



Confederation of Indian Industry



Power 100:

Women in innovation

www.pwc.in/startups

Foreword



Ms Anu Sriram,
Chairperson, CII Women in Innovation & Co-founder &
Joint Managing Director, Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.

It is with much joy and pride that I introduce this compendium which has been compiled with the intent of honouring the extraordinary achievements of women start-ups in the Indian start-up ecosystem. It has been a memorable tenure as the Chairperson of the Women in Innovation Steering Committee to witness the great impact and steadfast perseverance demonstrated by these remarkable entrepreneurs. The Compendium which recognizes and celebrates women entrepreneurship has been compiled with the objective of :

- Enabling more women to join the economic workforce by way of entrepreneurship
- Facilitating Corporate - Startup Connect for market access and growth
- Encouraging many more women entrepreneurs as role models in the startup ecosystem

This compendium demonstrates our confidence in the power of diversity and inclusivity to stimulate creativity and drive significant change. It serves as a showcase for the pioneering energy and game-changing innovations that these visionary women have brought to the forefront. Their experiences stimulate, inspire, and challenge the status quo, demonstrating that the startup landscape recognises no gender limits.

The goal of this compilation is to generate a ripple effect that inspires, encourages, and empowers the next generation of women entrepreneurs. We hope to convey their ideas, objectives and stories through the fireside talks hosted by the selected women start-ups, ensuring that their voices are heard far and wide. As a result, we intend to build a robust ecosystem that promotes collaboration, learning, and support for prospective entrepreneurs.

I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to the 50 female founders and co-founders profiled in this book. Their extraordinary accomplishments and unwavering pursuit of greatness serve as a beacon of hope for countless others. Not only have they pushed conventional standards, but also cleared the ground for a more inclusive and equitable entrepreneurial landscape.

I would like to specially thank all the Steering Committee Members namely Ms Geethika Kambli, Managing Partner, Future Factory, Chair, IWN Maharashtra; Ms Jayashree Mohanthy, Director, Luminous Infoways; Ms Kamna Raj Agarwalla, Director Marketing, GDPA FASTNERS; Mr NS. Parthasarathy, Managing Partner, Mela Ventures and Co-Founder, Mindtree; Ms Subha Kumar Natesan, MD, Natesan Group; Ms Vijayalakshmi Rao, Startup Mentor.

My special appreciation to Ms Vijayalakshmi Rao, for actively contributing in conceptualizing this initiative and diligently going through all the profiles and shortlisting the startups. I thank Ms Jayashree Mohanthy, for enabling the participation of several women startups from Orissa.



Our sincere gratitude to Mr S. Gopalakrishnan, Chairman, CII Centre of Excellence for Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Start-ups for giving emphasis for promoting Diversity & Inclusion in the initiatives of the Centre.

I take this opportunity to thank Mr Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII for his invaluable support in this endeavour.

I also would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to PwC, our knowledge partner for bringing out these stories of these women achievers in the form of a compendium.

I thank the CII Centre of Excellence for Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Startups for the dedication towards creating an inclusive and diverse entrepreneurial ecosystem in India.

My special thanks to Ms Madhu Vasanthi, Senior Director, CII Startup Initiatives for being the anchor for this initiative and for her unstinted support to the steering committee. I would also like to appreciate Mr Varun Akhnoor, Director CII Centre of Excellence for Innovation, Entrepreneurship & Startups for his constant support and perseverance throughout the initiative.

I would also like to thank our sponsors Delphi - TVS and Integra Software Services for their support.

I encourage aspiring female entrepreneurs reading this compilation to dream big, embrace challenges, and pursue their passion with unrelenting determination. I am sure all of you have realized that your gender has not been an impediment to your success. With the appropriate support, resources, and opportunities, you can make a long-lasting difference and contribute to your families, organization and to our country's progress and change.

Foreword



Mr. Chandrajit Banerjee
Director General, CII

Entrepreneurship and innovation are crucial to India's economic growth and development. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of women entrepreneurs who have emerged as significant drivers of economic growth, breaking down barriers, and carving out a niche for themselves in various industries. These women have demonstrated not only their ability to discover market openings but also incredible resilience and leadership in transforming their ideas into profitable companies.

This compendium demonstrates our dedication to creating an environment that supports women entrepreneurs. It recognizes 50 women entrepreneurs who not only met stringent criteria but have also achieved key milestones with tech-enabled enterprises, led startups from the front, and demonstrated sustainable growth of their businesses. Their endeavours reflect a spectrum of innovation, spanning multiple sectors and affecting the lives of many people.

I express my deepest congratulations to the 50 women founders and co-founders who are profiled in this book. Your accomplishments not only symbolize your own victories but also act as beacons of inspiration for many others. Each of you has pushed the envelope, challenged the status quo, and demonstrated that creativity knows no gender. You are influencing the future of our country's entrepreneurial scene.

I am convinced that these entrepreneurial journeys will spark innovation, generate new ideas, and foster collaboration among entrepreneurs, investors, and governments. Let us continue to advocate for women in innovation and entrepreneurship, with the goal of achieving a future in which gender equality is the norm, and women's entrepreneurial potential is fully realized.

Foreword



Mr Kris Gopalakrishnan,
Chairman CII CIES & Axilor Ventures & Co-founder Infosys

It gives me great pleasure to share this list of 50 Women Founders and Co-Founders in the Indian start-up ecosystem. This initiative by the CII Centre of Excellence for Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Startups (CIES) is an important step towards honouring the invaluable contributions of women entrepreneurs who are driving innovation, inspiring change, and encouraging collective impact.

This compendium is a monument to the transformative power of creativity and the tenacity of these female founders and co-founders. It honors their extraordinary vision, strategic thought, and ability to bring their ideas to life. The examples in these pages demonstrate their capacity to detect market gaps, develop innovative solutions, and generate economic progress.

I am convinced that the stories shared by these remarkable entrepreneurs will encourage countless others to start their own businesses. The selected women start-ups' fireside chats will serve as a platform for information exchange, cooperation, and the sharing of fresh, innovative ideas. We hope that by elevating their voices, we may encourage more women to enter the realm of entrepreneurship and contribute to our country's progress and prosperity.

I'd want to express my deepest congrats to the 50 Women Founders and Co-Founders profiled in this book. Your accomplishments are an encouragement to entrepreneurs of all backgrounds, not just women.

I invite the readers of this compilation to absorb the stories, thoughts, and experiences shared by these great women entrepreneurs. Allow their experiences to motivate you to take risks, overcome obstacles, and pursue your entrepreneurial goals. Let us work together to foster an atmosphere in which women-led innovation thrives and let us continue to recognise and promote women in innovation, because their achievements will pave the path for a brighter, more affluent future for all.

Message from PwC

The economy of a country flourishes when there are equal opportunities for every individual. With an increase in access to education, jobs, government schemes and entrepreneurial ventures, Indian women are making significant strides in their respective fields. With more women entrepreneurs joining the start-up sector, they are contributing towards creating more job opportunities for the working population of the country, enhancing the scope of innovation in various fields and playing an important part in the country's socio-economic development.

Women's participation in India's economic growth can be improved if the entrepreneurial ecosystem provides them with a more focused support in starting up and scaling their ventures.

PwC is pleased to partner with CII as the Knowledge Partner to the initiative - 'Power 100: Women in innovation' that profiles women who have used innovation as an instrument to embrace entrepreneurship at the centre stage. CII has led this programme by identifying, evaluating, screening and shortlisting women entrepreneurs for this initiative, and PwC India has extended its support by highlighting the achievements and journeys of these dynamic entrepreneurs based on discussions and interview sessions.

This publication seeks to recognise and applaud women who have made an impact in the entrepreneurial sector with their start-ups. The women featured in this publication have demonstrated their passion, resilience and risk-taking ability to embrace the uncertainty of entrepreneurship and used the latest technology for various ventures from screening breast cancer through non-invasive assessments to streamlining customer experience of traditional sectors such as automobiles, collections, and consumer durables. The publication also showcases sustainable and innovative business models such as recycling used cooking oil into biofuel, transforming floral waste into eco-friendly products and manufacturing nutrition supplements which can be easily incorporated in our diet.

The profiles of women entrepreneurs included in Power 100 have been shortlisted based on them (a) holding a founder/co-founder of a tech-enabled start-up, (b) holding of 51% or more in the company, and (c) their initial revenue from at least one client.

We are excited about the initiative and hope that it will create a more inclusive ecosystem for women entrepreneurs in India.

PwC India

#pwcforstartups

www.pwc.in/startups

Disclaimer*

All information and data is provided by the respective entrepreneurs and CII and PwC have not independently verified the correctness or accuracy of the same. Accordingly, CII and PwC accept no liability, and disclaim all responsibility, for the consequences of anyone relying, acting, or refraining to act, on the information contained in this report or for any decisions based on it.

Index

S. No.	Name	Page no.
1	Arasi Arul (60Plus India)	8
2	Akanksha Patil (Acc-Red)	10
3	Nimisha J Vadakkan (Aceware FinTech Services Pvt Ltd)	12
4	Geethanjali Radhakrishnan (Adiuvo Diagnostics Pvt Ltd)	14
5	Shobha Chanchlani (AgriVijay)	16
6	Prinshila Gandhi (Aranya Paridhi Private Limited)	18
7	Purvi Roy (Arista Vault)	20
8	Sharayu Lande (Bharat Krushi Seva)	22
9	Aditi Bhutia Madan (BluePine Foods)	24
10	Laina Emmanuel (BrainSightAI)	26
11	Karthika Prasad (BudMore Agro Industries Private Limited)	28
12	Richa Bajpai (Campus Fund)	30
13	Dr Neelima Mishra (Club First Robotics Pvt Ltd)	32
14	Vidhya Abhijith (Codewave)	34
15	Asha Bineesh (Competitive Cracker Pvt Ltd)	36
16	Gautami Raiker (Contractzy)	38
17	Harini Sivakumar (Earth Rhythm Pvt Ltd)	40
18	Dr Naima Shaikh (AgriDigi Tech (OPC) Pvt Ltd)	42
19	Subalalitha C.N (FirstLanguage Technologies)	44
20	Lakshmi Trivedy (FlexiEle Consulting Services Pvt Ltd)	46
21	Durga Priyadarshini (Gaumaya Agro Pvt Ltd)	48
22	Gudipati Naga Sirisha (GSR Eduwizer Pvt Ltd)	50
23	Sunita Dube (Happy60Plus)	52
24	Neelam Gaur (Harkamal Maritime Industries Pvt Ltd)	54
25	Menka Gurnani (Hidaa Life Science LLP)	56
26	Susmita Mondal (Homes Under Budget)	58
27	Romita Ghosh (iHeal HealthTech Pvt Ltd)	60
28	Phansiri Konte (Jivasree Ayurvedic Wellness)	62
29	Kirti Vaishanav (KNP Arises Green Energy Pvt Ltd)	64
30	Yosha Gupta (MeMeraki)	66
31	Aarti Joshi (Modak)	68
32	Asavari Hardikar (Network Science)	70
33	Nishita Baliarsingh and Nikita Baliarsingh (Nexus Power)	72
34	Geetha Manjunath (Niramai)	74
35	Maya Vivek (Oorvi Sustainable Concepts Pvt Ltd)	76
36	Tarvinder Kaur (PMaps)	78
37	Kriti Bajaj (QuitSure)	80
38	Rashi Gupta (Rezo.AI)	82
39	Poulomi Bhattacharya (SilverGenie Pvt Ltd)	84
40	Saketha Pingali (SmartPharma360)	86
41	Saikrishna Mohanty (Solar Infra)	88
42	Krishna Priya (Starbuzz.ai)	90
43	Himansubala Mohanty (Super Closure India)	92
44	Gagandeep Kaur Bhullar (SuperHuman Race Pvt Ltd)	94
45	Seema Sukhani (Tellus Habitat Pvt Ltd)	96
46	Dr Jyothi (TeraLumen Solutions)	98
47	Neha Misra (The Fin Lit Project Services Pvt Ltd)	100
48	Kanchan Bhandari (The Purchase House)	102
49	Rajeshree Deotalu (VECROS Technologies Private Limited)	104
50	Sri Reddy (Zithara)	106



“ The 60plusIndia’s app integrates wearables, CCTV devices, fall detection devices, and medical devices of senior citizens along with personal and medical healthcare devices.

Arasi Arul
CEO and Founder, 60plusIndia

”

Evolution – how it began

Arasi is a serial entrepreneur. She took to entrepreneurship very early in her career, and 60plusIndia is her fifth venture which she co-founded with two other people, including her brother. The seed for 60plusIndia was sown during the COVID-19 pandemic when many of Arasi’s friends and associates, who were not present in Chennai, reached out to her and her brother to help their parents who were living alone in Chennai. Arasi says that it was an intense experience for her and her brother and they extended their help in multiple ways from delivering water cans to senior citizens to performing the last rites for a friend’s father.

Arasi and her brother realised that citizens in the sixty-plus bracket were underserved and faced many medical problems and difficulties as they lived alone and they decided to address their problems through 60plusIndia. Arasi and her two co-founders have had entrepreneurial experience before 60plusIndia and they wanted to use their cumulative experience to help senior citizens. With their target audience being people who live away from their parents, 60plusIndia is an end-to-end parent management tech company. Its offering includes holistic senior citizen care services like maintenance of personal and medical data, integration of multiple technology devices to make life easier, and procurement of services and products for senior citizen parents.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

60plusIndia’s goal is to help people living away from their parents to take care of their family or relatives remotely through the app. One of the benefits of the app is the management and maintenance of personal and medical records and data for ailments such as diabetes and blood pressure. It helps people living away from their address questions about their parents’ medical history and insurance-related issues. Through the 60plusIndia app, children can book services for their parents’ healthcare, emotional care, and personal care needs. It helps children keep track of their parents’ doctors’ appointments, dietary requirements and medicine intake.

Arasi aspires to change 60plusIndia business model from B2C to B2B. She wants to take her offering to large technology companies in the US and Europe and pitch it as an employee benefit for Indians working overseas to allow them a stress and guilt-free professional career.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Arasi enjoys speaking to and mentoring young women. She is a guest speaker at many colleges and is part of multiple forums in Chennai that allow her to address women entrepreneurs and discuss ways in which they can grow their ventures and tackle professional and personal challenges.

In a nutshell

Website URL	www.60plusindia.com
USP	A complete parent management app for people who live far away from their parents and helps them take care of the health and well-being of their parents.
Mission	To make long distance elderly parent care easy
Year in which it was founded	2021
Co-founder/s	Oli Arul, Vivek Raja
Team size	20
Incubator/accelerator programmes (If any)	Accelerating Asia, Singapore
Headquarters	Chennai
Representative Customers/ partners	NA
Accolades	Startup of the year 2022 and 2021 by FICCI and New Indian Express
Next big milestone	1000 subscribers by March 2024, 5000 community members Provide B2B services for companies like Microsoft , Intel, FB and Google by December 2025
Qualifications	BE, University of Madras MBA, Loyola Institute Of Business Administration, Chennai



“Acc-Red hopes to bring a positive impact in the lives of people who face mobility limitations and provide economical products and solutions that could help them improve their quality of life.

Akanksha Patil
Director, Acc-Red

”

Evolution – how it began

Akanksha Patil started her career as a schoolteacher more than two decades ago. After a fulfilling experience in the education sector, she moved to the corporate world. She joined her husband in his business which provided ground transportation. It was while running their first business, M.S. Car Hires, that she and her husband realised a gap in mobility-assisted solutions like ramps and wheelchair carriers for differently-abled people and senior citizens. They researched more about this and realised that it was a concern across the country, specifically for differently-abled people and senior citizens.

In 2015, Akanksha and her husband took the first step in this direction by starting Ezy Mov – one of India’s first wheelchair-accessible transport services that help people travel with dignity – based out of Mumbai. In 2021, Akanksha and her husband started Acc-Red or Accessibility Redefined Private Limited, with the desire to expand their suite of solutions and public mobility products, for people with mobility issues to include a more comprehensive offering of customisable ramps, car transfer seats and hydraulic lifts.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

At the time they started Acc-Red, Akanksha says she and her husband were more settled in their other businesses and sought to give back to society in a more meaningful way. Since they were in the transport business for several years, they had seen the challenges faced by people with mobility issues, which was amplified by the poor condition of infrastructure in public places. This inspired them to provide a solution which would help senior citizens and differently-abled people to move with ease.

Acc-Red has partnered with third-party engineering manufacturing units in Mumbai and Pune that manufacture products as per Acc-Red’s specifications. The company’s products, such as customisable ramps, society ramp, suitcase ramp, and telescopic ramp are not only popular in Mumbai but are also sold across India in cities like Gangtok, Delhi, Kolkata, and Kanyakumari. Acc-Red’s aim is to help people by providing mobility support to them and make them self-reliant and independent.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Akanksha says it is essential for entrepreneurs to ask for and get help from the community and the start-up ecosystem. Although she and her husband are bootstrapping Acc-Red, she says that the guidance and support from incubators, partners, and mentors enabled them to get the business off the ground. According to her, every woman entrepreneur should take the initiative to strengthen their community and encourage other women in entrepreneurship.

In a nutshell

Website URL	https://acc-red.com/
USP	Customisable mobility improvement products at affordable prices
Mission	To create a positive impact in the lives of people with mobility dependent needs with our solutions
Year in which it was founded	2021
Co-founder/s	Rajesh Anant
Team size	5
Incubator/ accelerator programmes (if any)	Birla Institute of Technology and Science Pilani, Goa
Headquarters	Mumbai
Representative customers/partners	Rajesh Anant Patil
Accolades	Won the Award from BITS Goa Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship Society (BGIIES) for being one of the best start-ups
Next big milestone	Customisable car transfer seat: • For transferring wheelchair bounds directly bed to car and car to bed • easy to install • plug-n-play model • original warrantee and manufacturers guarantee remains intact
Qualifications	Diploma in Medical Laboratory Technology, SNDT University



“India's rural population is highly dependent on rural financial institutions. Our endeavour is to digitally transform these institutions so that this segment can easily access digital financial products and solutions.

Nimisha J Vadakkan

Managing Director, Aceware FinTech Services Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

After completing her B.Tech. in computer science and engineering, Nimisha worked as a software engineer for three years in Chennai. She then joined her husband's company, Aceware Technology, and in 2020, both of them incorporated Aceware FinTech Services. During the pandemic, Nimisha found it challenging to make payments in cash, which acted as the trigger for starting Acemoney, which offered doorstep banking services. Later on, Nimisha, and her husband decided to merge Aceware Technology with Aceware FinTech Services and focus on the product development of Acemoney.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

After the lockdown, Aceware FinTech Services also moved into the B2B space. Through Acemoney, Nimisha and her husband decided to enable financial inclusion for the rural population in the country through their FinTech products. However, they faced several challenges in the process due to the rural population's trust deficit in engaging with FinTech products. To address this problem, Aceware tied up with cooperative banks, cooperative societies, dairy units, farmers' associations and rural financial institutions. Furthermore, it converged all banking payments solutions – such as QR code services, prepaid card services, money transfer services, utility payment systems and wearable ATM cards – into a single platform which could be delivered to rural financial institutions in a plug-and-play model. Nimisha says that regional financial institutions conduct transactions in a traditional manner where the customer has to physically go to the bank because they do not provide any other format for customer interface, like mobile applications. Aceware FinTech onboards B2B customers and through the Acemoney platform and offers integrated solutions to the rural population. Currently, Aceware FinTech Services has a presence in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Nimisha says working as a software programmer required a limited skillset but as an entrepreneur, the scenario is completely different. Now, she has to take care of marketing, HR and finance, among other things. Her recommendation to entrepreneurs is that they grow their knowledge about areas outside the core area of their businesses. She believes that the playing field for women entrepreneurs has expanded exponentially in recent years, and there are many more opportunities for women entrepreneurs to scale their businesses.

In a nutshell

Website URL	www.acemoney.in
USP	A single-window solution for digitalising the underbanked and unbanked rural population of India
Mission	Financial inclusion of rural India
Year in which it was founded	2020
Co-founder/s	Jimmin J Kurichiyil and Nimisha J Vadakkan
Team size	54
Headquarters	Kochi
Accolades	• Certificate of Appreciation from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India • Go Global Award by International Trade Council • Promising Entrepreneurs Award by The Economic Times • FMB Award by Unique Times Magazine • Women Entrepreneur Award by Samrambham Business Magazine • Top 23 start-ups to watch out for from Kerala by Headstart Kerala
Next big milestone	To emerge as a digital rural bank in 2027
Qualifications	B.Tech. in computer science from Anna University, MBA in HR from Madras University



“ In India, over two lakh people have to undergo amputation every year due to severe wounds from burns, sores, and diabetes. Our opto-electronics imaging platform provides efficient assistance in early disease detection that is customised for low-resource for treatment.

Geethanjali Radhakrishnan

CEO and MD, Aduvo Diagnostics Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Geethanjali studied bioengineering and completed her B.Tech. in 2011. Though she worked as a software engineer in Tata Consultancy Services, she always knew that she would eventually come back to bioengineering. Five years later, she decided to move to the biotech sector and came across an opportunity to pitch an idea to the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), a non-profit arm of the Department of Biotechnology. She also presented her entrepreneurial dream to Villgro, a social impact incubator. Geethanjali recalls meeting Villgro's founder, Paul Basil, who told her that in order to understand the concerns of the healthcare system she should move out of her office and interact with the healthcare providers in the field.

Geethanjali took the advice to heart and travelled to Pune where she saw a farmer being treated with an antibiotic when he had a fungal infection. She also learnt that the patient had been wrongly medicated for three to five years and was at the stage of getting amputated because of the severity of the wound. During her discussions with the doctors in Pune, Geethanjali realised the need for a tool which could differentiate between bacterial and fungal infections and guide doctors and healthcare providers toward a more accurate prescription.

Geethanjali realised that there is no technology to correctly assess infections instantly and, with the aim of addressing this problem, she established Aduvo Diagnostics in 2015 and started her journey to find a better way to achieve non-invasive diagnostics by combining optics with electronics. Aduvo's tool can immediately tell how bad a wound is, if it is infected or not, and whether it is bacterial or fungal, without taking a sample and sending it for a culture test to the laboratory.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Geethanjali was aware that biotech medical devices, and pharma-based products or solutions require a lot of funding for the journey from idea to proof of concept to regulatory approvals and market launch. With funding support from their investors, the team at Aduvo was able to develop its medical imaging device and get the technology patent granted, both in India and in the US. They incorporated a technology called multispectral imaging into a medical device which Geethanjali explains is nothing but shining multiple lights, collecting it in different spectral bands, and using artificial intelligence on these images to determine where the infection and what type of bacteria or fungus it is.

Geethanjali says that though it is still a screening tool, Aduvo adds value by helping doctors understand the correct location to take the sample from a wound and send it for a culture test. Aduvo also documents the patient's visits over the years, which helps assess the progress made in curing the infection.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Geethanjali learned to ask for help early on in her start-up journey and says that's the best advice she can give fellow entrepreneurs, both women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs in the healthcare sector, because no one is an expert on everything. At Adiuvo, she has technical mentors who help accelerate product development, regulatory consultants to guide her through the regulatory pathway for medical devices, and now, when the company is ready to venture into the market, she actively takes the guidance of sales and marketing mentors to navigate the complex and price sensitive Indian market.

