

Reshma: The Creative Brain Behind 'Fresco'

Written by Valsala Menon

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Reshma is the personification of quiet strength, poise and confidence. A few minutes spent with this amazing lady can inspire and motivate one to step up their standards, and aim to reach for the skies. Born into an ordinary middle class family and with humble beginnings, it was just Reshma's tremendous will power, dedication, courage and commitment to excel in all that she undertook, that has propelled her upwards on the ladder of success.

"My father was a mechanic and mother, a home maker. Times were tough when my brother and I were just kids. There have been days when we have gone without food at all'- reminisces Reshma.

Right from an early age, Reshma had made up her mind to excel in all that she undertook. She excelled in her studies and stood first in the school final examinations at Railway school, from which she passed out with flying colors. She then proceeded to procure her Diploma in Civil engineering from Murugappa Polytechnic in Chennai. After that, she enrolled herself for the CAD Course.

"After completion of CAD course, I joined a small company that dealt with interiors. There, I learnt a lot about plywood. By this time, I was deeply interested in the concept of modular kitchens. There were no modular kitchens when I started out and the concept was yet to take root in India. Godrej was the only firm which had come close to designing cupboards but those too were in steel. I mulled over designs on my own and kept referring to a lot of magazines to learn more about the viability and designs of a modular kitchen well suited for Indian conditions "- explains Reshma.

"It was then that I decided to venture out into designing and making my own modular kitchens. My CAD training stood me in good stead here", Reshma. After her initial tenure at the company

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dealing with interiors, she was invited to join two other interior specialty firms. "Working there, I kept designing and learning on my own, about modular kitchens, accessories and other furniture. I understood that Godrej was not able to fulfill all the storage needs of an Indian home maker.'

Reshma was naturally creative and had a flair for designs, and she had by this time, created her own repertoire of modular kitchen designs, bedrooms, false ceiling and designer paintings. While working at those two companies, she had been able to successfully put forth her ideas and had helped turn them round to modular kitchen specializing firms. "When I had joined them, they had only one display kitchen with very little accessories. On my advice, they extended their showroom to include two to four more displays"- Reshma states with pride.

After two years of working with those interior firms, Reshma realised that it was high time that she struck out on her own. By this time, with endearing manners and quiet efficiency, she had built up a solid customer base on her own; a very happy and enthused customer introduced one Mr. Jose to Reshma. From then on, Reshma's career chart spiraled upwards. Jose and Reshma decided to set up office together, and under her able guidance and amazing creativity, Fresco, the exclusive modular kitchen firm was brought into being. It was like a dream come true for Reshma. Jose runs his own baby care firm under the same premises.

"We started three years back and it has been a meteoric rise with an ever growing customer base." It is to her credit that no loans were taken to set up shop. All the modular kitchen units, bedroom accessories, wardrobes and so on are exclusively designed by Reshma herself.

"We have not advertised at all so far. We have grown mainly through references of our clients. I let my work speak for itself, and builders keep coming back to me with more and more orders. All leading builders in the city of Chennai, for instance, VGN, Pace builders, Chaitanya and so on are her clients. "I get individual clients too, who have heard about my work from other satisfied clients. I have a large client base and I keep my margins small"- Reshma.

She has around fifty to seventy workers to assist her in her work. "Ours is not fully labor oriented and we need them only for final assembling and completion. Designing is all done on computers. '

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Reshma ensures that her modular kitchen units are all designed specifically to meet Indian conditions. “Lots of people have asked me about the effectiveness and viability of modular kitchens in India. I make sure that we never use pre laminated plywood, which is unsuitable for Indian kitchens. We use marine plywood which can effectively sustain Indian working conditions and climate. “

Reshma is a dedicated and committed lady, who settles for nothing other than the very best. She works long hours from eleven AM to eight PM., every day of the week. But she does not allow her commitment and dedication to her work affect her family. She ensures that she does her own cooking and caring for her family and little eight month old baby. Reshma believes firmly that no compromise should be made on any aspect, either it be in her personal life or on the professional front.

This wonderful and strong lady entrepreneur had gone through tough times while growing up and setting up her business. But, she proves beyond an iota of doubt that tough times do no last but tough people do. Reshma is one of those tough and resilient people who never ever give up or compromise on quality.