just and inclusive society, and it is through collective action that we can effect meaningful change.

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9: As an advocate for social justice, how do you balance legal advocacy with community outreach and empowerment initiatives?

As an advocate for social justice, I strive to strike a balance between legal advocacy and community outreach and empowerment initiatives. While legal advocacy is crucial for addressing systemic injustices and enforcing rights, community outreach and empowerment initiatives play a complementary role in fostering grassroots change and resilience. The Women's Day Award function, for instance, not only celebrates women achievers but also serves as a source of inspiration and empowerment for others. By recognizing and appreciating individuals who work on women's issues, regardless of gender, we challenge societal norms and promote inclusivity. Moreover, initiatives like the Homemaker Award aim to elevate the status of homemakers and challenge the notion that household work is inherently inferior. By engaging with diverse stakeholders and promoting dialogue, we can effect systemic change while empowering marginalized communities at the grassroots level.

10: What advice would you give to individuals or organizations looking to make a meaningful difference in the lives of women and marginalized groups?

To individuals or organizations seeking to make a meaningful difference in the lives of women and marginalized groups, I offer the following advice: Social work encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from charity to advocacy, and requires a nuanced understanding of social issues and dynamics. It's essential to recognize that meaningful change often begins with small, incremental steps, whether it's raising awareness, providing direct support, or advocating for policy changes. Collaboration and partnership with like-minded individuals and organizations can amplify impact and foster collective action. Moreover, building resilience and perseverance is crucial, as progress may be slow and setbacks inevitable. By staying focused on the long-term vision and remaining adaptable in the face of challenges, individuals and organizations can make a lasting difference in promoting gender equality and social justice.



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11) How do you prioritize self-care and maintain resilience in the face of challenging or emotionally taxing cases and situations?

Prioritizing self-care and maintaining resilience amidst challenging circumstances is essential for sustained advocacy efforts. Personally, I find solace and rejuvenation in activities that bring me joy and perspective, such as spending time with my pet, taking walks in nature, engaging in creative pursuits like painting and embroidery, and connecting with loved ones. These activities not only provide a reprieve from the demands of advocacy work but also offer opportunities for reflection and renewal. Additionally, seeking support from friends, family, and colleagues can provide valuable emotional and moral support during challenging times. Cultivating resilience involves acknowledging the inherent difficulties of advocacy work while remaining steadfast in one's commitment to social justice and women's rights.

12) Can you share some insights into the impact of systemic barriers and cultural norms on women's access to justice and equality, and how your work addresses these issues?

Systematic barriers and cultural norms profoundly impact women's access to justice and equality, perpetuating cycles of discrimination and marginalization. The dowry system, for instance, reinforces gender-based violence and discrimination against women, leading to practices like female infanticide and domestic violence. Cultural norms dictate societal expectations and perceptions of women's roles and rights, often relegating them to subordinate positions and limiting their agency. Widowhood, for example, is stigmatized in many cultures, resulting in social exclusion and economic vulnerability for widowed women. Addressing these entrenched inequalities requires not only legal reforms but also challenging deep-seated cultural norms and fostering societal attitudes that promote gender equality and social justice.





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13: What aspirations or goals do you have for the future of your advocacy efforts and NGO's initiatives?

My aspirations for the future of advocacy efforts and NGO initiatives center on empowering youth and building sustainable community-driven change. Young people represent a potent force for social transformation, possessing fresh perspectives, energy, and passion for change. By prioritizing youth engagement and education, we can cultivate a new generation of leaders committed to advancing women's rights and social justice. Moreover, leveraging technology and innovation can enhance the reach and impact of advocacy efforts, enabling broader community participation and amplifying marginalized voices. Ultimately, my goal is to create a legacy of empowerment, inclusivity, and resilience, where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to a more just and equitable society.

14: How do you measure the success and effectiveness of your programs and interventions in promoting women's rights and social justice?

Measuring the success and effectiveness of programs and interventions in promoting women's rights and social justice requires a nuanced approach tailored to the specific context and objectives of each initiative. Success may be measured by various indicators, including changes in attitudes and behaviors, improvements in access to resources and opportunities, and policy reforms. For example, the impact of training programs can be assessed by participants' acquisition of new skills and knowledge, as well as their ability to apply them in practical settings. Similarly, advocacy campaigns may be evaluated based on their ability to raise awareness, mobilize support, and effect policy changes. By employing a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including surveys, interviews, and case studies, we can assess the multifaceted impact of our efforts and refine strategies for greater effectiveness.

15: Looking ahead, what legacy do you hope to leave through your tireless dedication to advancing women's rights and empowering marginalized communities?

Looking ahead, my legacy aspirations are rooted in fostering sustainable change and empowering future generations to continue the fight for women's rights and social justice.



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By institutionalizing youth engagement and education initiatives, I hope to create a lasting framework for grassroots activism and advocacy. Moreover, I aim to build networks and partnerships that transcend individual efforts, fostering collaboration and collective action for systemic change. By inspiring others to join the cause and amplifying marginalized voices, we can create a ripple effect of empowerment and social transformation that extends far beyond my own efforts. Ultimately, my legacy will be measured not only by the tangible outcomes of my advocacy work but also by the enduring impact it has on communities and individuals, empowering them to claim their rights and build a more just and equitable world.