In a nutshell

Website URL	https://www.adiuvodiagnostics.com
USP	First ever imaging device combining multispectral imaging and AI that can detect and classify clinically relevant bacteria on wounds in a label-free manner and assist doctors with the right first line treatment, continuous wound monitoring and improved wound closure to prevent amputation and antibiotic misuse.
Mission	To bring down the rate of amputation and prevent antibiotic misuse
Year in which it was founded	2015
Co-founder	None
Team size	25
Incubator/ accelerator programmes (if any)	Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad, Cohort 2017 India Innovation Growth Programme 2.0 2018 Google Launchpad 2019 Society of Photo-Optical Instrumentation Engineers (SPIE) Start-up Challenge Global – 2020 Qualcomm Design in India 2020 NBEC Camp – 2020 Loreal Innovation Runway Challenge – 2020 AWS ML ELEVATE 2021 MedTech Innovator APAC Program 2021 University of Massachusetts Medical Device Development Center (UMASS) M2D2 Accelerator 2022
Headquarters	Chennai
Representative customers/partners	ISRO Shar, Omamdur Government Hospital, Auxillium Healthcare, American Wound Care President, Saveetha Medical College, VHS Hospital Chennai, ILS Hospital Kolkata, Jupiter Hospital Thane, Dr Sanjay Vaidhya, Dr Rajesh Kesavan
Accolades	ASME-ISHOW 2017, Winner Villgro Social Innovation TIE BIRAC Woman Entrepreneur event – 2018 IQVIA Award Anthem Bioscience Award Qualcomm Design in India Challenge 2020 Winner - Grant Menterra Venture Funds investment Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council Department of Biotechnology (BIRAC, DBT) Govt of India Grant Dept of Science and Technology Nidhi Prayas Grant Villgro Impact grant Qualcomm Design in India 2020 accelerator grant TIE BIRAC Award grant ASME-ISHOW Grant Google Launchpad accelerator Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP) National Bio entrepreneurship award
Next big milestone	Collaboration and IP licensing deal signed to develop and market Adiuvo technology In-process to get their offering approved by Food and Drug Association (FDA) and Conformité Européenne (CE) Marking EU MDR
Qualifications	B.Tech. Bioengineering, Shanmugha Arts, Science, Technology and Research Academy MBA Quality Management, BITS Pilani Work Integrated Learning Programme



“ We want women who use firewood for cooking and dairy farmers who use diesel sets to run their dairy machines to stop using fossil fuels and replace them with renewable energy which is cost-effective and less harmful to the environment.

Shobha Chanchlani

Co-founder and Director, AgriVijay



Evolution – how it began

Shobha worked with the Government of Rajasthan for over 30 years as a teacher and librarian at different schools in Jaipur and Ajmer. She availed of the government's voluntary retirement scheme, moved to Pune, and started AgriVijay in 2020 with her son as a second career. AgriVijay was founded with the vision to build a marketplace of renewable energy products for farmers and rural households. Both she and her son wanted to bring a positive change in the lives of farmers in India. The company seeks to empower farmers by making them independent energy producers and consumers. AgriVijay provides farmers with renewable energy like biogas and services like solar energy equipment thereby boosting their savings and income and enabling them to contribute to a cleaner environment.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Shobha believes in fighting climate change through AgriVijay and empowering farmers and rural households with renewable energy by offering products in solar, biogas, thermal, and green energy. AgriVijay's call centres connect with the farmers in their local language and connect them to the sales and technical support team for installation and after-sales services of AgriVijay's renewable energy products. With the help of a dedicated portal, AgriVijay assesses the energy needs of the farmers and rural households and provides the right product recommendations to ensure that the customers get maximum return on investments on their purchase. AgriVijay has installed 200-plus products such as solar water pumps, solar water heaters, solar dryers, solar DC fans, and biogas digesters which are helping mitigate climate change by abating CO₂/GHG emissions, treating waste, allowing irrigation of farms by solar energy. Their equipments and services are being used by farmers in Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana and Gujarat.

Shobha says that the stories of farmers using solar water pumps instead of electricity for irrigation and biogas instead of firewood for cooking keeps her spirits up and make her determined to take AgriVijay's offering to the rest of India. Educating farmers about renewable energy products and the benefits of solar inverters, water heaters, and pumps has been a remarkable journey.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Shobha says working in education and contributing to the education of the girl child has been a very fulfilling part of her career, but the impact she has made in a short duration as an entrepreneur has taken her to the next level. Her advice to women entrepreneurs is that it is never too late to start one's own venture.

In a nutshell

URL	https://agrivijay.com/
USP	We are a full stack renewable energy solution provider bringing renewable energy products such as solar, biogas, thermal and green energy products under one roof through our network of renewable energy stores. We also understand the energy and agricultural needs of farmers and recommend, sell, finance, deliver and deploy the renewable energy products making us an end-to-end service provider to last mile consumers, i.e., farmers and rural households.
Mission	Empowering farmers and rural households with renewable and green energy products and abating CO2/ GHG emissions.
Year in which it was founded	2020
Co-founder/s	Vimal Panjwani
Team size	15
Incubator/accelerator programmes (If any)	AIC JKLU, AIC SEED, AIC RMP, ICRISAT, a-idea NAARM, IRMA Iseed Miller Centre Accelerator Programme
Headquarters	Pune, Maharashtra
Accolades	Startup Awards 2021 – 'Top Agri Innovator in COVID times' FICCI



“ We are committed to providing cost-effective agri-tech products such as electric solar fencing to farmers facing crop losses because of wildlife intrusion. Our products prevent this conflict between humankind and wildlife and enhance productivity in the farming sector.

Prinshila Gandhi

Co-Founder, Aranya Paridhi Private Limited

”

Evolution – how it began

Prinshila Gandhi completed her B.Sc. in chemistry from Delhi University and is currently in the final semester of her M.Sc. in environmental sciences. She worked for a year with BYJU's while pursuing her master's. In 2021, Prinshila joined Aranya Paridhi, a start-up that was working on improving the environmental conditions in Odisha. She joined as an intern, and was later offered a co-founder position at the company.

Aranya Paridhi's flagship electric solar fencing product was built to help farmers and other people living close to forest reserves protect their crops, grain storages and village properties from being destroyed by wild elephants, monkeys and other animals. Prinshila says that although there were attempts by the Odisha government to prevent this by use of electric fences, those efforts were in vain as the fences could easily be pulled down.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Aranya Paridhi is an agricultural automation company that provides high-quality technology, infrastructure and solutions for assured sustainable development in agriculture. Agri automation is a diverse and pioneering area using internet of things, sensor-based features, renewable energy and satellite-based special devices to help optimise the food production process in farming. According to Prinshila, Aranya Paridhi's renewable energy-based automotive solar electric fencing system is an effective and efficient product for providing security to rural populations and safety to farm assets. The integrated system prevents wild animals from entering farmlands by giving a non-lethal electric pulse in two-second intervals along with a laser sensor that activates the siren when any animal touches the fence boundary. She says the fencing system was developed to meet the demands of the agri market and provides benefits like durability, longevity, affordability, rural accessibility, animal and human safety and ease of construction, along with some after sales-services like free installation, free operation and maintenance training.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Prinshila says it is important for entrepreneurs to take stock of their strengths and work continuously on improving them. She says that though the journey in start-ups seems never-ending, the sense of autonomy and confidence it builds in entrepreneurs is enriching.

In a nutshell

URL	www.aranyapariksha.com
USP	To develop cost-effective agri products to help boost the farming sector in India
Mission	To develop environment-friendly products and provide services that are in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
Year in which it was founded	2020
Co-founder(s)	Prinshila Gandhi
Team size	25
Incubator/accelerator programmes (if any)	Software Technology Park of India, Bhubaneswar
Headquarters	Bhubaneswar
Representative customers/partners	State governments, forests and agricultural departments, private institutions like IIMs and IITs
Accolades	Go Global Award 2021 STPI Exports and Excellence Award 2023
Next big milestone	To scale up manufacturing, increase sales and launch new products in the pipeline
Qualifications	M.Sc. in Environmental Sciences, J.C. Bose University of Science and Technology



“ Mobile phones and wallets are our co-hustlers in the daily rush of life and our affordable, high-tech products ensure that these belongings stay safe and secure for our customers.

Purvi Roy

Founder and CEO, Arista Vault

”

Evolution – how it began

Purvi started her career as a fashion designer. After an industrial internship with a luxury brand in Milan, she returned to India and started her label La-Styliste, which specialised in making workwear for professional women. As an India-registered designer, Purvi represented Lakme Fashion Week, India Runway Week, and other fashion events.

At one of these events in 2017, Purvi met the future co-founders of Arista Vault. They casually discussed the idea of building luxury products that would also be accessible to the masses. One of the founders shared his harrowing experience of losing a wallet which contained IDs, cards and cash. According to Purvi and her team, there are 2.5 million cases of mobile and wallet theft in India every year and the team acknowledged the need to solve the problem of loss and theft of wallets and mobile phones.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Arista is a Sanskrit word which means ‘unhurt’ or ‘safest’. The co-founders chose a Sanskrit name to depict the Indian roots of the company even when the company goes global. The team at Arista Vault surveyed airports, railway stations, and metros extensively and found that loss of personal belongings and luggage was a point-of-no-return situation and the likelihood of getting the lost product back was slim. The team built their first flagship product, a smart wallet with inbuilt anti-theft and anti-loss features that can be called from a mobile phone. The wallet has a separation alarm, and a GPS tracking feature, to keep the valuable belonging safe and protected while travelling. The wallet has a power button which, when pressed, activates its features. Arista Vault’s wallets are ISO 9001, 14001 certified and their privacy policy is compliant with the IT Act of the Indian Government.

There were many challenges when Purvi and her team was setting up Arista Vault. It took the company over a year to develop the prototype and though the pilot was a success, their funds were drying up. The turning point in their entrepreneurial journey came in 2019 when they were supported and incubated by the Ministry of Electronics and IT and three of its partners – Software Technology Park of India, Indian Electronics and Semiconductor Association, and Electropreneur Park. These partnerships were extremely valuable to Arista Vault in scaling their venture, product development, logistics and procurement of components, and other critical raw materials. They were also able to enter the international market by exporting their products to Germany, Chile, Dubai and other Gulf countries, and the US.

Arista Vault's products are the amalgamation of technology and design and are garnering the user's attention not just because of their features but also due their utility and attractiveness. The company aims to establish itself as a market leader in the smart luggage category by bringing revolutionary technology to wallets, business bags, travel backpacks and other products.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Purvi says her most valuable entrepreneurial advice came from her father, who told her that she must show complete confidence in her decisions. She was tested by stakeholders in this very area when she told them about the possibilities of Arista Vault's products. She held her ground even though she faced doubts from many corners. Her advice to women entrepreneurs is not to be afraid to walk their talk, to earn the trust of their audiences and not to allow skepticism to deter them from doing the hard work and pushing boundaries toward achieving their goals.

In a nutshell

URL	https://www.aristavault.com/
USP	Arista Vault is an innovative technology company creating intelligent concept-based products to make life easy, simple and safe.
Mission	Create an ecosystem to enable the customer to keep their belongings safe, with the help of innovative tech products and selling them in the B2C and B2B space
Year in which it was founded	2018
Co-founder/s	Col. Krishan Kumar Singh, Atul Gupta
Team size	25+
Headquarters	Delhi
Representative partners	Make In India, Amazon, Flipkart, Paytm, Myntra, Jiomart Supported and incubated by Ministry of Electronics and IT, and its three partners. Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi (IIITD)
Accolades	Five patents including one international patent; five trademarks
Next big milestone	Strengthen brand presence in India as well as abroad by launching another 15 product categories worldwide
Qualifications	Professional diploma in Luxury Brands from Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti (NABA), Milan Master's degree in International Business from Rani Durgavati Vishwavidyalaya, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh



“Farmers were the first entrepreneurs, but they did not know how agriculture can turn into a profitable business. This is where Bharat Krushi Seva (BKS) wants to add value to their work by helping them streamline their processes.

Sharayu Lande

Founder and CEO, Bharat Krushi Seva

”

Evolution – how it began

Sharayu began her career as a computer engineer with Mphasis and Amdocs and worked in the sector for nine years as a data and business analyst. During her tenure in the IT sector, she also worked in her organisation's CSR initiatives to address the issues of the nearby agricultural community. Sharayu grew up in a farming community and connected the dots between the two domains, which inspired her to use her technological skills and build sustainable practices for farmers. BKS was founded by Sharayu and a co-founder as a CSR initiative in 2019 and was later incorporated into a company in 2021. The company, which started with about 200 farmers, now serves two lakh farmers primarily in Pune and its surrounding areas in Maharashtra, and UP and Gujarat who are availing the virtual advisory services of BKS including weather alerts.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

The onset of smart phone usage in rural areas and farming communities was further accelerated in 2017 by events such as demonitisation and the COVID-19 pandemic. The agricultural sector supports a large section of the Indian population and also contributes towards the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country. Yet farmers in India struggle with efficiency and effectiveness due to the many unsynchronised channels they rely on. Farmers are deprived of value chain services like expert advice on soil, water and weather conditions and remain dependent on traditional agricultural practices. Traditional methods also prevent them to work sustainably and their practices add to the greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector. Other problems include rising groundwater levels in states like Punjab and Haryana, and the use of chemical-based fertilisers and pesticides. This results in tremendous losses in yield due to soil erosion and the lack of personalised crop advisory services.

BKS addresses the problem by providing farmers with a customised set of personal advisories. Once onboarded, farmers receive advice based on the soil, water, and weather conditions of their farms. The platform also offers farmers personalised calendars with recommended precautions for their farms based on the weather throughout the year. BKS captures real-time data on weather conditions to deliver farm-specific, crop-specific and crop-stage specific recommendations to farmers. The team has a skilled group of domain experts, agribusiness consultants, IT professionals, and marketing specialists to deliver these dynamic requirements. Sharayu believes that they have just scratched the surface in understanding where the future of agri tech lies, however, she is certain that companies like BKS can make a massive impact in this sector.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

According to Sharayu, nothing can stop women who are convinced and focused on their vision. She also highlights the increasing number of schemes and programmes within the government and private sector that are promoting women entrepreneurs like herself. The government of India's Department of Science and Technology has one such scheme for women scientists. Some incubators and accelerators focus only on women-run start-ups and networking platforms (e.g. Indian Women Network) and provide an opportunity for women entrepreneurs to learn and share ideas. Although women in the metros and tier 1 and 2 cities have access to more opportunities than those in rural India, Sharayu would like to see more active participation from women who come from the rural areas of the country.

In a nutshell

URL	https://www.bharatkrushiseva.com
USP	Using technological innovation to bring Indian agriculture one step closer towards smart farming by helping farmers make informed decisions, focus on precision farming and be self-reliant.
Mission	Drive the mass adoption of digital agriculture.
Year in which it was founded	2021
Co-founder/s	Hemant Dhole
Team size	25+
Investors	Upaya Social Ventures, SiriusOne, Ciryagen, Villgro, S.Amit
Headquarters	Pune
Representative customers/partners	Approximately two lakh farmers on the platform
Accolades	Incubation under Pusa Krishi – UPJA 2022 grant programme Top nine impacting startups – Upaya and Yunus Social Business (YSB) accelerator program
Next big milestone	To touch the lives of five million farmers by 2027
Qualifications	BE Computer Engineering, Pune University



“ I am an accidental entrepreneur. The turning point of my life came when I wanted to re-create the soulful Himalayan food from my childhood in Delhi.

Aditi Bhutia Madan

Founder and Director, BluePine Foods Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Though Aditi hails from Darjeeling, she has been living in Delhi for most of her professional life. In Delhi, Aditi missed the authentic, traditional Himalayan cuisine she had grown up with. She and her husband often spoke about venturing into a business which offers healthy, hygienic and affordable food but couldn't prioritise these ideas due to their hectic schedules. In 2013, they moved to Jaipur and, being a good cook, Aditi's husband nudged her to compete in Amul Master Chef 2013. She participated in the competition and was shortlisted among the top six contestants. This experience was an eye-opener for Aditi and it reinforced her desire to use her culinary passion for her entrepreneurial venture.

Aditi also participated in Kitchen Ke Superstar, a popular cooking show in Hindi, where she met Vikas Khanna, the famous restaurateur and chef, who affectionately gave her the name 'Momo Mami'. Before 2016, Aditi had a few unsuccessful attempts at starting a business on her own, before she met the two present co-founders, with whom she started and registered BluePine Foods Pvt. Ltd. (BPF) in Delhi which offers healthy, affordable and hygienic momos for its customers. In 2018, the company opened its first quick service restaurant (QSR), Yangkiez By Momo Mami, which was Aditi's name before her marriage.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

The entrepreneurial journey for the founders of BPF has been experimental and full of learning. The company tried variations of the QSR and direct to consumer (DTC) model through hotel restaurant café (HORECA) outlets and today the company draws a ratio of 50:50 in revenue from both these models.

Aditi and her co-founders wish to contribute to many agricultural and social causes and are passionate about the purpose behind their venture which is to use chemical- and preservative-free agricultural produce for making hygienic, healthy, nutritious, ready-to-eat momos that are preservative-free and have a higher shelf life.

The company believes in employing underprivileged women and in training its workforce in the HORECA segment. BPF has grown from two to 40 employees and Aditi has consciously employed women, who comprise 50% of her workforce, from small towns and villages in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, UP and Rajasthan. She has recruited visually impaired employees for her shop floor after being a jury member on @Golden Eye Chef, one of the first cooking competitions for the visually impaired in India. She values the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and has embraced it in her organisational culture at BPF.

The company started with three SKUs – chicken, vegetable, and paneer momos – and the number has now increased to 35 SKUs and includes dishes like chocolate momos, spring rolls, Thai momos, corn momos and pizza momos. These handcrafted momos are made from whole wheat flour, plain flour, vegan flour and even have a gluten-free variety. As of 2022, the company has made and sold 80 lakh momos, a feat they carry lightly on their shoulders.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Aditi's advice for women entrepreneurs and homemakers who want to start their venture is to try and be the master of their craft and aim to take the business to extraordinary heights. According to Aditi, when an entrepreneurial venture is born from a passion or hobby, it becomes a way of life, and one will be able to focus on it and enjoy it every day, even when things are not going well. Aditi was passionate about bringing food from the Himalayan region to cities and was able to turn her vision into reality. She has also won many accolades along the way.

In a nutshell

URL	https://bluepinefoods.com
USP	BPF delivers convenience in daily food experience with its natural, preservative-free, tasty, and handcrafted frozen momos with traditional ingredients from the Himalayas and a shelf-life of four months.
Vision	Enabling and empowering individuals in transforming societies by serving them with convenient food options, which not only helps save time but also establishes a feeling of reliability and simplicity. The food is made in an agile, innovative environment backed by simple sustainable systems.
Year in which it was founded	2016
Co-founder/s	Naveen Panwar, Rohan Singh
Team size	40
Headquarters	Faridabad
Representative customers/partners	24SEVEN convenience store has been a distributor and early supporter of the company Cinemas, restaurants, hotels and retail outlets
Accolades	Opener of Shark Tank India Season 1, 2022 and receiver of funding Among the top six contestants in Amul Master Chef India Season 3, 2013 Top 75 Women Transforming India (WTI) Niti Aayog and United Nations Awardee Enterprising Women of The Year 2021 By Nitin Gadkari Best Emerging Sustainable Food Startup by APAC Go Global FrontRunner Awards by International Trade Council Incubated at Nadathur S. Raghavan Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (NSRCEL), Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore Accelerator Program Technoserve Accelerator Program for Women Entrepreneurs Executive Education Programme Indian Institute of Management (TAPWE EEP IIMB) —Technoserve and Research and Innovation (R&I) Park, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi
Next big milestone	To open more QSR outlets and enhance existing facilities To make BPF the number one lean Himalayan food processing company in India
Qualifications	Executive Education Programme – Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIMB) Under Technoserve N5 Japanese - Language Proficiency Test



“ We are excited about what we do and the impact it can have on the society. We want to touch the lives of one million people with BrainSightAI’s technology and I am confident that we will get there someday. We plan to do this by offering better diagnostics and rehabilitation to people who as suffering from brain and psychiatric disorders.

Laina Emmanuel
CEO, BrainSightAI

”

Evolution – how it began

Laina began her career as a software engineer at Infosys and Netapp; and has about 15 years of industry experience in technology, healthcare management, policy and consulting. She is passionate about making an impact by using technology and has used her industry knowledge in consulting for the Government of India and organisations like Clinton Health Access Initiative. She loved working in the high-impact, developmental world and decided to make a career in this domain by starting her own company.

Things started moving at the pace she sought when she joined the incubation programme at Entrepreneur First, a London-based accelerator programme and met BrainSight AI’s co-founder, Dr Rimjhim Agrawal. The complementary skills of the two founders – Laina came with her experience in business, engineering and development, and Dr Agrawal’s brought with her the knowledge of bioinformatics and biotechnology – which helped them work together and develop BrainSight AI.

Laina says she was very excited and interested to learn about her co-founder’s transformational work in the area of brain indicators for psychiatric disorders. With a broad idea of the area they wanted to venture into and the impact they could make, they decided to start the company.

Dr Agarwal’s research was specific on finding brain indicators using complex data sets and running AI and computational neuroscience methods on them. BrainSightAI is building a detailed map of the human brain. To build this map, you need three things, the structure of the brain and details of where structures like the amygdala and the cerebellum lie. Second, knowledge of the roads and streets in the brain which can be obtained through an imaging technique called diffusion MRI. Finally, surgeons want to know the traffic situation or the networks in the brain. These networks are an expression of the function of the brain – for example, language function, attention capability, etc. BrainSightAI can conduct analysis on all these types of MRI.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Laina and her co-founder started talking to psychiatrists, neurologists and neurosurgeons about their offering, and the neurosurgeons they spoke to loved their idea. Before a brain tumour surgery, surgeons need to examine the functional loss that the patient may have after the surgery and plan their surgery to minimise the loss – whether their speech and decision-making abilities would be affected – something BrainSightAI's technology can help with. The top 20 hospitals in India are piloting and helping BrainSightAI further build its neuro-informatic platform, VoxelBox.

Building research into a clinically valid tool, convincing busy neurosurgeons that such BrainSightAI and such a tool can improve their patients' lives was tough. Though connectomics has shown to be useful for a variety of disorders such as dementia and Parkinsons, the team's current focus is on offering this to people suffering from brain tumours. BrainSightAI's team consists of neuroscientists, computer scientists, machine learning engineers, and software engineers. Apart from brain tumour, the company seeks to work on four more brain disorders, namely, epilepsy, schizophrenia, Parkinson's, and early dementia.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Initially, Laina spoke to more than 300 investors in India who found the technology compelling but they did not invest in her venture. She found that their work required niche deep-tech health-tech investors whose milestones are not based on traditional businesses. Such investors understand the regulatory cycle of a health-tech company and the lab-to-clinical cycle of a deep-tech product much better. She talked to investors in the US and Singapore, who found the company and the product exciting and were willing to invest in the company. She learned that as a founder one should just keep pitching, and not take the rejection of others or their opinions to heart.

