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AWARENESS & EDUCATION ARE ESSENTIAL TO CHANGE SOCIO-CULTURAL NORMS

HEP reached out to an iron-willed woman **Dr. Malini Saba**, Founder & Chairman, Saba Group & Ananke Foundation; from a creator to transformer, she had broken the proverbial glass ceiling a while back and is operating in more than 20 countries. The author of *The Abbreviated Cook*, a single mother, a global advocate for women and girl, she has worked relentlessly to provide access for women and children.



Q. As a woman leader what challenges did you face?

Positioning at predominantly held male dominated space is not been easy. I have met the best minds and the worst, frauds and cons, been fooled & bullied, sexually harassed and assaulted. I want to tell all women out there to never give up. If you believe in yourself and your mission, stick with it. Life will throw you setbacks, but it is to see if you truly want what you have set out to build. Trust in the universe, let go, build and move forward. Your dream will eventually become a reality. I have always done what I believe in, regardless of the status quo. Life has thrown me many difficult obstacles, but I have learned through the course of life that your strength comes from within. Do not wait for others to give you a pat on the back, carry on with your mission here on Earth.

Q. How Covid-19 shaped your philanthropic initiatives?

'Ananke Foundation' is an advocate for those who are being marginalized and focuses on healthcare, education, and the advancement of human rights. The foundation partnered and undertook numerous projects with former US President Bill Clinton on global initiatives, the Stanford Medical Center, YUVA, CARE International, the Concern Worldwide Program, Mother Teresa Foundation, Humanity Crew, Women refugee commission to name a few.

During the pandemic we have fed over 10 lakh people every month, provided healthcare facilities, built Schools and given Scholarships. We have funded over one million students and

regularly donated funds towards building schools in Africa, India and South-East Asia.

The goal of the foundation is to help at least one billion people around the world to gain access to basic healthcare, give education and opportunities that allow them to break the cycle of poverty, and eradicate illiteracy about human right issues.

Q. How have you seen the industry change since the pandemic?

Covid-19 has changed consumer behaviour that shall last forever and companies who adapt to this change will emerge as true winners. The pandemic has forced consumers to question their shopping habits including cost consciousness, preference for local products and there has been a dramatic shift towards e-commerce and technology. There is a significant change in the consumer's attitudes and shopping behaviour, most of which are expected to remain post-pandemic. Consumer preferences will realign sharply — away from luxury brands and travel, towards health and hygiene and personal care.

Achievements are a result of competent, intelligent, and resourceful teams. In India, we have to spend a lot more as there are many poor people. We need men of vision and action. We need outstanding administrators, expert economists, defence experts and analysts, experts on foreign affairs, industry, and IT. And our country has hundreds of experts across universities and the private sector, serving bureaucrats and diplomats, economists, defence strategists, entrepreneurs,

IT whiz kids, researchers, space pioneers. Last, but not least, there are good brains and experts in political parties as well. Nobody should feel left out or left by the roadside and should have to undergo what lakhs of our unfortunate citizens have undergone recently.

Q. If you were heading the government, what are the five things you would focus on?

- Equal pay
- Harder laws for rapists, sexual harassment, bullying, and violence
- Recapitalize banks
- Better access to healthcare
- Promoting Agricultural Research and Development to Strengthen Food Security

Q. How can we make young citizens aware about their rights to education in the society?

Awareness and education are essential to change social and cultural norms which perpetuate harmful practices and empower citizens. An awareness project can take many forms to unpack essential and sensitive issues, shift mindsets that are impeding access to education in communities and unmask violations of the right to education. Costless, projects, campaigns and events—can inspire young people and catalyze education throughout the world.

Q. How new age technology can create a sustainable future for the business?

Bringing digital prowess and sustainable practices together should be at the forefront of strategic thinking for any business to differentiate itself and gain long-term viability among customers, regulators, and the communities where businesses operate. It is essential for the business to include optimized energy system forecasting, demand-response charging infrastructure in transportation; analytics and automation for smart urban planning; "hyperlocal" weather forecasting for crop management; and supply chain monitoring and transparency.

Q. How do you keep the balance between business and philanthropy?

Having grown up the hard way, putting myself through school, working part-time and doing all sorts of odd jobs, I am aware of what it is like for the less fortunate. Thus, I work hard to make money so that I am able to give back. The challenge for every business is to understand its impact on the planet and to understand the regulations to which we are obliged to follow. The balance between business and charitable activities needs to be carefully calibrated and radical tactics may be called for. I tend to nurture local partners & volunteers, to reach more people and make a difference in the society. ||