"As we draw the curtains on our conversation with Advocate Ashwini Deshpande, her words resonate as a powerful call to action and inspiration. Through her unwavering dedication, compassionate leadership, and steadfast resolve, she has paved the way for transformative change and empowered countless individuals to reclaim their rights and dignity. As we carry forward the torch of advocacy and social justice, let us heed her wisdom and continue to strive for a world where equality, justice, and opportunity flourish for all."



Ideation & Conceptualisation : Pooja Prasun

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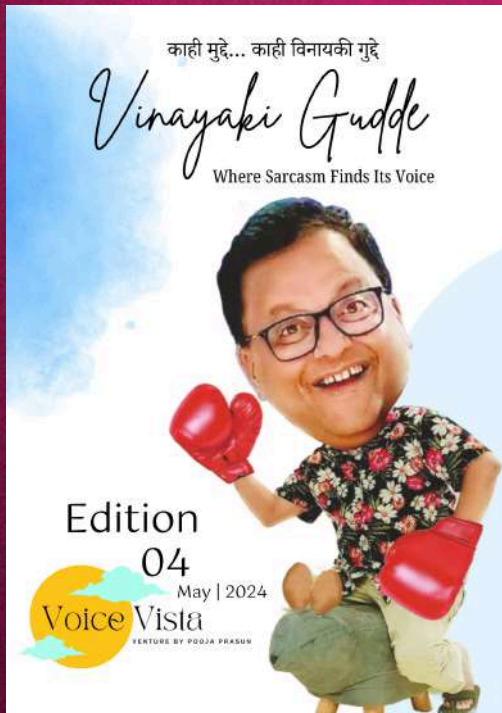
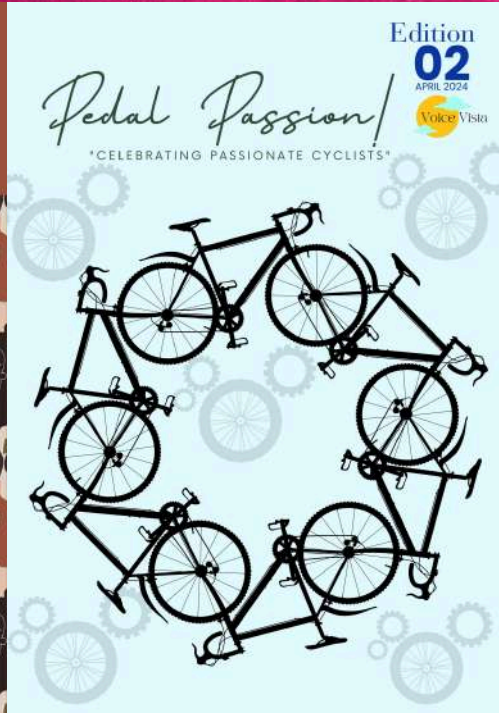
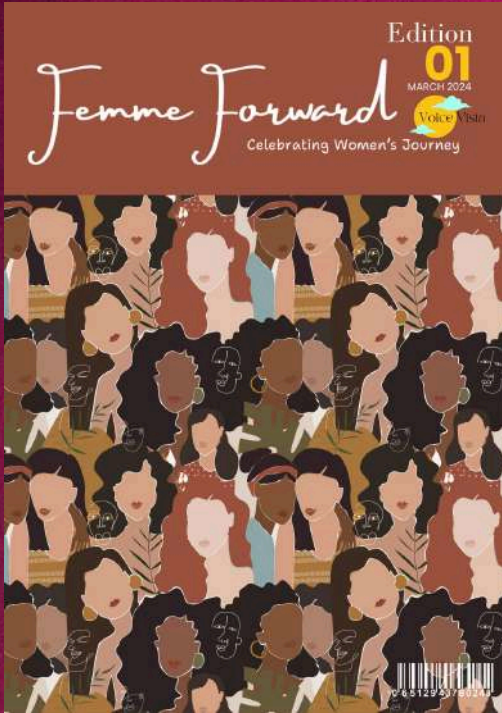
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Introducing "Feminine Fortitude" - a testament to the powerful female faces of Nashik who have not only excelled in their respective fields but have also set a benchmark in their domains. These remarkable women are the embodiment of commitment, dedication, and resilience, and their inspiring journeys serve as a beacon of hope and motivation for others.

"Feminine Fortitude" delves deep into the remarkable stories of these trailblazing women, uncovering the challenges they have overcome, the triumphs they have celebrated, and the lessons they have learned along the way. Through captivating narratives, insightful interviews, and stunning visuals, this magazine provides a platform to celebrate the indomitable spirit of women who have dared to dream and achieved greatness against all odds.

Each issue of "Feminine Fortitude" is a celebration of strength, perseverance, and empowerment, showcasing the diverse talents and accomplishments of women from all walks of life. Whether it's in the fields of business, arts, education, or social activism, our magazine shines a spotlight on the unsung heroes whose stories inspire and empower generations to come.

Join us on this extraordinary journey as we honor the resilience and fortitude of Nashik's formidable women, and celebrate their unwavering commitment to making a difference in the world.