In a nutshell

URL	www.brainsightai.com
USP	BrainSightAI's proprietary VoxelBox technology platform simplifies brain mapping, enabling complex neuro-radiology and neuro-psychology workflows.
Mission	Building the 3D map brain twin
Year in which it was founded	2019
Co-founder/s	Dr Rimjhim Agrawal
Team size	25 plus
Accelerator partners	Google for Startups, Edison Startups powered by GE Healthcare, MedTech Innovator Asia Pacific, 3DEXPERIENCE, Rebalance
Non-dilutive funding	ELEVATE 2021, Government of India-Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), Pfizer Grant
Dilutive funding	Stanford Angels and Entrepreneurs, RedStart Labs, IKP, Entrepreneur First
Headquarters	Bangalore
Representative customers/partners (clinical pilots and studies)	Clinical – St. John's National Academy of Health Sciences, Health Care Global Inc., Tata Memorial Centre, Sri Ramachandra Medical College, Max Healthcare, Mythri Hospital, Manipal Hospital, Sparsh Hospital, STAR Hospitals.
Accolades	Named in the Top 20 Medtech Startups in Asia Pacific by MedTech Innovator Asia Pacific Among the 10 start-ups to win the India-Sweden Healthcare Innovation Centre Challenge ISO Certified. 9 patents filed, 1 granted, 2 defended, 6 in review in India and the US
Next big milestone	Grow their team and enter the US market by end of 2023
Qualifications	MBA in Marketing and Healthcare, Indian School of Business, Hyderabad B.Tech., Electronics and Communication, National Institute of Technology, Calicut



“BudMore is an aquaculture farmer’s friend. Our goal is to take our flagship the internet of things (IoT) device and plasma combination to farmers to enable them to implement data-driven farming.

Dr Karthika Prasad

Co-founder and CTO, BudMore Agro Industries Private Limited

”

Evolution – how it began

Dr Prasad is a nanoscience and nanotechnology expert. She completed her Ph.D. in nanoscience in 2018, and in the same year co-founded BudMore Agro Industries (BudMore). The idea to start a venture in the aquaculture industry came from one of the co-founders, who is also the CEO of the company. Dr Prasad researched about the aquaculture industry and her findings around the elevated average mortality rates prevailing in the global aquaculture industry were a revelation to her and her team. In some species such as shrimp the mortality rate, as a result of unexpected infections, is very high. Such infections also affect other high cash flow crops like barramundi and trout, and are a productivity bottleneck in the fish farming sector causing multi-billion-dollar losses annually to the industry.

As Dr Prasad continued to research on the topic, she found that the primary cause of mortalities in aquaculture crops were infectious outbreaks, water quality management issues, and the lack of structured data-driven growing practices. She and her co-founders saw the opportunity to design solutions to address these root causes and build a data-driven, productivity enhancement (automation) product for aquaculture farms and hatcheries.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

The entrepreneurship journey for Dr Prasad and her co-founders was rocky, but they stayed true to their vision of supporting global aquaculture industries to meet the growing demand for healthy food products. Currently, the company is targeting aquaculture farmers and hatcheries in India and Australia.

The company’s smart farming solutions are an optimal blend of IoT hardware and cloud-based software, which helps with real-time data-driven automation and management of an aquaculture farm’s operations. Its ionic disinfection system helps with the disinfection of aquaculture medium at any stage of the growing process. The product is chemical-free and eco-friendly.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Since BudMore's offering was new and relatively difficult to explain, the initial penetration was challenging, however, when people saw the prototype working successfully, things became easier. With growing awareness about aquaculture and larger corporates entering the area, she is optimistic that more women will enter the sector and be instrumental in positively impacting the lives of fish farmers.

In a nutshell

Website URL	https://budmore.com/
USP	An off-the-shelf, end-to-end farm/hatchery automation solution for the aquaculture industry A zero chemical disinfection system with sustainable productivity improvement features.
Mission	Building sustainable productivity improvement solution for the aquaculture industry
Year in which it was founded	2018
Co-founder/s	Mr Syamlal Sasi Dr Pradeep Pillai Mr Anilkumar Sasi
Team size	9
Incubator/accelerator programmes (If any)	MANAGE CIA (RKVY RAAFTAAR) KSUM IIMK Live
Headquarters	Alappuzha (India) Brisbane (Australia)
Representative Customers/partners	Kerala Dept of Fisheries Dept of Fisheries, QLD Clearwater technologies, UK NexGen Turkey Australian National University University of Malaya
Accolades	Received an award from Kerala Management Association IT for Women Technology
Next big milestone	Upcoming product launches Fourth Generation IoT hardware with a 10-inch HMI graphical user interface by July 2023 Second generation Farm ERP software launch by December 2023 Disinfection system MVP testing in different countries by December 2023
Qualifications	PhD in Nanotechnology and Molecular Science, Queensland University of Technology



“ Campus Fund encourages student entrepreneurship in the country by investing in student-led start-ups. We provide anything and everything which founders need to grow their start-ups from 0 to 1.

Richa Bajpai

Founder and General Partner, Campus Fund

”

Evolution – how it began

Richa has come a long way since her first start-up which she worked on in the final year of her engineering degree in 2009. Having founded two start-ups already, the entrepreneurial bug stayed with her even at London Business School where she joined the full-time MBA programme in August 2019.

Richa came across dorm-room-fund, a concept which started in the US, while she was at London Business School in which venture funds would recruit students who would scout for start-ups. She says that the students who scout the deals also got to evaluate them and be a part of the decision-making team. She met Jamie Macfarlane from Stanford who was part of the original dorm room fund and wanted to bring the model to the UK. She had a chance to work with him at LBS and was excited to see innovations happening at the universities in the UK.

Being a student entrepreneur herself, Richa could immediately relate to the model and decided to bring the model to India, where she wanted to return after graduating. Richa contacted her network in the Indian start-up ecosystem to discuss the possibility of starting such a fund in India and received positive feedback from them. The COVID-19 pandemic expedited her entire plan and she returned to India and launched Campus Fund with a small proof of concept fund in July 2020. Richa is now into her second fund of INR 100 crore which is backed by big India Inc. companies and global industry leaders.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Campus Fund provides its portfolio companies with the right help at the right time. Its support includes mentorship, client access, go-to-market strategy and pricing, future fundraising, etc. Richa says the fund acts as their extended team and non-judgemental sounding board. In its first year, Campus Fund evaluated 800 start-ups and invested in ten. She says the first portfolio company the Fund invested in out of its pilot fund in 2020 has gone on to raise a seed round and Series A round of funding and is building a digital-services managed marketplace.

Campus Fund’s vision is to democratise student entrepreneurship. Richa believes student entrepreneurship shouldn’t be restricted to the students at premium institutes, but students from all institutes should get an opportunity to present their business plan. She says Campus Fund invests in student entrepreneurs who have solid business ideas, irrespective of the institute they belong to.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Richa advises women entrepreneurs to ask for help when they need it. She says this has been one of her biggest learnings because when she did, people came to help her without expecting anything in return. She also believes women entrepreneurs need more role models and successful women entrepreneurs should be recognised for their endeavours so that aspiring entrepreneurs can take inspiration from them.

In a nutshell

Website URL	https://www.yourcampusfund.com/
USP	Asia’s largest VC fund investing in student-led startups
Mission	Powering a generation of student entrepreneurs
Year in which it was founded	2020
Team size	four (full time) and 30 part-time students
Headquarters	Bengaluru
Investors	IIFL Wealth, SIDBI, HDFC Bank and others
Accolades	Forbes 30u30 India and Asia List, MIT Innovators under 35 India
Next big milestone	To launch Fund III in 2026
Qualifications	MBA, London Business School B.E. (Honours), Rajasthan University



“The pandemic helped people understand the technology and value behind Club First Robotics’ AI-enabled humanoid robots. It helped the company scale its offering to eight sectors, including service and industrial sectors.

Dr Neelima Mishra

Co-founder and Director, Club First Robotics Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

For Dr Neelima Mishra and her husband the idea of setting up their entrepreneurial venture began in 2013 when they started their research in the area of robotics and even made it to the Guinness Book of World Records for developing around 1100 robots. For Dr Mishra, research in robotics was a continuation of her academic thesis on wireless communication in robots that she was working on while pursuing her M.Tech. which continued in her PhD specialisation on the spine and navigation of a balanced robot. She was able to intertwine her academic interests into her business when she founded Club First Robotics (CRF) in 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the risk involved in frontline jobs in healthcare and other fields such as mining, defence, and fire and safety. CRF’s research is focused on preventing life-threatening risks for professionals who work in these domains by deploying a robot to complete the tasks. The company’s journey after the pandemic began at Sawai Mansingh Hospital in Jaipur where they were allowed to deploy one of their robots and within 24 hours the hospital asked them to ramp up their supply after seeing the benefits of using the robot.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Dr Mishra’s research and software expertise and her husband’s designing and manufacturing experience were crucial in manufacturing the robots in-house from developing the robot’s body with fibre-reinforced plastic (used specifically for the humanoid robot), to the software and the control systems of the robots.

Today, the company provides AI-enabled humanoid robots under its Sona series to work in office receptions and as automobile salespersons in showrooms. The industrial robots, Xena – which are used for defence, firefighting, and sewer cleaning – are also growing in demand.

Dr Mishra and her husband decided to make fully indigenous, self-financed robots that would meet the export standards without any investment from external sources. Dr Mishra recalls an early anecdote of using the revenue from one of their first projects – manufacturing 3000 water ATMs – to finance their vision of building the robots.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Dr Mishra is inspired by the warmth and openness with which she was received in the deep tech sector and encourages more women to come to work in the deep tech space. She believes that with confidence, women will be able to achieve their goals. She believes women have the inherent strength and self-confidence to face and quell most doubts or stereotypes.

In a nutshell

URL	www.clubfirst.org
USP	Specialises in robotics research and development and is a pioneering manufacturer of low cost, easy to operate and indigenously made robots in India
Mission	To help India become a global supplier of robots and stand in the value chain with other leading suppliers
Year in which it was founded	2020
Co-founder/s	Bhuvanesh Mishra
Team size	20
Headquarters	Jaipur
Representative customers/partners	Naandi, Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL), Indian Railway, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC), Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC), L&T Hydrocarbon Engineering
Accolades	Fist Wards for innovation in fire and safety Ready-Ho award for COVID-19 readiness ISO 9001:2015 certified company Two trademarks, one patent
Next big milestone	To scale up robotic solutions for the defence sector with surveillance capability and multi-terrain mobility
Qualifications	PhD, Robotics Technology, Suresh Gyan Vihar University, Jaipur M.Tech., Cloud Robotics, Acropolis Institute of Technology and Research, Indore B. Tech., Information Technology, Modi Institute of Technology, Kota



“India is brimming with talent, and our goal at Codewave is to generate opportunities in domain such as innovation, design, and product-thinking. Earlier, the perception was that the Indian workforce is the doer and not the thinker, however, the perception is changing as the number of new businesses in India is increasing.

Vidhya Abhijith
Co-founder, Codewave

”

Evolution – how it began

Vidhya started her career as a Java developer. She then ventured on to different roles in business, product development, and design. She met Abhijith Krishnamurthy, her colleague and future life partner, at HolidayIQ.com, where she was part of the product management team and he was in technology. They saw a clear need in the Indian market for design thinking. A lot of creative jobs like user experience (UX), user interface (UI) and product thinking were outsourced to the other countries and India was only popular for two domains – IT offshoring and low-cost BPOs. Vidhya realised that it was time to build product management roles in India and build this capacity. After about eight years in the corporate world, Vidhya co-founded Codewave and currently heads its design thinking practice.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Codewave promotes a culture of design thinking from an employee's perspective. One of Codewave's most satisfying yet challenging journeys has been to scale a culture of self-management, with a healthy balance of freedom and responsibility, and offer innovation as a service.

Vidhya describes the company as a full-stack, design-led technology company where customers can find product analysts, product managers, business analysts, and user experience (UX) and user interface (UI) professionals. Codewave has worked with venture capital firms on their portfolio companies. They have also worked on modernisation and upgradation projects for established firms.

Codewave revamped Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's (BBMP) portal which is in charge of dispensing municipality and citizen connectivity services in Bangalore. Most citizens only knew of BBMP's garbage collection service which is only one of the 50-odd citizen services it offers. Codewave helped BBMP change its identity and image from being just a

garbage collection agency to one that offers a variety of services including, issuance of birth certificates, death certificates, payment of property taxes, etc. It required a mindset change to make BBMP embrace conversational intelligence technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and chatbots. The Codewave team was able to give BBMP the confidence and conviction that even a big department like theirs could be agile. They worked on simplifying the user experience to get more citizens on the platform. Codewave also built the COVID-19 vaccination booking system and app for the Government of Karnataka, a feat it takes great pride in.

Empowerment—challenges and suggestions

In Vidhya's words, 'Challenges as an entrepreneur? A lot. Challenges as a woman entrepreneur? I have not faced much.' Even at venture capital pitches, Vidhya says gender is not an obstacle. It is all about the scalability of the idea and how it can give exponential returns. Her suggestion to fellow entrepreneurs is to work at the ground level, build a culture of autonomy and self-management and groom themselves and others to become servant leaders.

In a nutshell

URL	www.codewave.com
USP	Codewave specialises in new product development, bringing design thinking to everything it does. As a result, its customers offer products that people love and thrive as highly profitable and futuristic businesses.
Vision	Making creativity everyone's job, Codewave's highest purpose is human transformation.
Year in which it was founded	2013
Co-founder/s	Abhijith Krishnamurthy
Team size	100+
Headquarters	Bangalore
Representative customers/partners	Nexus Ventures, Accel Partners, Suzuki, Microsoft, Zomato, 3M, Siemens, Project Management Institute, Institute of Product Leadership
Accolades	Top B2B Companies – Clutch Global 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 Future 50 Honoree – Project Management Institute Top Mobile App Development Company – GoodFirms Top 1000 Companies – Clutch Global 2020
Next big milestone	Launch of Codewave Foundry – an initiative that is empowering the youth in India to embrace innovation from their school and college days. Productising the company's culture of self-management through an app called Glue.
Qualifications	B.Tech, Electrical Engineering, National Institute of Technology, Jaipur Management Program for Women Entrepreneurs, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore



“2016, Competitive Cracker emerged as a pioneering YouTube channel, dedicated to fostering education in vernacular languages like Malayalam. The channel aimed to bridge the gap for students and educators residing in small towns and villages, who faced obstacles related to limited resources or financial constraints, hindering their pursuit of academic and career aspirations. Competitive Cracker provided a valuable platform, empowering these individuals to overcome their limitations and actively engage in their educational journeys.

Asha Bineesh

Managing Director, Competitive Cracker Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Asha completed her B.Tech in Computer Engineering in 2006 and started her career as a software programmer. While she was working in an IT company in Mangalore, she also gave tuition to students who were preparing for competitive exams. Asha grew up in a village where students did not have coaching facilities and since her father was a schoolteacher, she understood the importance of education.

Recognising the lack of online educational resources available in her vernacular language, Malayalam, Asha saw an opportunity to make a difference. In 2016, she took the initiative to conduct online classes on her YouTube channel, which started with a modest subscriber count of just three which has now flourished to an impressive 4,85,000 subscribers.

Encouraging comments and positive feedback from her viewers motivated Asha to establish a company named Competitive Cracker, the same name of her successful YouTube channel. With an initial investment of INR 30,000, Asha ventured into the business world without any prior experience in financial management, marketing, or additional teaching support.

At that time, online training and education were still in their early stages, but Asha's background in engineering helped her to recognise the immense potential and scalability of teaching online. This realisation paved the way for her to efficiently onboard faculty members and students, and leverage technology to expand the reach of her educational enterprise.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Today, the online education market has grown exponentially, and Competitive Cracker (CC) has emerged as a significant player in this space. The platform caters to a diverse range of students, spanning from three-year-olds to adults up to the age of 42. They offer comprehensive coaching for nursery and school students in subjects like social science, Hindi, Malayalam, and English, and provide technical programming and digital marketing classes for adults. Over 50,000 students have benefited from the CC coaching programme, primarily consisting of Malayali learners.

A culture of diligence and teamwork under Asha's leadership has led to the launch of two flagship coaching programmes that contribute to around 70% of the company's revenue. These programs focus on preparing teachers for the Lower Primary/Upper Primary School Assistant (LPSA/UPSA) positions and the Kerala Teachers Eligibility Test (KTET). Additionally, CC offers online coaching for various other courses, including Kerala Public Service Commission (KPSC), Staff Selection Committee (SSC), State Eligibility Test (SET), National Eligibility Test (NET), bank exams, and more. The company has also expanded its offerings by launching online coaching in English for students across India who are preparing for the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Reflecting on her humble beginnings, Asha recalls starting her classes using a simple smart phone for recording her lessons. Today, Competitive Cracker boasts a dedicated team of 15 technical and editing professionals along with three studios and a mobile application.

Asha takes immense pride in the transparency and quality of the business model she has cultivated. Leveraging her extensive network of teachers, she can now offer coaching classes for civil service exams to students in rural areas, eliminating the need for them to relocate to cities for coaching. Her students, who have achieved success in their exams after attending CC's coaching, serve as powerful ambassadors for the platform, enthusiastically referring others to the channel.

Beyond student enrolment, Asha is driven by a mission to provide women with teaching capabilities a platform through which they can utilise their skills and earn a sustainable income, further empowering them in their professional journeys.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Asha deeply values her family, and her husband plays a crucial role as a co-founder in their business venture. Balancing the responsibilities of both her personal and professional life has been a challenge for Asha, but her determination to create opportunities for young individuals to pursue their educational dreams kept her motivated.

Asha has always maintained her focus on the bigger picture. She does not consider herself a perfectionist and believes in the power of trust and delegation. By effectively delegating tasks, she avoids becoming a bottleneck in her business operations. This approach has proven successful for her, and she advises fellow women entrepreneurs to embrace delegation as well. Asha firmly believes that if she can manage and run a business, anyone can do it.

Furthermore, Asha encourages women entrepreneurs to leverage the support and schemes offered by the government. She suggests taking advantage of training programmes, infrastructure support, and funding opportunities provided by various government initiatives. By tapping into these resources, women entrepreneurs can strengthen their businesses and enhance their chances of success.

In a nutshell

URL	https://competitivecracker.com/
USP	Competitive Cracker coaches students in Malayalam for various competitive exams such as Kerala Teacher Eligibility Test (KTET), Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Railways Recruitment Board (RRB), and bank exams.
Mission	To become one of the fastest growing EdTech companies in India.
Year in which it was founded	2016
Co-founder/s	Bineesh Kumar, Abhilash P.S.
Team size	95+
Headquarters	Kakkanad, Kerala
Representative customers/partners	Student circle comprises 50,000 students across the globe 4,85,000 subscribers to CC's YouTube channel
Accolades	Best E-learning platform in Kerala by Yes Biz Awards, 2021 Start Up Leader Award, Times Woman Icon Award, 2020–2021
Next big milestone	Grow the company's revenue to INR 35 crore by 2025
Qualifications	B.Tech., Computer Engineering, Cochin University of Science and Technology



“During COVID-19, we got a lot of requests from B2B companies asking us for an electronic solution to sign legal contracts in a timely and secure manner, which was the pivot for us at Contractzy.

Gautami Raiker

Founder and CEO, Contractzy

”

Evolution – how it began

After obtaining her law degree, Gautami worked briefly as a junior advocate, and joined a legal process outsourcing company in Goa in 2014 to offer legal services to clients in the UK. Later, she joined a technology business incubator where she provided legal advice to start-ups. This was her first foray into the world of start-ups and understanding what entrepreneurship was all about.

Gautami discovered that there was a gap in the start-up space in Goa, as many did not have access to legal help, and the lawyers available were all involved in civil or property litigation. After researching potential business ideas and requirements, she founded her first start-up, LawMate.in to help businesses with registration, company secretarial services, IP registration and legal documentation.

In 2018, Gautami launched the Legal Capsule – a document automation platform that makes it easier to create, collaborate, negotiate, e-sign, store and manage contracts and forms on the go. The platform was available as a SaaS model for small and micro as well as large enterprises. In 2018, she decided to develop a contract life cycle management platform where enterprises could create, collaborate, e-sign and manage contracts on the cloud. This led her to re-brand the Legal Capsule to Contractzy – a legal tech company built on SaaS.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Gautami says the problem with traditional contract management systems is that they are often paper based, time consuming and prone to errors. This can result in significant delays, increased costs and missed opportunities for businesses. Additionally, managing contracts across different departments or locations can be a challenge, leading to a lack of visibility and control over the contract life cycle. Contractzy is an award-winning contract life cycle management platform that allows enterprises to streamline, simplify and automate their contract management processes, while also reducing costs and enhancing productivity. Built on a SaaS platform, clients can effortlessly draft contracts, track changes, red-line and negotiate with counterparties, instantly e-sign and e-stamp, and manage and store their contracts, compliance and deadlines.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Gautami is the sole entrepreneur in her family and faced many financial challenges while building her company. She says entrepreneurship has been a roller-coaster ride, and no two days have been the same, but this has never stopped her from continuing on the journey.

In a nutshell

URL	https://contractzy.io/
USP	End-to-end contract management platform (patent pending), dispute resolution platform
Mission	To simplify complex legal processes using technology
Year in which it was founded	2018
Co-Founder(s)	Shravan Hegde
Team size	18
Incubator/accelerator programmes (If any)	Centre for Incubation and Business Acceleration, Goa
Headquarters	Goa
Accolades	Selected as the only woman-founded start-up in India for the Microsoft Emerge X programme
Next big milestone	Scaling global expansion
Qualifications	Master of Laws in Intellectual Property Rights, G.R. Kare College of Law



“ We aim to build and retain our customers’ trust through our philosophy of transparency. We work hard to protect our identity as a clean beauty and personal care brand.

Harini Sivakumar
CEO, Earth Rhythm Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Harini started her career in banking with Kotak Mahindra Bank and then with Standard Chartered Bank. After her first child was born and diagnosed with Down Syndrome, she quit her job in 2010. Harini was particular about the products she used for her son and was looking for gentle products but soon realised that most products available in the market had a lot of chemicals. She started studying natural skincare formulations and completed several courses before experimenting with making fragrance-free, natural soaps. She distributed them to her family and friends and was delighted when they came back asking for more. In 2017, Harini started Soapworks India (now Earth Rhythm) in Delhi.

Harini realised that she was addressing a growing concern of developing clean skin and hair care for a large number of customers who were willing to invest in products that were chemical free, clean, yet clinically effective. She also noticed that there was a lack of transparency in the market when it came to the ingredients list and the claims made on the packaging of these products which left the customer misinformed and unable to make an informed choice.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Initially, the brand was only into manufacturing soaps, however, Harini decided to venture into the hair care domain and expanded her product range with shampoos and hair oils. She started selling her products at exhibitions, on social media, and through word-of-mouth referrals. Within a year, with the positive response she was getting, Harini decided to expand the business and in 2018, her father joined her business and they rebranded Soapworks India as Earth Rhythm.

Earth Rhythm believes in clean, clinically effective skin and hair care and its product labels include a list of all ingredients that go into making the product. Harini strongly believes that the consumer must not be left in the dark when it comes to the ingredients which have been used in manufacturing the products as customers today have access to information like never before and makes conscious, informed choices. Earth Rhythm promotes a minimal regimen for customers with its range of products that offer multifaceted solutions which aims to solve several concerns with a combination of ingredients in a single product. Today, Earth Rhythm owns a 10,000 square feet factory and another 10,000 square feet warehouse in Udyog Vihar, Gurgaon, in addition to its corporate office where the corporate team is based.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

One of Harini's most heartening experiences, while she was still working from home, was hiring one of her first employees from a remote location who was unable to get a job because she was not fluent in English even though she was a graduate. Within a month's training, this young employee came back and asked Harini questions about the cash on delivery strategy, schedule for pre-paid orders, among other things and Harini was amazed at her grasp and understanding of the business. Today, the same employee leads a team of thirty women on the factory floor. Harini is thrilled about how her female employees have evolved and grown professionally and personally with her in this journey and this has motivated her to embrace a woman-first mindset in recruiting people at Earth Rhythm.

