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International Women's Day Interview: Krishna Handa, Founder- Claris Capital, and Brihati Foundation

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Name: Krishna Handa

City: Ahmedabad, India

Occupation: Founder of Claris Capital – a Venture Capital & Private Equity company, and Brihati Foundation

ST: Please tell us briefly about you.

Krishna: I follow a simple philosophy of being a self-starter. Today, as the founder of Claris Capital- a Venture Capital & Private Equity company, and Brihati Foundation, I see myself as a serial entrepreneur who takes risks and believes in creating more leaders than followers.

After completing my bachelors' degree in bio-technology and bio-chemistry, I studied law to get a wholesome view of regulatory procedures. To gain insight in business administration, I got enrolled in Suffolk University, Boston, and earned a MBA degree.

At the age of 25, I studied the market and concluded that there is an opportunity in the space of Contract R&D in the field of niche generics. My idea was to start a B2B company that can keep up with the cutting-edge technology. This was the genesis of Dorizoe Lifesciences – a Specialty Contract Research & Development Organization.

The birth of Dorizoe led to many ventures; some took off and some didn't. I started Claris Capital in 2016. As a venture capital company, Claris Capital aims to motivate aspiring young entrepreneurs to get started in entrepreneurship at an early stage. Going by the intent of creating better societies and empowering communities, Claris Capital hopes to mentor entrepreneurs that have the ability to execute an idea that can make an impact on society.

Brihati Foundation is an extension of the same philosophy that works in the areas of sustainable urban development by making citizens an active part of the process.

I am an avid reader and explorer with a child-like curiosity. I love to travel to newer places to gain insights on culture and urban planning.

ST: Who is a woman that inspires you the most and why?

Krishna: My first role model undoubtedly is my mother. Her undeterred love towards me is my strength, and has helped me build my self-esteem, encouraged me to dream and taught me to love them.

The other important woman who has influenced me in terms of pursuing my dream, is my Mother-in-law. She taught me how freedom and support can enrich other's lives.

From my mother and mother-in-law, I have learnt that how our inherent nurturing ability can help provide more voices to women around the world. I am grateful to both of them for helping me evolve as an Individual that I am today.

ST: How are you celebrating this year's International Women's Day?

Krishna: I celebrate women's day by connecting with spirited ladies who bring value to our society through their ideas and actions. This year is going to be the same too.

ST: What is the most important message you want to send out to all the women around the world on this occasion?

Krishna: As women, we are the architect of our society and yet often, we are the most untapped resource. We need to believe in ourselves, pursue our dreams on our own accord and shed away the societal prejudices. We are gifted with intuition and empathy and we need to effectively use these traits to create a ripple effect in empowering more number of women.

ST: What according to you is 'women empowerment'?

Krishna: Empowerment is an inclusive process that should bring women from various socio-economic levels together. It is also the moral, intellectual, and cultural development of a woman that enables her to face challenges and discharge her duties effectively without any constraint. For me, it is the right to make a decision and follow one's conviction without any

impediment. I feel like it's time to view women empowerment as treating them as equal and neutral, and not adhere to any gender war or biases.

ST: What would you say are the main challenges facing women at present in India?

Krishna: Despite some progress made in the last decade, we still have a handful of women who are in the leadership position. Unfortunately, there are biases that continue to impede the employment of women in all sectors and industries. It's time to break these stereotypes. We need to support a woman at home, a farm, or at a boardroom equally to build a progressive nation.

ST: Where do you want to see yourself in next 5 years?

Krishna: In the next five years or so, I want to serve a larger cause and help bring significant change in the society. Keeping this in mind, I started Claris Capital and Brihati Foundation to support and nurture innovative ideas that can bring solutions to the challenges of our society. An amalgamation of the philosophy of Claris Capital and Brihati is .INC - Ideas to Incorporation conference that looks to encourage solutions oriented enterprises.

The first edition of “.INC- Idea to Incorporation 2018” conference was recently held in Ahmedabad. The conference felicitated innovative winning business ideas and provided a platform for aspiring entrepreneurs to meet investors and various industry leaders. An acclaimed set of jury selected three innovative ideas that were solutions driven and sustainable. The winners not only received prize money from Claris Capital, but were mentored by renowned experts for commercialization of their business ideas.

.INC is an open platform to support aspiring entrepreneurs who are solutions oriented. Through this initiative our aim was to encourage “out-of-the-box” ideas from the hinterland of Gujarat and help them turn into a viable business. With this competition we wanted to showcase that innovation, however big or small, can also come from tier II/III cities. This will be an ongoing feature and next year we aim to take it outside of Gujarat.