In a nutshell

URL	https://earthrhythm.com/
USP	Earth Rhythm is a homegrown non-toxic and clinically effective beauty and personal care brand that believes in making products that are safe for both people and planet Earth. The professional-grade skincare, hair care and beauty products focus on ingredients of a superior quality and all Earth Rhythm formulae are supported by extensive research that the brand shares transparently with its consumers.
Mission	To build an environmentally conscious and sustainable brand that offer products in hair care, skincare, and other categories
Year in which it was founded	2018
Co-founder/s	Sivakumar Varadarajan
Team size	100+
Headquarters	Gurgaon
Representative customers/partners	Nykaa, Amazon
Certifications	ECOCERT, PETA, rePurpose Global
Next big milestone	Grow a strong digital brand and drive revenues predominantly from digital channels
Qualifications	Postgraduate in Retail Management, Chennai Business School Skincare formulation course from Formula Botanica; Diploma in Advanced Cosmetic Science from Institute of Personal Care Science



“With eKrishiKendra, farmers can connect directly with agri experts registered on the eKrishiKendra portal and seek their advice on issues related to their crops. For instance, if the crop is infested with a disease, farmers can ask an expert about which pesticide would be required for a particular crop. The portal also provides an audio and video functionality for farmers who are unable to read or write.

Dr Naima Shaikh

Founder and Managing Director, eKrishiKendra –
AgriDigi Tech (OPC) Private Limited

”

Evolution – how it began

Dr Naima Shaikh grew up in the Navsari farming community in Gujarat where her grandfather was a farmer. She completed her PhD in agri-business management and started her entrepreneurial journey in agri-tech in 2018. Before starting her business, Dr Shaikh worked as a project manager in an agri-tech company where she learnt about the nuances of the agri-input sector and building a company which offered digital solutions in the agriculture sector. She learnt about the challenges of the farmers in areas such as crop management, selling their products and purchasing agri-inputs. This led to many discussions with the managing director of the company, in which she worked, and they decided to offer new initiatives for the farmers through eKrishiKendra, an agri-portal they launched in 2018. Dr Shaikh's co-founder has a requisite technology background has been instrumental in developing the technology solutions at eKrishiKendra.

eKrishiKendra connects main stakeholders of the agriculture sector – farmers, agri input industries, agri experts, and students who are studying agriculture – on a single platform. The portal addresses the issue of farmers looking at different sources of information helps them in areas such as marketing, pricing, financing, assessing, and sourcing agricultural inputs and produce.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

In addition to the web browser, eKrishiKendra has now extended its offering through a mobile app which was launched in 2021. It works to provide insights on precision agriculture, farm input, and market linkage segment and provides complete auto-management of individual farmer's crops based on the crops grown in the district along with services such as home delivery of agri inputs, direct selling and futures trading of agricultural produces and a complete marketing kit for agri-input

industries. According to Dr Shaikh, online trading, bidding and retailing of agricultural products is also done through the e-mandi offering on their mobile application and the website portal. EKrishiKendra also provides e-library, e-learning, and job placement facility for agri students. There is a live farmer meeting, live deck, video library, and online student room where students of agriculture can engage with the agri experts.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Dr Shaikh says that despite the challenges, an entrepreneurial journey can be rewarding for those who are patient, hardworking and dedicated towards achieving their goals. Her advice to fellow women entrepreneurs is to build a dependable professional and personal support system to fulfil work and family commitments.

In a nutshell:

URL	www.ekrishikendra.com
USP	eKrishiKendra connects main stakeholders of agriculture sector which are farmers, agri-input industries, agri experts and agri students on a single platform and servers as a one-stop solution for their needs.
Mission	- To become a digital stack for agriculture that would allow effective use of technologies and services to every stakeholder in the agriculture sector. - Balancing the twin demands of ensuring food security (through higher productivity) and higher income for farmers (through cost reduction, qualitative market access).
Year in which it was founded	2017
Co-founder/s	Narendra Savaliya
Team size	27
Incubator/accelerator programmes (if any)	- Two month training under the 'Agripreneurship Orientation Programme' of RKVY-RAFTAAR conducted by MANAGE, Hyderabad. - Availed start-up support for a period of 12 months under the incubation programme conducted by Gujarat University Startup And Entrepreneurship Council, Gujarat.
Headquarters	Navsari, Gujarat
Representative Customers/partners	- Agri input industries - Agri input dealers, wholesalers, traders - Agricuiltural sector – traders, commission agents, wholesalers, food processors, exporters - Farmers
Accolades	Winner of 'Thinkers of Tomorrow' award presented by Symphony in collaboration with News18 Network
Next big milestone	FARMTIMELINE App - Weather-based auto crop lifecycle management - Farmers who make their own grown crops profile in eKrishiKendra portal will get customised services for their crops based on the profile of all crops growing in district.
Qualifications	Doctorate degree in Agri Business Management discipline from Agri Business Management Institute, Navsari Agriculture University, Navsari



“ We are building customised machine-translation language-models for Indian languages. Our offering has been launched as an application programming interface (API) and a product.

Subalalitha C.N

Founder and Director, FirstLanguage Technologies

”

Evolution – how it began

After completing her PhD in 2014, Dr Subalalitha started teaching computer science at SRM Institute of Science and Technology. She always had a passion for teaching and continues to teach at the institute as an associate professor. During her PhD, she also worked on a central government-funded project on Tamil computing tools as a junior research fellow. While working on this project, she found an outlet for her passion for research. She worked on many other projects through SRM primarily in the field of natural language processing (NLP) – a subdomain of artificial intelligence (AI) – and her project involved automating speech and text.

Dr Subalalitha explains NLP as a process that enables computers to understand human languages – when machines translate the source language into the target language, just like Google Search or ChatGPT tries to understand a query and respond in human language.

She published more than thirty papers but felt that there was a gap between the research and what was actually used by stakeholders and there was a need for NLP-based products as the market had immense scope owing to the complexity of human languages and the need to make computers understand them. She took her husband's help in product development during the lockdown to start First Language Technologies in 2021 and her father-in-law joined the start-up as the co-founder of the company.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

First Language Technologies was registered in 2021 and has faced its share of start-up challenges. Even with incubation support from companies like Nvidia, being a start-up in the area of NLP and AI is not easy with the presence of the tech giants such as Google and Amazon already in that space. Though the company provided its product at a competitive price, especially for the MSME sector, it took First Language Technologies two years before it could generate any revenue and convince its stakeholders. They built a customised machine translation system in English for their first client and the project involved creating domain-specific text documents that would translate words and terms in a language specific to the domain. Her vision for the company is to make NLP affordable for the MSME sector since many MSMEs cannot afford automation and Dr Subalalitha would like to bridge that gap and make speech and text automation a reality for the sector.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Dr Subalalitha says women need a solid support system around them in every sphere and they should support other women in entrepreneurship. She believes in patience, persistence, determination and passion, and says that one should focus on diligence rather than chasing quick results.

In a nutshell

URL	https://www.firstlanguage.in/
USP	Focusing more on Indian dialects as this helps in building better machine translations and speech recognition systems
Mission	Making NLP technology affordable for MSMEs
Year in which it was founded	2021
Co-founder/s	Mr Manoharan M
Team size	nine
Incubator/accelerator programmes (if any)	Incubated at MIT-World Peace University, Pune , Maharashtra
Headquarters	Chennai
Representative customers/partners	Fidel Technologies (https://fideltech.com/), Japan and Maharashtra (client)
Accolades	Young Scientist Award by MIT-World Peace University, Pune in 2022
Next big milestone	Building generative AI-based products customised for enterprise verticals
Qualifications	PhD in Computer Science and Engineering from College of Engineering Guindy, 2014



“ We wanted to develop a fully indigenous product, suitable for the growing Indian market, which is flexible and scalable enough to meet the multiple needs of small, medium, and enterprise-sized clients.

Lakshmi Trivedy

Director, FlexiEle Consulting Services Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Lakshmi began her career in plant biotech research. A move to the US with her husband changed her career trajectory and she got an opportunity to work in human resources (HR) and training. Her corporate journey as an HR professional started with Sapient in 2006. Lakshmi and her husband returned to India after a few years and she decided to do an MBA in HR from IMT, Ghaziabad, and also built her experience in related domains such as performance management, talent acquisition, and HR operations.

As an HR practitioner, Lakshmi had worked on a few human resources management system (HRMS) and consistently observed a few issues. In spite of a high price point, the system providers were unable to customise their offerings to meet the client's requirements. Often, clients would have to tweak their policies and procedures to be able to work on the service provider's platform. Lakshmi was also unable to find an HRMS which provided an end-to-end solution for the customer's HRMS needs.

Having experienced many such platforms in the market that were not satisfactory from a customer point of view, Lakshmi and her husband decided to build their own platform. Her husband, who comes from an HR tech background, complemented Lakshmi's functional experience. They began FlexiEle – an offering that would cater to the unique requirements of mid and enterprise-sized clients. Their vision when they started was to build a giant HR enterprise resource planning (ERP) system that fits into the client's requirement rather than the client fitting into an HR ERP's architecture.

The company started with a basic HRMS offering along with a payroll system. Their first client was a large EdTech company with 16,000 employees that was in need of a system suitable for their multiple entities and verticals. They have been FlexiEle's flagship client ever since.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

The initial five to six years at FlexiEle were focused on client service, product development, and adding a live mobile version to the offering. FlexiEle wanted to offer an affordable solution which brings both HR technology and domain expertise. The company is committed to putting all its customers on the cloud, even those with thousands of customers. According to Lakshmi the apprehension of most of the older clients is about the safety of cloud applications, which the team at FlexiEle is able to convince them of. Lakshmi takes pride in saying that FlexiEle can cater to enterprise clients for a complete ERP solution on a reduced budget.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Lakshmi and her husband are passionate about their product offering and decided early on that they would not dilute their ownership in the company and would grow it organically. Although Lakshmi started as a domain expert, she now juggles many roles, including finance, marketing, client management, customer service, and internal HR. Lakshmi worked remotely years before the pandemic started, and remote working is a facility which is provided to all female employees at FlexiEle.

Her advice to women entrepreneurs is to have patience and a positive attitude because, according to her, unless one are optimistic, the team will not be motivated and the clients will not be as forthcoming.

In a nutshell

URL	www.flexiele.com
USP	FlexiEle's human resources management system (HRMS) can be customised for a variety of workforces within the client's framework and provide flexibility and scalability to cater to the complete employee life cycle of mid to large organisations.
Mission	To provide the most flexible ERP solutions to pace up with ever changing business and ERP needs through latest technology and a team of professionals
Year in which it was founded	2010
Co-founder/s	Amitabh Trivedy
Team size	30+
Headquarters	Gurgaon
Representative customers/partners	Shopclues.com, Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail, Publicis Media, Hitachi, Educomp, Gokaldas Exports Ltd, imagine
Certifications	ISO 27001 certified
Next big milestone	Building a domestic and global presence for their brand
Qualifications	MBA – HR, Institute of Management Technology, Ghaziabad Certificate course – Bioinformatics, University of California, Santa Cruz M.Sc., G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar



“Through Gaumaya, we hope to build awareness about the harmful, toxic and poisonous effects of chemical paints, and encourage people to choose cow-dung based paints which is an eco-friendly, toxin free alternative.

Durga Priyadarshini

Managing Director, Gaumaya Agro Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

After she graduated in History from Ranchi University, Durga got married. Her husband worked as a chartered accountant with an MNC, and she accompanied him on his postings. Durga often dreamt of starting her dairy farm and during the COVID-19 pandemic, she found an opportunity to receive training in dairy farming at DesiMoo, an organic dairy farm in Haryana, where huge piles of cow dung lying around the farm caught her attention. She was also disheartened to see how cows were treated when they stopped giving milk. She researched how cow dung could be utilised and learned about the Khadi and Village Industries Commission's (KVIC) development of Khadi Prakritik paint from cow dung. She attended a KVIC workshop in Jaipur to learn the technical aspects of cow dung paint and how it is manufactured. Durga realised that the chemical paints available in the market contain heavy metals which pollute the air, water, and soil, and can also cause various respiratory related diseases.

In 2021, Durga and a few of her friends started manufacturing cow dung paints in Rajasthan where her husband was posted at that time. From manufacturing to marketing, she tried to build awareness about the eco-friendly benefits of cow dung paint in Rajasthan and Delhi NCR and with the support of her family and friends the word spread and Durga's entrepreneurial enterprise scaled.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Durga moved back to her hometown, Ambapali (near Bargarh district), to set up a plant and help the community in which she had grown up. Durga now procures cow dung from local dairies which provides an additional source of income for the dairy farmers. By purchasing cow dung, she has also helped cattle farmers whose cows have stopped giving milk. Within six months of setting up, Durga sold over 10,000 litres of paint from her plant in Ambapali. Today, Gaumaya has two manufacturing units in Bargarh with a manufacturing capacity of 2000 litres a day. The company offers over 1000 shades of cow dung-based interior and exterior paints, and primer in its product range and is also conducting research on making cow dung-based putty. In addition to Odisha and Rajasthan, Gaumaya's products are marketed in Telangana, Delhi, Gujarat and Karnataka.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

According to Durga, she was inspired to start her enterprise because she deeply believed in her purpose of setting up Gaumaya – to protect the environment from decay and eliminated diseases which arise from using chemical-based paints. She is passionate about supporting the livelihood of women farmers and has more than fifty farmers, including women, who are benefitting financially through her business model. Her advice to fellow women entrepreneurs is to follow their dreams.

In a nutshell

URL	https://gaumayapaints.com
USP	One of India's first companies to manufacture eco-friendly cow dung-based paint.
Mission	To provide eco-friendly non-toxic products to society, save cows from being mistreated, and boost the rural economy by increasing farmers' income
Year in which it was founded	2022
Team size	10
Headquarters	Bargarh, Odisha
Representative customers/partners	Recognised as a Startup under Odisha Startup Policy, 2016
Accolades	Innovative Entrepreneur of the Year, News 18 Business Leadership Awards, 2022
Next big milestone	Increase their sales and sell their products across India
Qualifications	BA History, Ranchi University



“ My dream is to help educational institutions achieve sustainable growth so they never have to close their doors. We do this by providing end-to-end solutions to their operational problems.

Gudipati Naga Sirisha

Founder and CEO, GSR Eduwizer (GSRE) Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Sirisha Reddy had already been working in the education industry for 18 years when she established her education management consultancy in 2019. She began her career as a schoolteacher and later worked as an advisor to many institutions on their branding and marketing strategies. She envisaged GSR Eduwizer (GSRE) as a project management company which would take up turnkey projects towards building sustainable educational institutions and started the organisation in 2019.

GSRE develops institutions as per the vision and mission of the stakeholders in areas such as land acquisition, construction, curriculum development and recruitment of students and teachers. In her experience it takes about six months on average to deliver a preschool project and eighteen months for a regular school. GSRE enables the process by providing consultancy support across the value chain – from infrastructure and administrative, human resources to academic, to marketing and branding support.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Under GSRE, Sirisha has delivered eight turnkey projects and provided consultancy services to about 250 institutions. GSRE's core offering includes:

- Education management consulting: Project start-up, infrastructure, administrative and operations and academic support
- Institutions property consulting: Franchise model acquisition, divest and lease exclusive pre-schools
- Digital services: Digital marketing, digital media, websites branding
- HR consulting: Recruitment and staffing solutions
- Edu-tech services: Interactive digital classrooms, content, English labs learning management systems (LMS) /school enterprise resource planning (ERP), digital equipment and technical support

GSRE provides EdTech services and supplies interactive flat panel displays (IFPD) and other digital classroom technology through its partnership with e-classroom solutions provider Crown Technologies based in Hyderabad, which enables real-time data analytics to improve administrative efficiency and decision-making. The company also has its own hardware and software team.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, Sirisha and her team have transformed many classrooms and delivered several blended learning environments, including hybrid classrooms, AV rooms, and AI and ML integration, however, the journey isn't always linear. Institutions commit to projects, but due to reasons such as budget constraints, license approvals, and educational policies, drop them mid-way. Currently, the company is working on two projects in Karnataka – one is the launch of a green school concept, and the other is for the armed forces.

Sirisha sees schools trying to offer holistic learning, bring new technologies and innovations into the classroom, improve the teaching quality and standard of curriculum development but are unable to attract students because the K-12 segment doesn't have the marketing agencies to facilitate the admissions that get affiliated to the higher education institutions – another gap GSRE is trying to fill.

Sirisha has ambitious plans for GSRE. After spreading GRSE's operations in Telangana, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh, she wants to launch her consultancy services in other Indian cities over the next two years and develop overseas operations in Dubai, where she sees a growing opportunity with the number of universities and educational institutions of Indian origin which are established there.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Sirisha's advice to fellow women entrepreneurs is to choose a field which is commensurate with their skill set. She says that women can perform exceedingly well in a competitive environment with dedication, support and guidance.

In a nutshell

URL	www.gsreduwizer.com
USP	GSR Eduwizer provides educational institutions management consultancy support across the value chain. It also serves as a technology partner to its clients and helps them take advantage of digital opportunities across channels.
Mission	Re-imagine school education to establish sustainable schools, enhance teaching opportunities and educate children for life.
Year in which it was founded	2019
Team size	25
Headquarters	Hyderabad
Partners	Crown Technologies, an e-classroom solution provider in Hyderabad
Next big milestone	To enter the Tamil Nadu education market
Qualifications	Diploma in Engineering and Technology, Government Institute, Vizag



“Happy60plus aims to solve the day-to-day problems of senior citizens. We make aging at home happy, healthy, and comfortable for senior citizens.”

Sunita Dube

Co-founder and CEO, Happy60plus Pvt Ltd



Evolution – how it began

Sunita is a start-up enthusiast. She founded Happy60plus in 2019 after founding and working with a research and analytics start-up which focused on the banking, financial services, and insurance sector. Belonging to a large, joint-family and living with grandparents and other seniors, Sunita had nurtured a desire to do something in elder care, which finally culminated in the founding of Happy60plus. Sunita says that there is a lack of wholesome elder care services in India which addresses issues such as loneliness, chronic health issues, and dependence on others. Happy60plus has a holistic elder care offering which enables and empowers senior citizens to live independently. help buddies who help alleviate loneliness and depression and provide other healthcare assistance for the mental and physical well-being of the older population.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Happy 60plus' started with engagement activities such as motivational and informational talks for senior citizens along with hobby classes and outings to give them a sense of belonging. After the COVID-19 pandemic, though it was difficult to continue these activities it became more important than ever because this section of the society needed the support more than ever. This is when Happy 60plus started the help buddy service for daily assistance in running errands for the elderly.

Happy60plus' help buddies selection process includes a rigorous screening and evaluation process to provide the best support for empathy, compassion, and care. The on-demand helpers are verified, educated, trusted, and trained assistants who support senior citizens with a variety of services and activities. The automated five-step verification and training process makes Happy60plus' services reliable and trustworthy. The services they offer includes running daily errands, teaching technology, and providing car-assisted helper services for visits to hospitals, clinics, banks, or any outside home visits to museums, parks, etc., that support mental wellness and provide companionship.

Happy60plus' AI-enabled tech platform supports mobile and web apps and provides easy-to-use scalable solutions. Services can be booked at a click-of-a-button at affordable prices on an hourly basis in the convenience of the home. Happy60plus' aim is to integrate empathy and technology to deliver the best elder care solutions. Sunita wants to make elder care affordable and convenient, and create a conducive and collaborative elder care ecosystem.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

According to Sunita, hiring and retaining employees is a common challenge in the start-up environment. Her suggestion for retaining talent and reducing attrition includes rewarding and motivating high performers and building a learning environment where employees are trained and helped to grow. She advises women entrepreneurs to be prepared for the ups and downs in the start-up journey and surround themselves with capable team members who complement their skill set.

In a nutshell

URL	https://www.happy60plus.com/
USP	Tech-driven, affordable and safe holistic elder care solutions
Mission	Holistic elder care to provide physiological and emotional wellness solutions to the elderly within comfort of their own home.
Year in which it was founded	2019
Co-founder/s	Vinay Krishna Mishra
Team size	12
Incubator/accelerator programmes (If any)	Accelerating at TECHIN of IIT Palakkad
Headquarters	Bangalore
Representative customers/partners	Partnerships with Narayana Hospital, NIMHANS, BAF-Bangalore Apartment Federation to provide elder care services
Accolades	Selected by SEE (Social Entrepreneur & Enterprises) as Top 8 Social Impact enterprises in Bangalore Supported by IIT Startups Covered in various national and international magazines
Next big milestone	Expanding operations in other states and cities
Qualifications	MBA in Finance, Manipal University Management Program for Women Entrepreneurs, IIM Bangalore



“ More women are joining the Merchant Navy and I am confident it will have a domino effect in the Ship Repairs domain as well.

Neelam Gaur

Managing Director, Harkamal Maritime Industries Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Neelam and her husband started Harkamal Maritime Industries Private Limited in 2016. After spending over 7 years accompanying her husband on the ship during his assignments in the merchant navy, the couple settled ashore by taking up on-shore jobs. Neelam gained further shipping experience by working in a reputed marine Survey company. They decided to open their ship repairs workshop during 2016 to provide comprehensive ship repairs and maritime services, underwater works, fumigation, marine salvage and other civil works. Neelam had gained most of her knowledge of ship repair and maintenance by being on the ship and observing its operations in addition to an experience in marine surveying. In the beginning, Harkamal Maritime Industries secured all the required licenses, certifications, et., and commenced taking up jobs in ship repairs and gradually took up underwater works as well. Harkamal Maritime's main workshop is at the Krishnapatnam Port in Nellore District, Andhra Pradesh. After some time, they started getting repeat calls by their clients of many nationalities in addition to Indian ship owners, Indian Coast guard for ship repairs jobs in almost all the Indian seaports, which they successfully completed and expanded their operations with a headcount of eighty employees and sixty contract workers at various seaports. Harkamal Maritime's team comprises captains, marine engineers, marketing professionals, naval architects, surveyors, divers, chartered and civil engineers. The company's ship repairs workshops are in Nellore (Andhra Pradesh), Chennai port (Tamil Nadu), Marmagao (Goa), Pondicherry and by end of 2023 they plan to open another branch at Paradip port in Odisha.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

When cargo ships, container carriers and oil tanker ships, whether foreign or Indian, come to a port it is a routine for them to undergo some type of repair given the time they have spent on the sea. Harkamal Maritime, like other ship repair companies, works through agencies and with Indian and foreign ship owners that provide the leads on the ships that are going to be reaching the ports and the type of services they may need.

In the first few years, business went well and ships carrying food exports such as wheat, and maize would even get their ships fumigated through Harkamal Maritime, however, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their business considerably. To cope with the change in business needs, Neelam and her husband decided to diversify their offerings and provided construction services at power plants, seaports, railways, dams and reservoirs for which they onboarded civil engineers and divers growing over 100% on an year on year basis and operates debt free on bootstrap model.

Neelam says Ship repairs is a competitive field in which while maintaining quality standards is an essential pre-requisite, ship owner's decision to carry out repairs is mostly based upon the international competitive pricing as ships keep calling at various countries and options available for repairs are many. Harkamal Maritime Industries was born out of a need to solve the challenges faced by ship owners in carrying out ship repairs in India. The company conducts an in-depth analysis of each repair project in order to deliver the most suitable and sustainable repairs for its customers and is known for execution of many complex repair and marine salvage projects for the first time in the country. This gave an edge to the company over its foreign competitors and helped in expansion of business as well as earning of precious foreign reserves through export of service.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

In her current role, Neelam wears many hats. She focuses on business administration and finance, and ensures to offer timely repair services to the inbound ships as well as progress monitoring of various infrastructural and underwater projects. Neelam believes that there isn't anything that women cannot do and, according to her, women can juggle both professional and personal roles successfully.

In a nutshell

URL	www.harkamal.in
USP	Experts in marine offshore projects, dredging and logistics at all Indian ports and waterways
Vision	To become the largest comprehensive shipping and marine service provider in the country through continual learning, innovation and adapting to widen its client base and serve the clients better.
Year in which it was founded	2016
Co-founder/s	Pradeep Kant Gaur
Team size	80
Headquarters	Nellore, Andhra Pradesh
Representative customers/partners	Anglo Eastern Group, Hong Kong The Shipping Corporation of India Fleet Management Limited Bernard Schulte Management Olderndorff Carriers HmBG Synergy Ship Management Maersk Line MSC Shipping Company
Accolades	ISO 9001 (2015) and IACS Certified organisation Rated amongst Top 10 ship repair companies in India by Outlook Magazine
Next big milestone	To open a workshop at Paradip Port in Odisha
Qualifications	Bachelor of Commerce, HNB Garhwal (Central) University



“ I want our product to be incorporated into the mid-day meal programs run by the government because children are the future and backbone of our country, and their nutrition is crucial.

Menka Gurnani

Director, Hidaa Life Science LLP

”

Evolution – how it began

Menka had been working as a fermentation researcher in biotechnology at a leading pharmaceutical company for almost a decade. In 2015, she learned that she had a vitamin D deficiency. Vitamin D deficiency can lead to bone diseases, depression, and other lifestyle diseases. While lack of exposure to sunlight is one of the main reasons for the deficiency, another reason is the unavailability of natural foods which are rich in vitamin D. Although she had a prescription to cure the vitamin deficiency, neither that nor going out in the sun was benefitting her.

To figure out a solution for this problem, Menka started looking for natural vegetarian food sources with high vitamin D content. She did not find any appealing options. Her father played an important role at this stage in her entrepreneurial journey. He encouraged her to be self-dependent and pursue career options outside a regular job, although she was doing very well at her company and had a number of patents to her credit. Menka quit her job and started her company. The word hidaa is an Urdu word which means a pious gift from God. The company started its research on vitamin D in June 2015 and worked on developing D'bello, a product which contains vitamin D derived from natural sources, and launched it in January 2018.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Menka is thrilled with the progress Hidaa has made in the last five years. D'bello is a cost-effective, convenient, natural, chemical-free, 100% vegan (from vegetable and microbial sources) source of vitamin D which can be added to almost all kinds of Indian foods such as chapatti, dal, vegetables and curd. It does not alter the taste and texture of the food and is suitable for all dietary habits and age groups. At present about 80% of its users are from tier 2 cities.

Menka says that by adding half spoon of D'bello powder or by consuming two pieces of khakhra that the company has developed, a person can get 120 IU vitamin D which is the recommended daily dietary allowance (RDA) .

According to Menka, Hidaa's products and technology have opened the door for staple food fortification. She draws the analogy of fighting vitamin D deficiency by fortifying flour as the country resolved the problem of iodine deficiency by incorporating it in common salt. In Hidaa's case, the Gujarat state government was the first stakeholder to help the company. Her strategy of piloting the product at an early stage helped the company with the much-needed impetus needed in the entrepreneurial journey. Today, Hidaa has an established B2B channel. Menka is now planning a foray into B2C channels as well.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

The struggles of entrepreneurship were very real for Menka. Her advice to women entrepreneurs is to focus on their goals, targets, and success.

In a nutshell

URL	www.dbello.in
USP	Naturally high vitamin D foods such as vitamin D mushrooms, vitamin D powder, vitamin D khakhara/wheat crisps and other items
Mission	To conduct innovative research work in the field of biotechnology to develop natural, healthy and novel products for customers
Year in which it was founded	2015
Co-founder/s	Harsha Gurnani
Team size	Five
Headquarters	Ahmedabad
Representative customers/partners	Big Basket, Amazon, Reliance Fresh, Big Bazaar, Flipkart
Accolades	Biotech Winner Award, 2020 – BIRAC TiE Trend Setter Award, 2018 – Gujarat Innovation Society Super Jury Scape Up Award, 2018 – Vibrant Gujarat Start-up and Technology Summit
Next big milestone	Enhance online education and awareness of the importance of vitamin D and reach metros, tier 1 and tier 2 cities through this initiative to create an economic and health impact
Qualifications	M.Sc in Microbiology, Department of Bioscience, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh, Vidhayanagar, Gujarat



“ We have carved a niche by specialising in affordable modular interior design. In a city like Bangalore, only a handful of companies offer this high-end service at an affordable price. We want interior design to be something that all homeowners can aspire for.

Susmita Mondal

Co-founder and CDO, Homes Under Budget (HUB)

”

Evolution – how it began

As an architect, Susmita had worked on various construction projects such as luxury houses, home units, industrial and commercial buildings, villas, mock-up flats for apartments, and plotted development sites. She met her future partner at the architectural firm they both were working at, and they decided to start a venture that would give them more autonomy in the professional sphere.

They started Homes Under Budget (HUB) from their living room in 2018 and combined their experience in architecture to develop their interior design company. Susmita and her partner realised that many people in Bangalore had few options when it came to interior designing for their homes. The price, quality, and professionalism of carpenters and decorators were always unpredictable. They decided to make HUB an affordable, one-stop-solution for people who wanted to design their homes.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Susmita was able to attract the initial set of customers through her earlier assignments as an architect when HUB was bootstrapped and struggling financially. Under the HUB model, customers get what they pay for within the agreed timelines. A promise of the lowest price in the market, use of branded materials which are made in the HUB factory, 3D visualisation, a wide range of finishes, and a dedicated customer service team are some of the features of HUB. The company has completed more than 400 projects and has opened two showrooms in Bangalore in addition to its manufacturing facility.

Susmita is optimistic about the future and has great plans for HUB. From a primarily B2C offering, the company is expanding into the B2B space and collaborating with builders. The company is also planning to launch its offering in Pune, Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

According to Susmita, women entrepreneurs must be self-motivated and push themselves to achieve their goals and inspire future generations. She acknowledges that while the support of one's family and friends is of immense help, self-motivation is crucial. She supports the cause of educating the girl child and her advice to parents is to invest in their children's education and make them independent. Susmita believes that it is never too late to start fulfilling one's ambitions.

In a nutshell

URL	https://homesunderbudget.com/
USP	HUB makes living spaces beautiful and accessible to everyone. Their factory-made, top quality modular interior designs are at provided at an affordable cost.
Mission	Making interior designing purely affordable and hassle-free and guiding efforts with an uncompromising commitment to transparency and quality.
Year in which it was founded	2019
Co-founder/s	Ranjith P. Raj
Team size	20
Headquarters	Bangalore
Representative customers/partners	HAFELE, Blum, Faber, Asian Paints, Hettich, Ebco, Rehau, Elica
Accolades	Best Home Designer 2019, Homepreneur awards by Color TV 2019 Budget Interiors designer of the year hosted by Time2Leap Awards, Global Smart Build Summit
Next big milestone	Expand HUB's presence in Pune, Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi
Qualifications	Bachelor of Architecture, Guwahati College of Architecture



“ At iHeal HealthTech, we are driven by our commitment towards social impact and sustainability, and are dedicated to improve key healthcare metrics for underserved populations at the grassroots level.

Romita Ghosh

Founder, iHeal HealthTech Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Romita survived blood cancer as a kid. According to her, her parents were able to afford the treatment because they moved to Mumbai. She graduated with a double major in biotechnology and biochemistry where she was one of the youngest researchers in cancer at the Regional Cancer Centre, Thiruvananthapuram, and Tata Mumbai Cancer Centre. Romita had the opportunity to work closely with renowned scholars and fellows at these institutions. Although there was a massive repository of knowledge and information on treatment protocols for cancer to learn from, she realised that the research was not being translated into innovation.

She was advised by her seniors to do her MBA to make an impact; therefore, she moved to Delhi and did her MBA in biotechnology management and marketing. After working with Biocon – a biopharmaceutical company – Romita turned to entrepreneurship. Through her entrepreneurial endeavours, Romita has been able to make an impact to the health of many patients.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Romita's current venture, iHeal HealthTech aims to make healthcare more accessible through innovative digital solutions. Leveraging the power of artificial intelligence and deep tech research, the company is creating cutting-edge tools and technologies that can help individuals and communities better manage their health and wellness. The company operates in the B2C segment as MedSamaan, D2C as LOMO, and in B2B/B2G as MAAP and has a dedicated research wing which is building nextgen medical technologies.

MedSamaan is a revolutionary retailer of innovative and novel medical devices from around the globe, which integrates authentic experience with users in terms of choices, lower-than-market prices, assured quality, on-site demo, and on-time delivery. LOMO, which is delivered both physically and digitally, aims to solve the gap in the musculoskeletal health of patients with personalised products and services to treat over 150 musculoskeletal conditions. Malnutrition Assessment and Action Plan (MAAP) efficiently tabs nutrition and growth of infants and young children with its advanced monitoring system. MAAP's AI is solving the triple burden of malnutrition through an AI platform that co-relates nutrition with a child's growth.

Romita says her mission is to improve child healthcare outcomes in India and impact fifty million children by 2030. She also wants to help patients with bone and joint conditions and improve their health over the next ten years with deep-tech digital health solutions.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Romita learnt early in her career that in order to be disruptive, one needs to follow the path of learning and doing and to play by the rules. It is something she has carried with her throughout her career. Romita says that this is the core advice she can give women entrepreneurs, especially those in the healthcare sector.

In a nutshell

Website URL	https://www.maap.tech/
USP	MAAP AI, comprehensive app for nutrition deficiency identification and growth tracking for young children
Mission	Improve infant and children health outcomes by identifying nutrient deficiencies and focusing on nutrition in rural India
Year in which it was founded	2018
Co-founder/s	Nilashis Roy, Amit Das
Team size	40
Incubator/accelerator programmes (if any)	We Hub, Amity Business Incubator, IIT Hyderabad
Headquarters	Delhi/Hyderabad
Representative customers/partners	Ministry of Women and Child Development, myGov, WIN Foundation, Maharashtra Institute of Health Sciences
Accolades	Bayer Foundation for Women Empowerment 2023 Finalists, Grant from Meity, National BioEntrepreneurship Competition 2021 Finalist, NVIDIA Inception Partner, AWS Partnership: Digital Innovation program for Women Entrepreneurs – supported by Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser, GoI, Dell for Startups Partnership, WTI 2021 by Niti Aayog
Next big milestone	Screening 10,000 children for nutritional deficiencies
Qualifications	B.Tech in Biotech, Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad, Post Graduate Diploma in Biotech, Indian Institute of Management Udaipur Fellow, Indian Council of Medical Research



“ I spent two years researching the 5000-year-old Indian Ayurvedic system and ways to revive its natural and holistic approach to health for the twenty-first century.

Phanisri Konte,
Founder and Managing Director, Jivaasri Ayurvedic Wellness

”

Evolution – how it began

Before starting Jivaasri Ayurvedic Wellness, Phanisri had spent 13 years in the IT sector as a human resources practitioner. Her experience in HR made her privy to the challenges many corporate teams face in adhering to deadlines and various other organisational demands. She also obtained an insider's perspective on the initiatives' organisations were taking to improve the health and wellness of their employees.

Phanisri became interested in Ayurveda and started studying and practicing ayurvedic therapies. She also started practicing yoga and incorporated natural ingredients into her daily life and benefitted from the positive results of this change. After experiencing the benefits of Ayurveda in her own life, Phanisri wanted to spread awareness about Ayurveda and encourage people to make health and wellness a priority in their lives.

In 2016, Phanisri made a deliberate decision to leave a flourishing career in HR and start her entrepreneurial journey with Jivaasri Ayurvedic Wellness. Her dream is to create awareness about the benefits of Ayurveda, and to provide affordable treatments through natural therapies and time-tested methods.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Though the journey has been challenging, Phanisri wants to bust myths about Ayurveda. For instance, people believe taking ayurvedic medicines creates heat in the body and puts one under dietary restrictions. At Jivaasri, the focus is to spread awareness about the preventive therapies in Ayurveda and provide treatments that address a person's unique condition.

Jivaasri's first branch opened in 2016, and by the end of 2017, they had four centres in Hyderabad and a client base of 9,000 customers. The general protocol was to conduct counselling sessions for clients before they actually started the treatment. Every client gets assigned to a therapist and a doctor and Phanisri assumes responsibility for the overall customer experience. She points out that typically when one goes to a hospital, one is confident of the treatment, however, people are unsure of the outcomes of the treatment provided at an ayurvedic centre. Ayurvedic treatments at Jivaasri last anywhere from seven to 21 days. Some diseases, like obesity, require more time and additional dietary changes. Jivaasri's focus is on services as Phanisri believes that the ayurvedic products and medicine market is already saturated.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Jivaasri had four centres in Hyderabad. But therapies and services had stopped because of the pandemic and the company shut down one of its branches. However, the situation is now returning to normal and, currently, Jivaasri has five branches in Hyderabad.

The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced Phanisri's belief in holistic wellness and they have now added psychologists to their team since more and more people were approaching them for counselling and mental health issues. Phanisri wants to expand Jivaasri's offering within Hyderabad and to more states across India through the franchisee model.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Phanisri acknowledges the challenges faced by women who are on the entrepreneurial journey. She says that the journey is full of uncertainties and women tend to withdraw quickly from pursuing their dreams and vision when they face criticism and according to her, 'when women face challenges, not giving up is a challenge.' If they fail, which they are bound to sometime in the course of the entrepreneurial journey, they lose momentum. Phanisri wants to change this trend. To encourage and promote women entrepreneurs, Phanisri co-founded a women's organisation called Womenenergy Association of Incubators in Manufacturing (WEAIM) which nurtures and encourages fellow women entrepreneurs through the initial years of their journey.

In a nutshell

URL	www.jivaasri.com
USP	Jivaasri's curative approach through ayurvedic treatments and protocols addresses the root cause of diseases.
Mission	Jivaasri's mission is to spread the message of aarogya bhaaratham – a healthy India that trusts in nature's gifts.
Year in which it was founded	2016
Team size	25 plus
Headquarters	Hyderabad
Representative Customers/partners	WeMart Global
Accolades	MSME Startup award, 2018
Next big milestone	Expanding Jivaasri's offering within Hyderabad and to more states across India through the franchisee model
Qualifications	MBA – HR, Indira Gandhi National Open University



“ Our goal is to build a supply chain infrastructure to collect and store every single drop of used cooking oil (UCO) in the country. Many companies are converting UCO to biofuel and we want to supply it to these plants.

Kirti Vaishnav

Founder, KNP Arises Green Energy Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Kirti Vaishnav had ten years of project management and procurement experience before she and started he entrepreneurial journey with her husband. While living in Dubai, they observed the robust and user-friendly ecosystem for collecting and processing UCO and converting it to biofuel and wanted to replicate this model in India.

According to Kirti, there was a large amount of used cooking oil which was either discarded or sold to street food vendors.

Repetitive use of cooking oil can cause serious health diseases like heart problems, cancer, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's while the disposal of UCO in drains leads to soil and water pollution.

Kirti and her husband moved back to India in 2018 and were ready to dive into their maiden entrepreneurial venture. Kirti recalls how they collected the first used oil container in their car from a hotel and stored it in their home, which they went on to use as their storage space for the next three to four months. What struck them, time and again, was the lack of awareness in India about the reuse of cooking oil and the lack of infrastructure which was preventing the conversion of this oil into green biofuel. This led them to start Arises and facilitate the conversion of UCO to biofuel.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Arises' mobile application facilitates the collection of used cooking oil from small and medium businesses. After collecting the oil from various sources, it is pre-treated and sold for production to the biofuel industry and then to oil marketing companies (OMC) and transporters.

Arises collects used cooking oil from more than 2500 outlets and has five warehouses across India. The company works in 40-plus cities across six to seven states in India. Anyone, including third-party couriers and vendors, can place a request and through its logistics system and the oil gets delivered to a facility for conversion into biofuel.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Kirti became the first girl in her family to study engineering and start her own entrepreneurial venture. She attributes her success to her father who supported her entrepreneurial dreams even though he himself was not an entrepreneur. With two children and a start-up, Kirti is juggling professional and personal roles with ease and, according to her, discipline, planning and time management are the three key elements which help her accomplish her goals.

In a nutshell

URL	https://www.knparises.com
USP	Collecting used cooking oil (UCO) from small and medium sellers for conversion into biofuel
Mission	To build a tech and data-enabled supply chain for the collection of used cooking oil
Vision	Organise the disposal and recycling of UCO and convert them into green energy.
Year in which it was founded	2019
Co-founder/s	Sushil Vaishnav
Team size	25+
Headquarters	Jaipur
Representative customers/partners	Swiggy, PVR, McDonald's, The Leela, Nestle, Hyatt, Le Meridien, Oberoi Hotels and Resorts
Accolades	Among the Top 20 start-ups (out of 500 entries) under the Ministry of Agriculture program called Arise
Next big milestone	Collect over eight million litres of the total market of 220 million litres of used cooking oil generated in India for conversion into biofuel and reduce 19.3 million kilograms CO ₂ , equivalent to CO ₂ absorbed by 8.3 million trees by 2025
Qualifications	B.E. Electronics, MBM Engineering College, Jodhpur



“ We aim to create sustainable livelihoods for traditional artisans and use technology as a differentiator. We have set out to digitise more than 3000 arts and crafts of India with online and offline experiences, including handcrafted products that can be integrate into modern lifestyles.

Yosha Gupta

MeMeraki, Founder and CEO

”

Evolution – how it began

Yosha grew up in Aligarh and, until her MBA, followed the straight and narrow corporate career path. Since she had seen entrepreneurship up close in her family, it always seemed to her to be a feasible option and after a two-year stint at GE, she took her first steps toward start-ups by joining a mobile payments solution company.

She dived into her first entrepreneurial venture with LafaLafa – a platform for online shopping and coupons, discounts, and cashback – and ran the company for about three years but shut it down in 2017. She moved to Hong Kong in 2009 and then to Australia in 2021, where she is currently based, and worked part-time as a consultant with International Finance Corporation, but the entrepreneurial bug didn't leave her. Yosha attributes her persistence to pursue her goal of starting her own business to her father who did not deviate from his journey as an entrepreneur in spite of the challenges he faced throughout his entrepreneurial journey.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Yosha found MeMeraki in 2019. She stumbled upon the idea when, almost on a whim, she asked a Madhubani artist from Bihar to paint her handbag for her. It was an instant hit with her friends and strangers alike who walked up to her and asked her if she was carrying a limited-edition handbag.

Although MeMeraki started with handbags with beautiful paintings on them and the business model has now changed completely, the purpose remains the same – to take Indian traditional arts and crafts to people in a new way and create a global voice for traditional master artists.

The origin of the name MeMeraki is from the Greek word Meraki which means leaving a part of your soul in your work and Me represents the company's community of patrons and artists. MeMeraki's logo is the Tibetan sign for an infinity knot, which signifies the deep connection between artists and the community.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, MeMeraki was working with about 50 to 60 artists as a fashion brand, but sales started diminishing and Yosha quickly realised that in order to sustain and support the artists, who hailed from the remotest parts of the country, the business model needed to change.

As a pandemic relief effort, MeMeraki started conducting online workshops where these artists could teach their craft to people with a creative bent and were interested in learning and conserving art forms of India. This effort gave a new source of livelihood to the artists at a time when their income had reduced drastically during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, MeMeraki is helping 275 artists on its platform and helps them sustain traditional art forms and handicrafts across 80 categories.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Yosha believes in gender equality. She also believes that women entrepreneurs need to create an ecosystem to help each other navigate the many challenges.

In a nutshell

URL	https://www.memeraki.com
USP	First 'culture-tech' platform which enables heritage master artisans to be digital creators, in addition to the traditional formats, and commercialise their art.
Mission	MeMeraki's mission is to create a world where anyone in the world can explore an authentic connection with their culture through master artists who have inherited artistic knowledge from their ancestors.
Year in which it was founded	2019
Team size	20
Headquarters	Gurgaon
Accolades	Google Accelerator META XR Accelerator
Next big milestone	Bring 1000 new artists into the MeMeraki network by the end of the financial year and 10,000 in the next five years
Qualifications	M.Sc. Finance, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology MBA, Management Development Institute, Gurgaon BA Economics, Lady Shriram College, Delhi University



“ We are seeing digital drug discovery for the first time with the unison between technology and clinical data.

Aarti Joshi
CEO and Co-founder, Modak

”

Evolution – how it began

Aarti graduated in 1997 and chose to begin her career with a start-up even at a time when start-ups were not the preferred career choice. She moved to the US with her husband in 2004 and worked for five years with First Data Corporation in their billing and fraud analytics department. However, when they moved back to India in 2008, Aarti started exploring new areas for her next professional move.

She realised that small and mid-sized companies in India had a lot of operational data but were not using it to gather any insights for their business. This is when she decided to start Modak to provide data analytics and insights for small businesses who didn't have big budgets.

Modak did a few projects for retail and BFSI companies and received a data analytics project in 2011–2012 with an Indian political party. Aarti and her 14-member team built the whole infrastructure on the big data Hadoop system, which solved the big data problems of the party and enabled them to run a successful campaign. Modak received positive recognition for the project, which became a case study in the Harvard Business Review. A pharma company in the US, who was also building a big data Hadoop system, offered them a similar project. That's how Modak started its journey in the US.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Modak entered the pharma sector in the US and saw the need for a cloud-agnostic product, which led to the work on their flagship product, Modak Nabu. The product uses patented technology to streamline data discovery, preparation, and cataloguing into a single platform. It also helps organisations in their multi-hybrid cloud journey.

Aarti believes that the amount of time and investment spent on product development was only possible due to the freedom the investors had given to Modak's team. According to Aarti, as an entrepreneur, one should be clear about one's priorities and strategies. Modak's founders decided to bootstrap and grow organically and retain their autonomy.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Almost 33% of Modak's headcount comprises women engineers, and Aarti is passionate about maintaining, if not increasing, that percentage. Women employees at Modak are empowered to switch their roles or workload based on the responsibilities in their personal life.

She advises aspiring women entrepreneurs to demonstrate self-confidence, take risks and be assertive. Aarti has seen many women entrepreneurs entering an already-crowded start-up market, and, according to her, it is important to evaluate the business model in such a case because scaling up in an already populated environment can be difficult.

In a Nutshell

URL	https://modak.com
USP	Solving clients' toughest data challenges at scale, in production with tangible results with a quick turnaround time.
Mission	To be the most innovative solutions provider and preferred partner for data analytics worldwide. Drive upto 10 times acceleration in data journey with leaders in data fabric and DataOps
Year in which it was founded	2010
Co-founder/s	Milind Chitgupakar
Team size	400
Headquarters	Hyderabad
Representative customers/partners	Google Cloud, AWS, Starburst, Logi Analytics, neo4j, SciBite, Snowflake, StreamSets, Cloudera, Microsoft Azure
Accolades	Issued a US patent in 2022 Member, Board of Governors, BVRIT, Hyderabad Member, Forbes Technology Council
Next big milestone	Onboard more clients in the US and Europe in the life sciences domain. Onboard domestic clients that are ready for management and utilisation of their data.
Qualifications	10K Women Entrepreneurial Studies, The Indian School of Business Bachelor of Engineering (Electronics and Telecommunication), Savitribai Phule Pune University



“ Network Science is changing the world with deep tech innovation through its proprietary framework that helps deep tech start-ups go global. We believe that deep tech has the potential to address big societal, industrial and environmental challenges and impact everyday life.

Asavari Hardikar

Co-founder and Head – Marketing, Network Science

”

Evolution – how it began

After a Bachelors degree in pharmacy and an MBA in Marketing, Asavari spent a decade and a half in the life sciences industry. In 2015, she took a break from her career for three years and during this break, she worked on self-development projects and volunteered with NGOs which worked in the education sector. The fulfilling experience of working with NGOs made her realise that she wanted to do something beyond her career. Asavari and her husband agreed on building something which would help an organisation achieve its goals and started Network Science in 2020.

At its core, Network Science is a B2B business accelerator that helps deep tech start-ups go global. Even before they set up Network Science, Asavari and her husband realised that there were many start-ups globally and in India with world-class products in artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and machine learning (ML) and these start-ups had a common problem of being unable to sell their products in the global market. For example, a European start-up who wants to sell its product in the Indian market may not be familiar with the regulatory framework which is required to enter the Indian market. Network Science's offering helps Indian start-ups who want to enter the European market and vis-a-versa. Through its platform, the most promising pioneers in the technology space are connected with leading global organisations.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

According to Asavari, India is one of the largest hubs for deep tech start-ups. During the COVID-19 pandemic companies were hastening their technology adoption to ensure business continuity, and, as a result, Network Science was inundated with requests from deep tech start-ups to assess their readiness to go global. However, Asavari and her team's stringent selection process only gives clearance to start-ups which are already successful in some parameters and Asavari says that Network Science's success depends on the success of the start-ups they work with.

The company represents start-ups from Canada, the US, and India. They help organisations with limited domestic services to expand their operations globally by providing an understanding of the global market, building local geographic talent, familiarising them with the regional ecosystem, developing in-region billing capabilities, assessing entry points, and providing insights on the most opportune time of entering the global market. Network Science's offering includes compiling a portfolio of clients in the home country and quality assessments of the product for global markets.

Network Science is on a mission to build unicorns and its team includes leaders who have a successful track record of building unicorns in their countries. Asavari says her company offers global market acceleration to deep tech B2B Indian start-ups by participating in global innovation programmes which are conducted by enterprises. For Indian start-ups, Network Science provides institutional support to tap global markets and takes full accountability for market development in the US, the Middle East, Europe and Australia.

Network Science's risk/reward model ensures it stays committed to the first-year performance of the start-up. They also help start-ups set up full-service sales and marketing functions without administrative hassles and enable them to access customers, partners, consultants, analyst firms and forums across the globe.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Asavari says she's lucky to have been part of a very supportive environment, whether at home or in her professional circle. She says in the Indian start-up ecosystem, raising funding remains a challenge for everyone and according to her, only a person's credibility and intent should matter.

In a nutshell

URL	www.networkscience.ai
USP	Network Science acts as a global innovation market accelerator and seeks collaborations with global enterprises to co-create and solve global challenges
Mission	Network Science is dedicated to bringing deep tech (AI, ML, Robotics, the internet of things (IoT), blockchain, augmented reality, virtual reality) to the world. Its mission is to change the world with deep tech innovation.
Year in which it was founded	2017
Co-founder/s	Sandeep Hardikar, Raju Chouthai
Team size	25+
Headquarters	Mumbai
Representative customers/partners	Shaze, Suzlon, Schneider Electric, H&M, Mahindra Finance, FM Logistic, Sun Pharma, Intermiles, Ugro Capital, Renew Power
Accolades	Signed more than 40 contracts for over 25 B2B deep tech start-ups
Next big milestone	Deep Tech Innovation Alley - offering big corporates a deep tech centre of excellence for their board and executive team to experience deep tech innovation
Qualifications	MBA – Marketing, Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies (JBIMS)



“ We make rechargeable, bio-organic, and biodegradable batteries from crop residue. The indigenously developed batteries charge faster and last longer than their industry counterparts. By using crop residue, Nexus Power’s batteries aim to reduce the dependence on rare elements like lithium and reduce air pollution.

Nishita and Nikita Baliarsingh
Founder, Nexus Power

”

Evolution – how it began

Nishita grew up in Bhubaneswar. Her parents have been running successful businesses for over thirty years and became role models for Nishita and her twin sister. Nishita graduated from XIM Bhubaneswar and completed her MBA degree from IIM Bangalore. Before starting Nexus Power in 2019, Nishita worked with her father for a couple of years as a field employee in his mobile infrastructure company. Nishita started Nexus Power purely out of her love for automotive cars and machines. She and her sister noticed that although electric vehicles (EV) were being manufactured and displayed at tradeshow, people were not embracing these vehicles. The sisters realised that the electric vehicles segment did not have a robust ancillary industry for internal components like petrol and diesel vehicles and decided to do something about it.

According to Nishita, batteries are the heart of electric vehicles. Most EV batteries are made of lithium. Lithium reserves in the country are scarce. It is also hazardous and extremely volatile and cases of burning of lithium batteries due to temperature fluctuations has been a common problem. Lithium is also harmful for the environment. India’s dependence on importing lithium-ion batteries also make EVs expensive. Nishita and her sister decided to work in the field of battery technology and green energy industry and solve the issue.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Nexus Power seeks to build batteries from agricultural waste. Their patented technology ensures fast charging, long-lasting, environment friendly batteries for electric vehicles, grid storage, drones, and consumer electronics. Nexus Power’s batteries offer better performance and higher energy density. With a promising proof of concept, the company has successfully tested a 48V crude form prototype in a 2W EV. Nexus is not only building a better performing EV battery, but is also solving some of the major environmental concerns like minimising the dependence of limited natural resources for elements like lithium and reducing air pollution caused by burning agricultural waste which is a contributing factor towards the poor air quality index in India.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Nishita believes that organisation skills, discipline and having a calm mindset is what helps her in her entrepreneurial journey and encourages aspiring entrepreneurs to follow these principles. Her passion for the automobile sector and her deep experience in entrepreneurship makes her optimistic and ambitious about the growth of Nexus Power.

In a nutshell

URL	https://www.nexuspower.in/
USP	Bio-degradable batteries manufactured using agricultural waste
Mission	To build eco-friendly global opportunities for bio-organic, and biodegradable batteries through our ecosystem partners
Year in which it was founded	2020
Team size	27
Headquarters	Bhubaneswar, Odisha
Representative Customers/partners	Electric Vehicle Manufacturers, Grid Storage, Mobility, Drones, Consumer electronics
Accolades	Featured as the top 20 thought leaders in sustainability in THE CEO MAGAZINE Aegis Excellence Awards Star Battery Technology Provider of the Year at India EV Awards 2022 NORTHSTAR GLOBAL EXPO Dubai: LOGO DST Startup Utsav Funded by NexGen Technology fund-1 (Pontaq ventures LLP) Nexus R&D at Digital India Week 2022 Panelist at TiE GreenCon 2022 Funded by JITO MG CHANGE MAKER Listed in Forbes 30 under 30
Next big milestone	Product launch and deployment of batteries in the market.
Qualifications	Bachelor's in Business Management from Xavier Institute of Management (XIM), Bhubaneswar Course in Electric Vehicles and Semiconductors, Design of Mechatronic systems, Computational fluid dynamics, renewable from Indian Institute of Technology, Madras



“Artificial intelligence is now changing so many domains including healthcare. I have made it my life’s mission to use AI to cure breast cancer.

Dr Geetha Manjunath
Founder and CEO, Niramai



Evolution – how it began

Dr Geetha Manjunath worked with Hewlett Packard Labs for 17 years. She was a principal scientist and department manager working very closely with the Palo Alto labs in Silicon Valley as well as leading the India teams. She moved on to Xerox Research as a lab director for AI Laboratory and although based in India the role was global. She was enjoying her career and heading the artificial intelligence research for Xerox which required an entrepreneurial bent, to come up with new ideas, propose them to the business, and work on product development.

Two shocking and moving incidents in her personal life that were almost serendipitous made her re-examine her direction. She lost two loved ones to breast cancer at a very young age. She started reading about breast cancer. Her research found that more than 90,000 women die every year from breast cancer in India alone and almost all of them could be saved with early diagnosis. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), most breast cancer cases are detected late in India—at stage three—which reduces the chances of a patient’s recovery to 50 percent. In contrast, diagnosis at stage one improves the survival rate of the person to 96 percent. Today, x-ray mammography is the most common approach for screening breast cancer, however, the technique is poor at detecting cancer in women less than 50 years of age. It is also an expensive and cumbersome test.

The majority of women in India have limited access to screening tools such as mammography, which prevents early detection. And that became Dr Manjunath’s life’s mission. She decided to quit her job and founded Niramai, which means healthy in Sanskrit. She also gave it a scientific expansion, non-invasive risk assessment with machine learning.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

It has been a journey of over six years for Dr Manjunath, but today Niramai is recognised globally for trying to change the breast cancer care pathway and India’s contribution to this field. Most importantly, approximately 100,000 women so far have been positively impacted by taking Niramai’s imaging test.

Niramai uses a high-resolution thermal imaging device that detects temperature variations in the patient’s chest. The thermal patterns are then analysed by their proprietary AI-based software to detect abnormalities. An auto-generated report is then evaluated by a healthcare professional on a mobile application. The entire process, from testing to report generation, takes less than 20 minutes and it can be done by a paramedic as well. It is an accurate, efficient, affordable, and patient-friendly solution and is being used to conduct tests across India. Niramai’s solution is now both FDA and CE-approved.

Empowerment—challenges and suggestions

Geetha has received much international and national recognition for her innovations and entrepreneurial work. But the journey has been 24x7, with hardly any sleep! What keeps her going is the real help being provided to so many women. She balances work/life by ensuring she finds time to do things she loves, like cooking. The rest of the time is mostly for Niramai. At Niramai she's maintained a hybrid work culture, giving enough freedom for people to choose where they work from, when they deliver, etc.

Her advice to women entrepreneurs is if they want to start a start-up, they should just do it. In her words, "Put 100 percent into it. Don't doubt whatever you know. Build on your strengths. Be open to feedback, but make your own decisions. Be confident because entrepreneurship is a wonderful journey and social entrepreneurship is fulfilling and allows you to make a difference in so many lives"

In a Nutshell

Niramai URL	https://www.niramai.com/
Niramai USP	Niramai has developed a novel breast cancer screening solution that uses Thermaltytix, i.e. machine intelligence over thermography images. It provides a Non-Invasive Risk Assessment of breast cancer with Machine Intelligence.
Niramai Mission	Niramai's mission is to create a Universal Cancer Screening Method that can save lives.
Year Founded	2016
Team Size	25 plus
Advisory Council	Dr Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Chairperson & Managing Director, Biocon Limited; Ms. Anna Maria Kinberg Batra, Prominent Leader of Sweden; Dr H V Ram Prakash, Senior Radiologist and Expert Thermographer.
Headquarters	Bangalore
Representative Customers/ Partners	Over 28 hospitals in India have installed Niramai and the technology has been deployed at screening camps by state governments.
Accolades	An inventor of 20 US patents. Niramai Smile-100 received USA FDA clearance. Winner of the Global Women Health Award 2022 by World Bank and IFC. Winner of Commonwealth Digital Health Award in 2022. Selected for UMASS M2D2 Program 2022. Forbes List of Top 20 Self-Made Women 2020. CSI Gold Medal. BIRAC WinER Award 2018. Accenture Vahini Innovator of the Year Award from Economic Times. Women Entrepreneur of the Year 2020 by BioSpectrum India. Co-author of book "Moving to the Cloud".
Next Big Milestone	Provide every woman access to Niramai's imaging solution and expand the product portfolio to detect other types of cancers.
Qualifications	PhD, Indian Institute of Science Executive Management program, Kellogg's, Chicago



“Recycling flower waste is a win-win for us at Oorvi. When we transform flowers, we also transform lives and achieve our sustainability objectives. For instance, we use the natural, anti-bacterial ingredients of marigolds in our products and provide employment opportunities to marginalised women.

Maya Vivek

Founder and Director, Oorvi Sustainable Concepts Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Maya grew up in Karnataka. From a young age, she was passionate about studying and supporting issues related to the development of women and children. Although she completed her post-graduation in women and child studies, career opportunities in this field were limited at that point. Her two-decade-long career in international logistics and freight forwarding was contrary to what any of her friends expected her to do. Maya is honest in acknowledging that her boredom with the corporate life and a desire for more purpose made her seek more meaningful projects outside her domain. Her first instinct was to try and do something in women and child development and she discussed it with a like-minded friend who went on to become the co-founder at Oorvi. Maya took the bold step of quitting her job, not knowing what she would do but knowing for sure what she didn't want to continue doing.

Maya and Oorvi's co-founder Minal Dalmia stumbled upon the idea behind Oorvi when they saw a video of two young men from Kanpur recycling floral waste from the banks of the Ganges. Floral waste is a global issue and its safe disposal remains an unexplored territory. According to Maya, most Indian cities generate an average of 1000 million tonnes of floral waste per day. These flowers come from places of worship, events, unsold market inventory from farms. They are usually discarded on roads or in landfills and are even thrown in water bodies and end up clogging the canals.

Maya and her partner saw the potential of using used flowers for a sustainable business and were convinced no one had taken up this idea on scale, particularly in Telangana. Flowers are natural and biodegradable, however, the way they are grown and disposed off poses a hazard to soil, water, and air. The massive global market for flowers and lack of stringent regulations have ensured rampant use of harmful chemical fertilisers and pesticides to produce them on scale and increase their shelf-life. Even when they are disposed, the chemicals from flowers leach into soil and water.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Oorvi (u:rv), Oorvi Sustainable Concepts Pvt Ltd, the parent establishment of its flagship brand Holy Waste, was founded in 2019. Oorvi means earth in Hindi, which emphasises Maya's vision of sustainability and women empowerment.

Maya and her co-founder started with just two temples from where they collected about five kilos of used flowers a week and relied on online tutorials and do-it-yourself (DIY) kits to develop the prototype of their product. They realised that the business would have to be profitable and sustainable. Soon the structure of their venture started falling into place and Oorvi Sustainable Concepts became a bigger umbrella under which they would launch other brands.

In three years, the company has managed to salvage 200 tonnes of floral waste and used them to make products such as incense sticks, floor cleaners, soaps, and Holi colours. Today the company has 19 stock keeping units (SKUs) in home and personal care, and industrial products.

The social impact of keeping away floral waste from polluting water bodies and offering direct and indirect employment to women (Maya's entire team at Oorvi is comprised mostly of women) is as encouraging to Maya as the entrepreneurial and creative aspect of the business.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Maya and her team when they were just about a year into the business and it was a challenging time for the organisation. Sales were down, the inventory was piling up and salaries had to be paid. It was with a lot of self-belief and encouragement from stakeholders and well-wishers that the venture pulled through and by the end of 2022, they landed their products on the shelves of 28 stores in Bangalore, Pune and Chennai.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Maya believes that women should understand the true meaning of empowerment, financial independence, and prudence. Most importantly, they should know how to ask for help and be open to continuous learning. Through Oorvi, Maya is determined to touch the lives of women in these areas and make a positive impact in their lives.

In a nutshell

URL	https://oorvi.org
USP	Deriving environmental value from floral waste by transforming it into incense sticks, soaps, and other personal and home care products
Mission	Oorvi wishes to take up activities which can result in direct and regular employment of women, benefit the education of children and improve health and living conditions of the people.
Year in which it was founded	2019
Co-founder/s	Minal Dalmia
Team size	12
Headquarters	Hyderabad
Partners	Foundation for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Indian Institute of Management Kashipur (FIED IIM-Kashipur) Wash Innovation Hub WE Hub – State-led incubator for women entrepreneurs and other online retail platforms
Accolades	Winner of India Sustainability Award 2022 by Sustainable India Woman Entrepreneur Award 2021 by Department of GST and Indirect Taxes Best Green Startup award in the Eco Ideas category at the Green India Awards, 2019
Next big milestone	Taking Oorvi's story and scaling its model to a larger canvas both in India and across the world
Qualifications	Executive Management Program, IIM Calcutta Masters in Women Studies, Gulbarga University



“Working in a start-up inspired me to become an entrepreneur, start my own company and make an impact in the society.

Tarvinder Kaur
CEO, PMaps



Evolution – how it began

Before starting PMaps, Tarvinder worked with leading companies and a start-up in digitisation, technological innovation, and product development where she could see that most hiring decisions at companies were made subjectively by the hiring managers, without using objective tools, and there was no way to check the hiring biases by the interviewers and line managers. This was also Tarvinder's personal experience when she managed teams of over 100 people in her previous organisation.

Tarvinder also noticed that even if tools were being used, they were primarily used to check IQ and behavioural responses of a candidate. She felt the need for a tool which could conduct a comprehensive assessment of a candidate, including IQ, skills analysis, attitude and the fitment of the candidate in the profile and provide predictable and quantitative evaluations. Tarvinder decided to address this need of removing the subjective biases in hiring and bringing in a ready set of candidates.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

PMaps addresses the problem faced by recruiters while hiring frontline executives such as customer service and healthcare executives. According to Tarvinder, some of the key issues faced by recruiters while hiring front-liners include attracting Gen Z, minimising the time spent on screening hundreds of applications for a single position, and the unreliability of face-to-face interviews in making an unbiased and objective hiring decision. PMaps improves hiring outcomes through quick and engaging assessments. The PMaps's team comprises seasoned psychologists and OB practitioners with experience in industrial psychology, statisticians, and IT experts to provide its clients with seamless hiring execution. Its platform measures personality through pictures and its assessments are three times faster than traditional assessments. The assessment has reduced the time to hire period and improved the quality of hiring for leading customer service and sales-driven organisations. Asian Psychology Association, a leading mental health and well-being industry body serves as an advisor for PMaps for designing its visual-based competency framework.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Tarvinder says her journey as an entrepreneur has been exciting and dynamic. She believes that the recognition and support given to women entrepreneurs by the government and large corporates has increased in the last few years. Her advice to technology entrepreneurs is to accept the support around them and to be patient, especially during the product development journey.

In a nutshell

URL	www.pmapstest.con
USP	Language agnostic visual assessments
Mission	To be the leading global assessment player for non-technical workforce
Year in which it was founded	2014
Co-founder/s	Saurabh Rana
Team size	32
Incubator/accelerator programmes (if any)	Zone Startup and Workplace Accelerat
Headquarters	Delhi
Representative customers/partners	VodafoneIdea, MaxLife Insurance, Inventurous Knowledge Solutions, Dishd2h, IDFC First Bank and many more
Accolades	Zone Startup Winner, Selected in Top 5 in Workplace Accelerator
Next big milestone	To conduct 1.2 million assessments annually
Qualifications	Post Graduate Diploma in Marketing, Balaji Institute of Telecom and Management, Pune



“ Though there are many addictions, the thought patterns around cigarette smoking are not the same as the thought patterns around alcohol, sugar or gaming.

Kriti Bajaj
Co-founder, QuitSure

”

Evolution – how it began

Kriti Bajaj completed her BSc and MSc in Biology from Stanford University. In the US, she worked on medical research which tried to produce insulin-producing cells from stem cells to help with diabetes. When she moved back to Bombay, she started exploring areas outside her fundamental research in medicine, in which she had spent about ten years, and found opportunities to work in technology start-ups.

Kriti says that QuitSure was the outcome of a personal journey she and her husband shared, as both of them had been smokers for about 15 years. They tried but were unable to quit smoking. They decided to research about the ways in which they could quit smoking and were successful. When friends and family asked them how they did it, they decided to start QuitSure in 2020 as an online programme to help people quit smoking.

Cigarette smoking remains one of the leading causes of preventable death. Many people die every year from smoking, tobacco consumption, and second-hand smoke. However, currently available and recommended tobacco cessation programs have very low success rates. Programmes with higher success rates exist, but require personalised human intervention combined with costly pharmaceutical supplements, making them unaffordable and inaccessible to most tobacco users.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

QuitSure is an app-based, six-day quit smoking programme, accessible to anyone who owns an Android/iOS smartphone. The programme is designed using the latest innovations in behavioural science, psychology, and neuroscience to remove the desire to smoke from the user. As a result, users are able to quit smoking without any cravings, lifestyle change, or mood swings. The material takes 8–10 hours over 6–12 days to complete and is delivered in the form of text, videos and simple mental exercises. The app also has 24/7 chat-based, expert counselling support for anyone who needs it. According to Kriti, QuitSure has a success rate of 71% at 6 months after the completion of the programme.

Kriti says that the QuitSure app focuses on positive psychology instead of making the person who is trying to quit smoking feel guilty or ashamed. She says these negative feelings drive one to smoke in the first place. The app allows the user to be okay with the fact that they smoke and then breaks every single belief that the user has about why they smoke.

The next goal for QuitSure is to make their programme available in multiple languages. Currently, the app is in English, but the company has been receiving requests to translate the content for non-English speaking users and they are working on translating the programme in Hindi, German and French.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Kriti has always been encouraged by her family to focus on things that drive the highest impact. It is this advice which she took to heart and recommends it to budding entrepreneurs. She lauds the start-up ecosystem for its diversity and acceptance of people from non-traditional backgrounds.

In a nutshell

Website URL	https://www.quitsure.app/
USP	To help its users quit smoking
Mission	To free the world from tobacco and nicotine addiction
Year in which it was founded	2020
Co-founder/s	Ram Chandra
Team size	20
Headquarters	Mumbai, India
Representative customers/partners	Smokers
Accolades	4.7/5 rating on the Google Play Store Awarded Rising Star of 2022 by Google
Next big milestone	To offer the app in multiple languages
Qualifications	B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Biological Sciences from Stanford University



“

Rezo's AI-Powered customer experience (CX) cloud has enabled enterprises in the collections, automobiles, and consumer durables sectors to transform customer experience and boost revenue.

Dr Rashi Gupta

Co-founder and Chief Data Scientist, Rezo AI

”

Evolution – how it began

Dr Rashi Gupta had nearly 18 years of professional experience with AbsolutData and WNS . She also taught at Jawahar Lal Nehru University for three years. In the course of her experience, she noticed that in comparison to worldwide norms, customer support in traditional contact centres in India was struggling due to high number of queries, insufficient capacity of agents, and inefficient customer support systems. Businesses had been struggling with a multi-fold rise in customer discontent and bounce rate resulting in poor customer satisfaction ratings.

Dr Rashi Gupta and her husband, Manish Gupta, developed Rezo's artificial intelligence (AI)-powered CX cloud for enterprises to help businesses avoid customer churn and boost revenue without incurring financial costs by providing 24x7 real-time responses to customer inquiries with minimal human interaction.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Rezo aims to help its clients boost their revenue by transforming the CX with Rezo's AI and natural language processing (NLU) engine and automating and analysing customer interactions at scale. The company assists organisations across multiple voice and non-voice channels in more than 20 languages and coaches and trains agents with minimal costs. The 360-degree CX platform enables enterprises to enhance customer service and turn CX into a growth engine.

The flagship product, AutoEngage, engages with the organisation's customers through a channel they are most comfortable with and acts as a self-serve platform to understand and resolve their queries. Speech analytics stays at the backend and provides the intelligence which powers automation of the process. Built with a core philosophy of extracting value from every interaction, it enables enterprises to reach a point where they're not just reactive to queries but proactively want to resolve them.

Dr Gupta is proud of her team and the advancement they have made in automating and disrupting the contact centre space before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Rezo works with large data sets to reach out to the customer in a systematic and data-driven manner.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

According to Dr Gupta, running a start-up has many challenges. She also believes that the start-up environment is changing rapidly in India for women entrepreneurs and her advice to women is to be clear about the direction they want to go in and stay focused in order to achieve their entrepreneurial goals.

In a nutshell

URL	https://rezo.ai/
USP	Rezo's AI-Powered CX Cloud enables enterprises to transform customer experience and boost revenue with the company's APIs by automating and analysing customer interactions at scale.
Mission	Rezo's aims to build a robust AI-powered CX cloud that enables businesses to achieve their key objectives by enhancing customer experience, agent efficiency and lowering operational costs. The company strives to provide the most efficient and streamlined CX each time a client touch-point occurs.
Year in which it was founded	2018
Co-founder/s	Manish Gupta
Team size	100
Board members and investors	Bhavish Sood, Bhavesh Manglani, Vasant Rao, Devesh Sachdev
Headquarters	Noida
Representative customers/partners	Maruti Suzuki, Airtel, India Mart, L&T Financial Services, Dr Lal PathLabs, USHA, Tata AIG Insurance, Delhivery, Pigeon, Fusion Microfinance
Accolades	Member, Maruti Suzuki MAIL (Mobility and Automobile Innovation Lab)
Next big milestone	Build capacity by the end of 2023 to handle 45 lakh calls a day using Rezo's preconfigured bots
Qualifications	PhD in Biometry – University of Helsinki Double Masters of Science in Mathematics and Computer Applications – Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi



“SilverGenie is the compass that allows seniors, especially those who live away from their children, to navigate the healthcare maze in India towards their safety, where their health and well-being, both physical and mental, are taken care of, guaranteeing peace of mind for the whole family.

Dr Poulomi Bhattacharya
Founder, SilverGenie Private Limited

”

Evolution – how it began

Dr Bhattacharya grew up in different parts of India, including Delhi, Bangalore, and Mumbai. She completed her graduation and postgraduation from St Stephen's College, Delhi, and her PhD from Texas A&M University in the US. After getting married, Dr Bhattacharya and her husband moved back to India. She joined the Dupont R&D centre in Hyderabad and spent ten years with the company in multiple roles, starting as a bench chemist, and then moved to product innovation and strategic marketing. Before starting SilverGenie she worked with a start-up which inspired her to consider entrepreneurship.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, her husband's parents live in Agartala, and Dr Bhattacharya and her husband were constantly worried about their parents' physical and mental health. It was during this time that Dr Bhattacharya researched about geriatric care and saw a crying gap in geriatrics and senior care in India and she decided to start SilverGenie and established the company in 2020 in Gurgaon.

Dr Bhattacharya says healthcare in India is a confusing and tedious maze. It can be extremely confusing for a senior citizen with chronic illness to visit hospitals, labs and insurance offices for claims. The senior citizen population of India is growing and most of the senior citizens have a chronic health condition. She says the onus is upon healthcare providers and the healthcare ecosystem to help the senior citizens and streamline the process for them.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

SilverGenie aims to provide qualitative, personalised, and accessible healthcare to citizens above the age of 60. The company harnesses the power of technology, compassion, and standardised protocols to offer a personalised customer experience, resulting in a happier, more independent, and fulfilling life for senior citizens. SilverGenie's flagship platform for elderly care ensures round-the-clock care services with a unique combination of human intervention and technological expertise, under preventive, curative, and rehabilitative care. The services include doctor consultations, diagnostic services, health management and monitoring with wearables, emergency services, etc. The roadmap for SilverGenie's future growth is to continue to grow the volumes in terms of subscriptions in the care business, and to increase the number of premium users.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Dr Bhattacharya believes entrepreneurship is difficult and feels that there is a need for more role models for younger women entrepreneurs. She also feels that it is important to create an ecosystem of mentorship and building professional connections.

In a nutshell

URL	https://www.yoursilvergenie.com
USP	SilverGenie is a new age broad spectrum, full stack company which provides healthcare services to senior citizens.
Mission	SilverGenie is an enabler which combines technology, clinical expertise and human empathy to integrate its offering with a singular focus on empowering the senior citizens in an environment of trust.
Year in which it was founded	July 2020
Team size	21
Incubator /accelerator programmes (if any)	Software Technology Parks of India Gurugram Agartala
Headquarters	Gurugram
Representative customers/partners	20+ senior and pre-senior citizens
Accolades	Winner Chunauti 2.0 (MEITY), Winner OCTANE (STPI), SonderConnect Fellow
Next big milestone	Positioning SilverGenie for Sustainability by 2025–26
Qualifications	PhD with Business Certification from Texas A&M University



“ We live in a world where we know exactly what time and with which toppings our pizza will be delivered, but we don’t know if or where our life-saving drug is available when we need it. We cannot afford to take chances or go wrong in this aspect of healthcare and I am excited to change this with SmartPharma’s expertise in tech, supply chain, and pharma.

Saketha Pingali
Founder, SmartPharma360

”

Evolution – how it began

After completing her civil engineering degree and an MBA in supply chain and finance, Saketha worked in the renewable energy sector. Her first assignment was for a 24 MW hydropower project, which was the first power project to be developed and commissioned in the interior region of Arunachal Pradesh. Saketha was heading the procurement, operations, and logistics for the project. Saketha says working on this core fundamental infrastructure project in the area of materials, machinery, and equipment in rural parts of the northeast fundamentally changed her as a person and she realised that she had a much higher threshold to perform in uncertainty, risk, and ambiguity.

Saketha decided to explore opportunities after discovering her passion for solving the core fundamental problems of any industry and realised that technology is also underserved in the pharmaceutical industry. She met her co-founder who belonged to the pharma sector along with many other professionals in pharmaceutical manufacturing and distribution that reinforced her belief.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Saketha says the pharmaceutical industry was one of the first to start using software for their day-to-day operations, but there was no evolution in terms of the technology or the products, or the modules they used. Much of the software is still offline software that doesn’t work on the internet, and the data exists in silos. These were the real problems she wanted to solve. She started the company with two of her friends, who are her co-founders and come from the pharmaceutical and manufacturing, and technology sectors. The company’s offering to customers is a software-as-a-service (SaaS) platform that digitises and automates the supply chain process including inventory management and customer relationship management on a secure cloud-based platform.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Saketha says that her journey in building the company, hiring talent, or client interactions has been smooth and she owes it to a peer group of women entrepreneurs whom she meets at least once a week to brainstorm ideas and discuss ideas. A common challenge for budding entrepreneurs face compared to their male counterparts is access to funds and hopes that it will change in the future.

In a nutshell

URL	https://smartpharma360.in/
USP	Integrated technology solutions for pharmaceutical ecosystem. Software that powers network effects to solve previously inefficient, expensive processes, from the supply chain, to smarter healthcare transactions, to better shared knowledge.
Mission	Empower healthcare supply value chain and serve consumers with best-in-class experience through omnichannel presence and focus on availability, accessibility, affordability, awareness and quality.
Year in which it was founded	2020
Co-founder/s	Bharat Kumar, Surya Nagesh
Team size	21
Incubator/accelerator programmes (If any)	WeHub, Microsoft for Startups, MeitY Startup Hub (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology), startupindia
Headquarters	Hyderabad
Representative customers/partners	Medigo Pharmacy (25 stores in Hyderabad), PMJAY (28 stores in Pan India), MediBuddy Pharmacy Wing, Lxir Medi Labs (Manufacturer)
Accolades	Recognised by Emerging Technologies Wing, Govt. of Telangana for developing SaaS solutions on ecosystem of AI/ML, Cloud and Big Data.
Next big milestone	- Scale all 3 SaaS solutions in Pan India - Launch of PillPlus –omnichannel pharmacy store(online + offline) with tele consultation for prescriptions in Andhra Pradesh and Telegana State and further scale it to other parts of India. Developing an inclusive community model to empower standalone pharmacies with strong tech infrastructure, branding and working capital and digital presence to solve the persistent issues of availability, accessibility, affordability, quality and awareness about medicines in common mass. - International expansion targeting MENA and South-East Asia as the pilot programme
Qualifications	BE Civil Engineering , Osmania University MBA from IMT, Hyderabad



“Solar Infra seeks to create an impact in the lives of farmers and other families living in rural India where they don't have consistent supply of electricity.

Saikrishna Mohanty
Managing Partner, Solar Infra”

Evolution – how it began

Saikrishna and her husband incorporated Solar Infra as a partnership firm in 2016 which installed solar panels and assembled and supplied solar technology products. When she and her husband travelled to Odisha, they witnessed electricity-related issues and realised that the implementation of renewable energy would be a viable solution to the problem.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Saikrishna and her husband started Solar Infra in Bhubaneswar with the idea of implementing renewable energy solutions to address the problem of electricity supply in the state. She says that the solar energy solutions offered by Solar Infra can be customised as per the budget and requirement of the customer and are also portable. Although installing a solar system is expensive in the initial years due to the capital investment, it provides free supply of electricity in the subsequent years.

Saikrishna says Solar Infra has become a well-known solar energy provider to engineering, procurement, and construction companies in Odisha. Their target market is farmers who are unable to run their core farming activities smoothly due to interrupted supply of electricity. Solar Infra's offering includes solar power plants, solar irrigation systems, solar drinking water systems, solar street lights, solar water heating systems, fencing, and customised home-based solutions.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Saikrishna says there are many challenges in entrepreneurship and it was difficult for her to find role models and a support group whom she could learn from and with whom she could share her experiences. She believes that things have changed in recent years, and with greater access to global and domestic support and advisory groups, entrepreneurs are feeling less isolated.

In a nutshell

URL	www.solarinfra.ind.in
USP	Solar Infra customises electronic products using solar energy as per the customers' requirements.
Mission	To accelerate the adoption of solar energy systems and provide all stakeholders clean, abundant, low-cost, distributed, and renewable energy.
Year in which it was founded	2016
Co-founder/s	Arup Sahoo
Team size	16
Incubator/accelerator programmes (if any)	NSRCEL GoldmanSachs,IIM, Bangalore (Over) SRI SRI University (Continuing) Women In Climate energy (Over) Technoserve (Over)
Headquarters	Bhubaneswar, Odisha
Accolades	Nari Shakti Puraskar, CII-IWN Udyog Urja Award, News18 Green Conclave Award, Hindustan Corridor Business Superstar Award, Indian Chamber of Commerce Grand Queens Leadership Award, Lions Club
Next big milestone	To set up a solar streetlight assembling unit which will be operated through women from tribal belt.
Qualifications	MBA in HR and Marketing, IIM Bangalore



“ We work with different brands and provide them with data about their social media audiences and the credibility of their followers – whether they are active or inactive and if they are bots or fake profiles. Our software also gives the male-female ratio, age-wise bifurcation of the followers and a perspective on their interests. Brands use this intelligence to create a content strategy that keeps audiences engaged, increases follower rates, and gets better collaborations.

Krishna Priya
Founder, Starbuzz.ai



Evolution – how it began

Priya graduated in 2017 with a B.Tech. in electrical and electronics engineering. Though she had four offers on campus from large technology companies, she chose the entrepreneurial route to set up her own start-up. She gives credit to her parents for giving her the freedom to chase her passion. Before Starbuzz, Priya had worked as a full-stack developer for a start-up and where she gained a perspective about the workings of a start-up.

Priya says that she started thinking about her career and long-term goals during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the clients in the start-up where she worked wanted to try influencer marketing to attract the products' target audience. Priya did some research and realised that the entire process could be automated. She approached her then co-founder with the idea of developing a B2B software as a service (SaaS) platform that uses AI/ML to automate influencer marketing for brands and agencies, which he liked, and together they started Starbuzz in 2021.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Priya says that though influencer marketing is growing and many companies have understood its importance, they are unable to leverage it to its full capacity. One of the main roadblocks is the inability to discover a creator/influencer whose audience is similar to the brand's target group. Also, influencer marketing outcomes are difficult to measure because most companies depend on Excel spreadsheets to manage their campaigns due to a lack of proper technological tools which leads to ambiguity in measuring the impact of the campaign.

The SaaS model in Starbuzz has a total of six AI algorithms which helps marketers at different stages of their campaign from influencer discovery to campaign management and tracking, and generating the report of the campaign. According to Priya, the tool can bring down the time and resources for this process by almost 50%.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

For Priya, no two days are similar and as an entrepreneur she gets to do new things everyday. Even at this stage when she is pitching her product to customers or investors there are new questions that come her way. To be successful, she believes that entrepreneurs need to be lifelong students.

In a nutshell

URL	https://starbuzz.ai/
USP	Starbuzz.ai is a B2B SaaS platform for influencer marketers. The SaaS helps the marketers in different stages from influencer discovery to campaign management, campaign tracking and generating the report for the campaign.
Mission	To automate and bring authenticity in influencer marketing and make it accessible to everyone.
Year in which it was founded	2021
Co-founder/s	Krishna Priya Akella, Aravindha Bollineni
Team size	11
Incubator/accelerator programmes (if any)	T-hub incubated
Headquarters	Hyderabad
Accolades	Received 50 women entrepreneur award from T-hub Featured in YouandI magazine and Eenadu (local newspaper)
Next big milestone	Reaching 1000 paid subscribers for SaaS 10k app installs for the influencer app
Qualifications	B.Tech in Electrical and Electronics, Sreenidhi Institute of Science and Technology



“ At Super Closure India, we are trying to replace single-use flex and plastic signage materials with eco-friendly and recyclable tin and aluminium sheets for advertising.

Himansubala Mohanty
Proprietor, Super Closure India

”

Evolution – how it began

Himansubala is a first-generation entrepreneur and started her venture, Super Closure India, in 1991 after having completed her BA. She was encouraged by her husband to do something for herself and the society. Super Closure India started out as a packaging and multi-colour metal printing unit, and in 2005, the company ventured into manufacturing printed signage boards. In 2018, Himansubala decided to get into food-grade tin and aluminium container manufacturing. The company is currently in the process of manufacturing plastic containers as well. The company primarily caters to private sector companies in the pharmaceutical and chemical sectors.

She says that the government, forest, health, agriculture and education departments in Odisha are her biggest clients for the printing unit on tin and aluminium sheets. Super Closure India has received contracts to work on pictorial outdoor advertisements for the ‘Save the Elephant’ campaign, and educational campaigns around forest fires and burglary. The norm of using single-use flex and sun-board materials for advertising in the industry is wasteful and harmful as the paints used on them are carcinogenic, leading to solid waste and pollution. Super Closure India is addressing this issue by replacing them with tin and aluminium-based signages that are recyclable and eco-friendly.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Himansubala says that Super Closure India acts as a bridge between the government and corporate houses, and the rural, and urban people of Odisha. By providing multi-colour printed metal display boards for government campaigns that communicate awareness, educational messages/incentives, and facilities and schemes for people, she feels aligned to a larger purpose. Although procuring the raw material from Jamshedpur and Calcutta is a challenging task, the outcome makes the effort worthwhile. The sheets used can preserve messages in a durable photo-finished form for the rural and tribal masses, who comprise a majority of the population in the region. She describes Super Closure India as a house which has an integrated arrangement of pre- and post-press operation of glossy and durable metal printing, under one roof.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Himansubala had to make many sacrifices to keep her business viable. Although there were many moments of doubt and uncertainty, she never gave up. Her advice to entrepreneurs of her generation is to bring in the new generation, which is innovative and ambitious, to help grow and expand their businesses.

In a nutshell

URL	www.superclosureindia.com
USP	Only unit in Odisha having both printing and tin can fabrication
Mission	To continuously improve quality levels across all our lines of service to ensure stakeholder satisfaction.
Year in which it was founded	1991
Co-Founder(s)	Amiya Kanti Patnaik
Team size	40
Headquarters	Bhubaneswar
Accolades	Nari Shakti Puraskar 2021
Next big milestone	Complete packaging solution for customers and partners
Qualifications	BA, Swami Vivekananda Memorial Autonomous College, Jagatsinghpur



“Most of our clients want to be achieve measurable outcomes related to their company’s ESG disclosures, and our platform automagically conducts the impact assessment for them. Our 40+ categories of ‘good’ or the parameters for impact assessment are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Gagandeep Kaur Bhullar

Founder and Chief Executive Officer, SuperHuman Race Private Limited

”

Evolution – how it began

Before starting SuperHuman Race, Gagan worked with The Boeing Company. She was the first woman to be hired in a leadership role in India in the company’s 70-year-old history. Her growth and recognition at Boeing was commendable. She was the first locally-hired employee from Asia to be selected for Boeing’s flagship leadership programme, where only one person is selected globally and trained in the US. It was an intense and immersive experience which involved reviewing engineering and business programs and initiatives.

The idea of SuperHuman Race was born when Gagan was living in the US. She was motivated by the opportunity to improve the quality of life for Indian citizens and individuals the world over by measuring outcomes of programs that were focusing on development including infrastructure and access. She says, ‘From Kenya to Kentucky to Kanpur, the soft indicators of access and infrastructure are varied, subjective and open to interpretation while the hard indicators of finance, such as revenue, margins, returns, are consistent, objective and understood universally.’ Gagan started thinking about how she could bring measurement discipline to soft indicators like access, equity and equality that are difficult to quantify and have no standardisation. In short, Gagandeep wanted to solve the problem of quantifying ‘good’.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

The desire to quantify outcomes and impact in the impact and sustainability space using technology made Gagan quit her cushy Boeing job. Her zeal to solve the problem of quantifying good so it can be visualised and scaled consumed her. She even passed on an opportunity to be on the board of a multi-national aerospace and auto-manufacturer to stay committed to her dream. Her underlying belief is that an organisation’s impact can never be scaled if it is not rewarded and it cannot be rewarded if it isn’t quantified consistently, rigorously and reliably.

The first two-and-a-half years as an entrepreneur were dedicated to product development and fine-tuning the details of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) functionality. The goal was to build a scalable, location- and industry-agnostic product that can measure impact assessment in all its formats – sustainability, ESG performance, carbon emissions, and social equity.

According to the analysis conducted by Gagan and her team, majority of the investors are looking for data-driven disclosures to evaluate ESG performance; however, collecting and aggregating this data is a challenge. Improving performance dynamically is next to impossible due to inaccessibility of data. This data (for environmental and social outcomes) is distributed, hard to access, and needs complex calculations and analysis. Moreover, investors and customers have a keen interest in the ESG goals and disclosures of companies and it has become important for organisations to have clearly-defined ESG disclosures to maintain their brand's image and reputation in a competitive market.

SuperHuman Race's platform specialises in real-time, automated, and gamified measurement of good, i.e., impact assessment linked to data-driven disclosures through its AI-enabled tech platform. It is operational in approximately 30 countries and offered in 100-plus languages worldwide. Today, SuperHuman Race has more than 1,000 enterprises on its platform and 30 partners (paying clients). The company has 5,00,000 users and 2,500 employees who sign in daily to use the SuperHuman Race app.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Gagan's commitment to excellence and high performance did not wane as an entrepreneur. In a span of just a few years as an entrepreneur, Gagan represented India at two UN General assembly meetings, as well as in a CEO Roundtable at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. SuperHuman Race has also been featured in a UN CEO study which was launched at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in January 2023 at Davos.

Gagan is passionate about mentoring women on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) topics. She is determined to empower women, whether in school, university, or business and encourages them to be vocal on all platforms, including social media, on choices in STEM for women. Her advice to her fellow women entrepreneurs is simple – to be undeterred by criticism, stay humble and be agile to stay at the top of their game.

In a nutshell

URL	https://www.mysuperhumanrace.com
USP	SuperHuman Race is a data company with an AI-enabled platform for collecting and analysing data, and visualising impact with automated environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting, which includes measuring carbon footprint, governance and social impact of an organisation.
Mission	To be the world's most advanced platform where impact assessment is measured continuously AI technology.
Year in which it was founded	2016
Co-founder/s	Aalok A. Deshmukh, Punnu Singh
Team size	20
Headquarters	Mumbai
Representative customers/partners	SBI Foundation, Jones Lang LaSalle, Capgemini, IBM, Indorama, Cipla, Jindal Stainless, Godrej, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Deloitte
Accolades	Incubated by NITI Aayog under Atal Innovation Mission
Next big milestone	SHR, through its machine interface, should be able to offer tangible value beyond just insights by informing decisions about sustainable choices.
Qualifications	BE in Electrical and Electronics Engineering degree from Mumbai University



“ Our research shows that one out of ten children in India suffers from a sanitation-related disease. We want every school and college to have a wastewater system that can treat every drop of water from these institutions to help combat this health risk. Tellus Habitat hopes to lead this change.

Dr Seema Sukhani
Director, Tellus Habitat Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Dr Seema Sukhani completed her doctoral degree from the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. Though originally from Rajasthan, she was born and brought up in Delhi and remembers living near the banks of the Yamuna and being disheartened by the continual deterioration of the river. She says that the impact of that memory somehow stayed with her and inspired her to make environmental protection her vocation. Before becoming an entrepreneur, she worked with the Department of Environment in Delhi and the Karnataka government on various environmental projects. These experiences not only strengthened her technical skills but also gave her an understanding of the different environmental problems in the country. A specific project that steered her toward a career in this field was a project on the integration of technology with wastewater treatment and management where Dr Sukhani used her technical expertise to create a system for wastewater treatment whose water outlet filled up a lake in Bangalore under the Karnataka Forest Department.

It was during the COVID-19 pandemic when Dr Sukhani and a few of her batchmates, who became co-founders at Tellus Habitat, realised the problem in the structure of the sanitation industry. They observed that the problem was only getting magnified as the country's population increased. Dr Sukhani says the pressure on water resources has been rising exponentially in terms of direct use, and to support developmental needs, it is important to reduce the dependence on freshwater for all requirements. With this goal in mind, Dr Sukhani and the co-founder and COO established Tellus Habitat in 2021.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Tellus Habitat offers a decentralised, unmanned sewage treatment plant which is fully automated with low capital and operating expenditure. The treated water can be reused for non-potable requirements. Dr Sukhani says Tellus Habitat is committed to revolutionising the way wastewater is managed. Her passion lies in developing innovative solutions to address the challenges of wastewater treatment while reducing the environmental impact. With a focus on customer satisfaction and sustainability, she and her team are dedicated to provide quality decentralised wastewater treatment products and services.

The company had its share of challenges as an entrepreneurial venture. Since the technology was new, convincing stakeholders of its validity was a painstaking activity. She compliments her co-founder's perseverance and patience in getting the first pilot site up and running in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Dr Sukhani realised early on that there are very few women entrepreneurs in the sanitation industry. Initially, she found it difficult to get people to take her seriously, but that impression changed once they got to know her and recognised her technical prowess. Her advice to fellow women entrepreneurs is to have patience and keep doing what they are doing and at some point, people will get on the same page as you.

In a nutshell

URL	http://www.tellushabitat.com/
USP	Fast and efficient installation for next-generation wastewater treatment.
Mission	Our mission is to provide sustainable and affordable wastewater treatment solutions, ensuring clean water for a greener, calmer and cooler future
Year in which it was founded	2021
Co-founder/s	Mr Naveen Janardhana
Team size	9
Incubator/accelerator programmes (if any)	K-SAP Gruhas ASPIRE program
Headquarters	Bangalore
Representative customers/partners	Prestige, Saint Gobain, Glassio, Siri Agro Fresh Food
Accolades	Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) recognition Awardee of Start-up India Seed Fund National Bio-entrepreneurship competition-2022 award in Wash Category Best start award by Indo-French Chamber of Commerce in Sustainability conclave Top five start-up of India by Lemon Ideas
Next big milestone	Technical: Launching IoT platform for our systems Economical: one million in revenue in this financial year Environmental: Water recycling of four millions of litre per day (MLD)
Qualifications	Doctoral in Environmental Engineering from Indian Institute of Science (IISc)



“ At TeraLumen Solutions, our mission is to deploy terahertz systems to solve real-world problems such as rapid cancer margin detection.

Dr Jyotirmayee Dash

CEO and Director, TeraLumen Solutions Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Dr Dash completed her PhD in terahertz imaging and spectroscopy and worked as a professor at SRM University in Chennai. In 2019, one of her friends who got diagnosed with breast cancer opted for a mastectomy, even though the size of the tumour was small. According to Dr Dash, it is a common practice in India for patients and doctors to opt for mastectomy even when it isn't necessary, which goes on to affect patients physically and mentally.

Cancer is a leading cause of death and an important barrier to overcome in order to increase life expectancy globally, especially in transitioning countries. Worldwide there are many new cancer cases and deaths every year. In India there are many cases of breast and oral cancer. Factors like lack of proper infrastructure, poor awareness, low patient-to-doctor ratio and rising cancer incidence rate in India makes cancer diagnosis a major challenge in our country. According to her, significant number of patients undergo breast conservation surgery (BCS) and oral surgeries. Many cancer surgeries fail in India due to inaccurate margin detection, which leads to repeat surgeries. According to Dr Dash, current margin assessment techniques are histopathology assessment, which is the gold standard technique, and frozen section analysis. Both are time consuming, need a separate pathology lab and an expert pathologist.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

TeraLumen Solutions has developed India's first machine learning-enabled intraoperative terahertz device for rapid diagnosis of cancer margin. The technology is non-ionizing and non-invasive, making it suitable for medical diagnostics. Furthermore, the process does not involve any agents or tissue staining for analysis. Surgeons can visualise the cancer margin inside the operation theatre.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

For most of her career, Dr Dash was more inclined towards research as compared to running a business. Thus, becoming an entrepreneur was a steep learning curve that included fundraising, financial management, team and stakeholder management, and building business models and plans from scratch. As the sole founder, it was challenging for her to manage the business along with the research and product development. She says that patience and persistence helped her overcome these hurdles.

In a nutshell

URL	https://www.teralumensolutions.com/
USP	First intraoperative device in India for cancer diagnosis
Mission	Transforming the way of diagnosing cancer margin, using AI-enabled terahertz technology
Year in which it was founded	2019
Team size	7
Incubator/accelerator programmes (if any)	Venture Centre Pune, Golden Jubilee Biotech Park for Women Society, MSMF TBI
Headquarters	Chennai
Accolades	Top 3 start-ups selected in Pfizer INDovation programme Top 12 start-ups in Qualcomm Design in India Challenge Top 20 MedTech Innovator APAC Accelerator programme
Next big milestone	Launching the product
Qualifications	PhD in terahertz imaging and spectroscopy, CSIR-SERC Chennai



“Financial literacy is a global concern. Even in India, the financial literacy rate is only 25%, and in states like Uttar Pradesh, it is just 10%. At Fin Lit Project, we are passionate about democratising finance and helping people make better financial choices.

Neha Misra

CEO and Co-founder, The Fin Lit Project Services Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Neha started her career in IT at Tata Consultancy Services, however, her transition to a career in finance began in 2017 with a need to understand personal financial products. A few years into her IT career, she had the opportunity to work in New York at Long-Term Stock Exchange (LTSE) – an SEC-registered national securities exchange built to serve companies and investors who share a long-term vision.

After returning from New York in 2020, she decided to set up The Fin Lit Project with her father, Dr DC Misra. The Fin Lit Project was born as an initiative to help people with no background in financial literacy take charge of their finances at a time when there was tremendous uncertainty in financial markets due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Neha and her father spent the first few months bouncing off the idea of the Fin Lit Project with people, understanding the customers' needs and conducting sessions to address these issues. They soon realised that they needed a technology-based solution to scale and disseminate information for people to access it at their convenience.

Today, The Fin Lit Project is a premium financial education and investment platform. In the three years since its inception, the company has conducted more than 300 programmes and trained over 20,000 individuals across India on financial literacy. Its programs are also focused on topics such as sustainable finance and building financial solutions for the greater good.

Its app with micro-courses and quizzes on finance and FinTech along with articles and personalised mentorship support has crossed over 5000 downloads. The company's unique stakeholder-focused approach helps them to keep the clients at the forefront. Some of its programs which have been developed in collaboration with the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI), National Institute of Securities Markets (NISM), Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), and other organisations offer unbiased financial education and help people to use technology embrace finance as a way of life.

The Fin Lit Project assesses the success of the business by the number of repeat customers. That's the foundation that the company aspires to build through its work.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Neha has encouraged many women to step into entrepreneurship and believes women entrepreneurs can create the work/life balance they desire if they are committed and have an understanding and like-minded team. She is a mentor for the IIT Madras Alumni Association, IIIT Delhi Incubation Centre, Sheroes – Google Internet accelerator, and the Oxford University Women in Business. She is also a global speaker, having spoken at multiple international platforms like the Womentech conference, Code for America, Dell Women's Entrepreneur Summit, and Think India, amongst others, and an advocate for financial literacy in India. She is also an advisor to the board of governors at IIM Visakhapatnam.

In a nutshell

URL	https://www.thefinlitproject.com
USP	Leveraging technology to help the layperson bridge the gaps in financial understanding and enablement.
Mission	Enabling financial literacy
Year in which it was founded	2020
Co-founder/s	Dr DC Misra
Team size	35
Headquarters	Lucknow
Representative customers/partners	IIT Delhi, IIIT Delhi, IMS Ghaziabad, and organisations like ConsenSys, the Indian Navy, GBA, UNDP, Coursera, Dell, and Cognizant
Accolades	Incubated by IIIT Delhi, Zone Startups (Bombay Stock Exchange) and STPI, Chennai Pre- incubated by NSRCEL, IIM Bangalore Received funding from the Department of Science and Technology in October 2020 Selected for the United Nations Niti Aayog investor consortium in January 2021 Indian Achievers Award for the best emerging company, 2020–21 TheFinTech India Innovation Award for the Best Alstart-up in FinTech 2022 at the 29th Convergence Expo, Delhi
Next big milestone	Be part of the effort to push the present financial literacy rate of 25% in India to 50% over the next ten years
Qualifications	B.Tech. Computer Science, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Technical University, Lucknow



“As a small trader, we faced the problem of liquidating surplus inventory which was still in good condition and scrapping was the only solution in the market. That’s when we realised that even companies with large inventories are limited in their options.

Kanchan Bhandari
CEO, The Purchase House

”

Evolution – how it began

Kanchan completed her post-graduation in applied chemistry and worked as a college lecturer for a brief stint of one and a half years. Kanchan and her husband moved to Nashik and started their own business of trading engineering and chemical goods. The business did well till 2017 when they faced a severe cash crunch and were unable to invest back into their business. During this time, they also realised that they were sitting on around INR 6,00,000 worth of inventory and were shocked to discover that the only option was to scrap the inventory which was in good condition as there was no market channel for them. They decided to look for buyers for the surplus inventory and were able to recover 70% of their product cost after two months.

This sowed the seed for The Purchase House – an industrial marketplace which helps companies improve their cash flow by liquidating industrial surplus and non-moving inventory. They believe that the problem of disposing surplus inventory is a global concern and can be solved with the help of a digital platform. The Purchase House started connecting micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that want to sell their inventories to companies that wanted to buy the stock. The company bridges the gap between buyers and sellers of surplus inventory helps industries in reducing their carbon footprints by channelising and utilising the surplus in the circular economy.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

By 2018, multinational companies also started approaching The Purchase House and wanted to liquidate their surplus inventory on the platform. The returns on the product value was 60–70%, compared to 5–10%, which the companies were able to recover. At present, The Purchase House has more than 30,000 products of different brands listed on its platform with a mix of new and repeat customers.

The focus of the company in the last few years has been to automate their operations and reduce manual intervention. Their focus remains on using surplus inventory of the B2B segment though organisations have inquired about listing new products on the platform.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Kanchan says her parents fully supported her entrepreneurial journey. She says that the perception of women entrepreneurs has also changed over the years and people are more receptive to women in the start-up sector.

In a nutshell

URL	https://www.thepurchasehouse.com
USP	Bridging the gap of usable stock between buyers and sellers with transparency in the entire process
Mission	To channelise industrial surplus into circular economy and facilitating the utilisation of every manufactured product to its full potential.
Year in which it was founded	2017
Co-founder/s	Rushikesh Bhandari
Team size	13
Headquarters	Nashik, Maharashtra
Representative Customers/partners	BFW Ltd. (strategic partners)
Next big milestone	To expand the company's reach in the ASEAN region
Qualifications	M.Sc. in Applied Chemistry from Shri G S Institute of Technology and Science



“Our drones can continuously inspect and monitor sites in construction industries, mining sites, bridges, and cell phone towers. We are using a first-of-its-kind AI-on-edge, made-in-India drone. We have developed and deployed AI and other autonomy tools for precise video capture, infrastructure inspection, and situational awareness through our flying intelligent camera.

Rajeshree Deotalu

Co-founder and Chief Technical Officer, VECROS Technologies Pvt Ltd

”

Evolution – how it began

Rajeshree got her first taste of cutthroat competition when she left her village near Amravati district in Maharashtra to prepare for higher studies in engineering. Although she was a topper in her school, she struggled with mathematics while she was preparing for her competitive exams. She was relieved when she was admitted into the reputed National Institute of Technology in Nagpur though she was not particularly interested in electrical engineering. She chanced upon and joined the Robotics Club at the institute which changed her academic and professional trajectory. She was encouraged by her seniors and by the end of her second year, she had published two international papers and was invited to attend the International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA) in Australia, one of the largest conferences on robotics where she met researchers and scientists from top institutes all over the world.

In her third year at the university, she visited the US and interned at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) Humanoid Robotics Lab where she worked on Atlas, a Boston Dynamics humanoid robot. At this point, she knew she had found her calling – to learn to control robots efficiently and dynamically in various scenarios and to perform intricate tasks intelligently.

After her graduation, Rajeshree had offers in other areas, but none piqued her interest as she was keen to work in robotics and artificial intelligence (AI). She was interested in posts on smart drones by the CEO at VECROS and connected with him. He also read her research on robotics and AI and offered her to work on a few projects in Delhi. Soon after, she became a co-founder at the company.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Rajeshree and her colleagues at VECROS invested their initial years in deep research and development to make a unique product which performs inspection activities safely, securely and efficiently. They have done paid proof-of-concept projects for cell phone tower inspection and signal capturing with Nokia, continuous monitoring and surveillance with Maruti Suzuki, and 3D modelling and capturing with real estate companies in India.

Drones have been around for almost a decade and have been implemented in various fields to conduct different operations, yet they are limited by network connectivity and range of flying. The best-in-class features of VECROS drones include a 35-minute max flight time, 10 km transmission range, 360° obstacle avoidance, and 4G beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) communication. The product has eight cameras around its body, which allow it to build a detailed 3D map of its surroundings. The autonomous engines designed by VECROS are responsible for high-level tasks and ensure seamless hardware and software integration. Though the hardware comes from a third-party manufacturer, VECROS has the final say over design, quality, and other specifications. The end goal for VECROS is to make inspection tasks as easy and as reliable as possible for users using drones with advanced AI and deep learning techniques.

Many authorities and industries gave VECROS's solution a try during the COVID-19 pandemic and were able to increase their inspection time tenfold. Rajeshree says she would like VECROS to offer its customers a tangible return on investment. Rajeshree encourages her team to contribute to open-source projects and builds a culture of openness. She says the team at VECROS has also benefitted from the open-source system, which in her opinion, promotes transparency and collaboration.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Rajeshree assumed a senior role at VECROS very early in her career and had to face doubt and scepticism of her peers. She says that it didn't make her doubt herself but made her more determined to fight through her inhibitions and prove herself and encourages budding entrepreneurs to believe in themselves and overcome their apprehensions about their goals.

In a nutshell

URL	www.vecros.com
USP	VECROS specialises in the development of smart drones and provides preventive surveillance using computer vision and robotics.
Mission	Transforming the world through innovative, efficient and safe autonomous flight technology.
Year in which it was founded	2018
Co-founder/s	Best Prem Sai, Allu Sai Haneesh
Team size	15
Incubator programmes	Microsoft Startup Program, 2021 Mobility Startup Incubation by NSRCEL and Maruti Suzuki India Limited, 2020 Nvidia Inception/Accelerator Program, 2020 Incubator Program, Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT) Incubation, 2020 Incubator Program, Innocity Online Booster by Startup Oasis, 2020
Headquarters	Delhi
Representative customers/partners	Nokia, Maruti Suzuki, real estate companies
Accolades	Winners of Sterlite Innovation Challenge, 2020
Next big milestone	Building a technology and brand that the company will be proud of and that customers will be happy to use.
Qualifications	B.Tech, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, National Institute of Technology (NIT), Nagpur



“ I am positive about the women entrepreneurs’ support groups and the connections one can build through them, though, ideally, there shouldn’t be gender differentiation in entrepreneurship.

Sri Reddy
Co-founder, Zithara

”

Evolution – how it began

Sri Reddy was always interested in the retail sector. She completed her B.Tech. in computer science and then went to the US to do her MBA and worked there in programming and product marketing. She returned to Hyderabad in 2013 after spending nearly ten years in the US and decided to pursue her passion for retail. She started a business in the wellness space, which at that time was at a nascent stage in the Indian market.

According to Sri, the challenges of building a business model from scratch are very different from working in an organisation and she had to focus on all the details of the business without a big team, or a budget for the technological tools one has access to when they work in a big corporation. It is at that stage that she met Zithara’s future co-founder who sold her the software for her billing system.

According to Zithara’s research, retail businesses may incur significant losses due to disconnected or fragmented customer data which results in ineffective marketing communication. This is why she and her co-founder decided to start a company and develop a software that addresses the customer engagement requirement of corporates.

Entrepreneurship – growth and challenges

Sri and her co-founder built the Zithara software to help retailers understand and assess the customer in a formulaic way through algorithms and to give the business owner timely insights on one platform. Zithara’s engagement begins at the time of the transaction or payment of money by the customer. The software gives retail businesses a smart way to engage customers at the time of payment itself. Zithara has been developed as an all-in-one AI-powered software as a service (SaaS) platform for omnichannel retailers which helps them solve issues related to customer identification, personalisation and communication.

Empowerment – challenges and suggestions

Sri's belief is simple – once an entrepreneur, always an entrepreneur. She says that it is important for women entrepreneurs to prioritise their day carefully to ensure that they can utilise their time well and juggle the many tasks one has to do independently as an entrepreneur.

In a nutshell

URL	www.zithara.com
USP	India's First AI-powered Omni channel CRM platform
Mission	To simplify marketing for retailers
Year in which it was founded	2021
Co-founder/s	Varun Kashyap
Team size	16
Incubator/accelerator programmes (If any)	SRIX
Headquarters	Hyderabad
Representative customers/partners	Qmart, Today's Mart, mendesrve, loveco, brownbear bakers, pmj, Bneu mobiles and more
Next big milestone	reaching 500 paying clients
Qualifications	MBA

Power 100: Women in innovation

Steering Committee Members



Anu Sriram

Co-Founder, Integra Software Solutions



Geethika Kambli

Managing Partner, Future Factory, Chairman IWN Maharashtra and
Convenor, CII Maharashtra Panel on Industry, Academia Connect



Vijayalakshmi Rao

Startup Mentor



Subha Kumar Natesan

Managing Director, Natesan Group



Kamna Raj Agarwalla

Director Marketing, GDPA FASTNERS and Past Chairperson,
CII IWN North



Jayashree Mohanthy

Director, Luminous Infoways



NS. Parthasarathy

Managing Partner, Mela Ventures and Co-Founder Mindtree

About our patrons



powering content transformation

About Integra Software Solutions

Founded in 1994 Integra offers a wide range of content services and workflow solutions to publishers, educational content providers, and digital learning services to enterprises, globally. As a content service organisation, we are infectiously optimistic, innovative and thrive on the impact and customer experience we can deliver.

As a leader we consistently evolve and stay agile to provide world-class deliveries. Our design thinking-led approach allows us to stretch our content capabilities, while we never compromise due to our technology first, human-led solution strategy. Our multi-pronged strategy of tapping into proven expertise, impactful delivery and disruptive digital technology positions us as the pioneers in providing digital content development solutions in emerging disruptive content technologies.

As a digital-native organisation, we re-envision client's digital transformation strategy to ensure they stay on top of the game with the ever-changing digital landscape, while our customer-centric leadership enables a collaborative ecosystem that allows us to help them overcome challenges and alleviate their pain points. Integra helps global publishing customers maximise their return on content production investment's and focus on what they do best — publish great content products for their customers.



About Delphi - TVS

Delphi-TV S is a joint venture company between BorgWarner (Erstwhile Delphi), USA and TV Sundaram Iyengar & Sons (TVS), India. BorgWarner a leading global Automotive Systems Supplier and TVS is one of India's largest Automotive systems suppliers. Delphi-TV S offers state-of-the-art fuel injection systems for cars, multi utility, sports utility vehicles, light and medium Duty commercial vehicles, construction equipment vehicles, tractors, gensets and various small engines.

Delphi-TV S is an ISO/TS 16949, ISO 14001 and IATF 16949 certified organisation. The state-of-the-art Technical Centre at Delphi-TV S is a part of BorgWarner's Global Technical Centres. Delphi-TV S believes that its success is based on a solid foundation of customer satisfaction, continuous innovation and total employee involvement.



Centre of Excellence for Innovation, Entrepreneurship & Startups

CII set up its Centre of Excellence for Innovation, Entrepreneurship & Start-ups (CII-CIES) on the 11th of July 2020 to create a strong ecosystem for entrepreneurship in the country. Being an industry-led initiative, CII-CIES has the reach, resources and perspective to design programmes and interventions that increase the odds of entrepreneurial success in India.

The Government of Telangana is supporting the Centre by way of infrastructure at T-Hub technology startup incubator in Hyderabad. CII-CIES is also supported by Pratiksha, a charitable trust founded by Kris Gopalakrishnan, Co-founder Infosys and Chairman Axilor Ventures

CII CIES envisions to be a world-class, state-of-the-art, corporate-driven virtual start-up Resource Platform that enables growth of successful start-ups in India.

CII CIES's mission is to evolve and leverage corporate partnership in development and growth of India's start-up ecosystem with end-to-end support at a single platform aiming to faster transformation of business ideas to successful ventures impacting social and economic development through employment generation and wealth creation.

CII Centre of Excellence for Innovation, Entrepreneurship & Startups

6th Floor, T-Hub Building, 20, Inorbit Mall Rd, Vittal Rao Nagar, Madhapur,
Hyderabad, Telangana 500081 | E: info@ciicies.in | W: www.ciicies.in

About CII

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering Industry, Government and civil society, through advisory and consultative processes.

For more than 125 years, CII has been engaged in shaping India's development journey and works proactively on transforming Indian Industry's engagement in national development. CII charts change by working closely with Government on policy issues, interfacing with thought leaders, and enhancing efficiency, competitiveness and business opportunities for industry through a range of specialized services and strategic global linkages. It also provides a platform for consensus-building and networking on key issues.

As India strategizes for the next 25 years to India@100, Indian industry must scale the competitiveness ladder to drive growth. It must also internalize the tenets of sustainability and climate action and accelerate its globalisation journey for leadership in a changing world. The role played by Indian industry will be central to the country's progress and success as a nation. CII, with the Theme for 2023-24 as 'Towards a Competitive and Sustainable India@100: Growth, Inclusiveness, Globalisation, Building Trust' has prioritized 6 action themes that will catalyze the journey of the country towards the vision of India@100.

With 65 offices, including 10 Centres of Excellence, in India, and 8 overseas offices in Australia, Egypt, Germany, Indonesia, Singapore, UAE, UK, and USA, as well as institutional partnerships with 350 counterpart organizations in 133 countries, CII serves as a reference point for Indian industry and the international business community.

Confederation of Indian Industry

The Mantosh Sondhi Centre

23, Institutional Area, Lodi Road, New Delhi – 110 003 (India)

T: 91 11 45771000

E: info@cii.in • W: www.cii.in

Reach us via CII Membership Helpline Number: 1800-103-1244

For More Information, Contact:

Varun Akhnoor

varun.akhnoor@cii.in

Madhu Vasanthy

madhu.vasanthy@cii.in

About PwC

At PwC, our purpose is to build trust in society and solve important problems. We're a network of firms in 152 countries with over 328,000 people who are committed to delivering quality in assurance, advisory and tax services. Find out more and tell us what matters to you by visiting us at www.pwc.com.

PwC refers to the PwC network and/or one or more of its member firms, each of which is a separate legal entity. Please see www.pwc.com/structure for further details.

© 2023 PwC. All rights reserved.

Contact us

Amit Nawka

amit.nawka@pwc.com

Twinkle Jain

twinkle.jain@pwc.com

Amena Pathan

amena.pathan@pwc.com

pwc.in

Data Classification: DC0 (Public)

In this document, PwC refers to PricewaterhouseCoopers Private Limited (a limited liability company in India having Corporate Identity Number or CIN : U74140WB1983PTC036093), which is a member firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited (PwCIL), each member firm of which is a separate legal entity.

This document does not constitute professional advice. The information in this document has been obtained or derived from sources believed by PricewaterhouseCoopers Private Limited (PwCPL) to be reliable but PwCPL does not represent that this information is accurate or complete. Any opinions or estimates contained in this document represent the judgment of PwCPL at this time and are subject to change without notice. Readers of this publication are advised to seek their own professional advice before taking any course of action or decision, for which they are entirely responsible, based on the contents of this publication. PwCPL neither accepts or assumes any responsibility or liability to any reader of this publication in respect of the information contained within it or for any decisions readers may take or decide not to or fail to take.

© 2023 PricewaterhouseCoopers Private Limited. All rights reserved.

KS/Junr 2023 - M&C 28471