



*Alia Bhatt, perhaps the youngest powerhouse in Bollywood, has gone from one incredible performance to another. At Outlook Business WOW 2019 - Mumbai, she tells us why she follows her gut and her heart*



**12** The tug-of-war between work and life can be resolved with sensitive workplaces and assertiveness. Arundhati Bhattacharya, Dipali Goenka, Apurva Purohit and Avani Davda join the discussion

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*My parents raised me to respect my own voice, my own opinion. There were rewards given to fail, so I performed well because I wanted to and not because I had to*



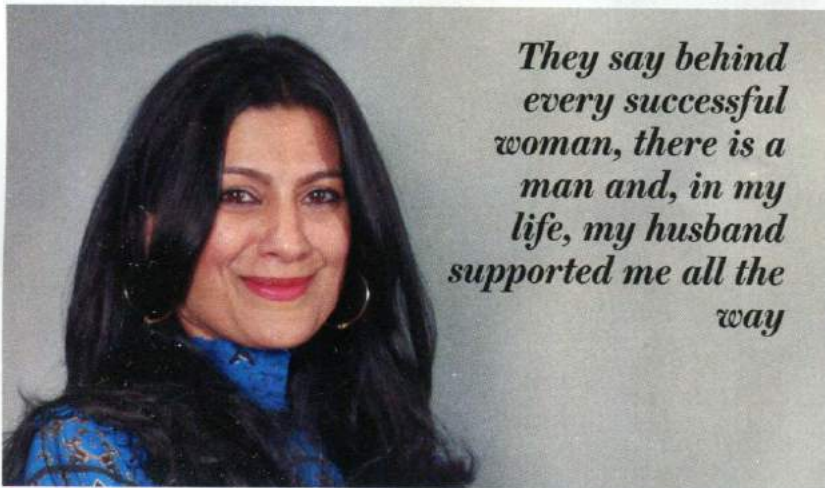
**ALIA BHATT**  
Actor

*Women have to be clear about what they want and have the guts to say it to the man or woman at work and people at home*



**AVANI DAVDA**  
MD, Godrej Nature's Basket

*They say behind every successful woman, there is a man and, in my life, my husband supported me all the way*



**DIPALI GOENKA**  
CEO & JMD, Welspun India

*Don't wait for opportunities to come to you. Create your own!*



**NIDHI BISHT**  
Creative Director, The Viral Fever

*To ensure diversity, a triad has to work together. It consists of the organisation, the women and the men in her life*



**APURVA PUROHIT**  
President, Jagran Prakashan



## *Phantom chains*

*When you are on a demanding job — leading nationalised banks or conglomerates in fast-changing industries — you may not find time to meet every domestic expectation. You may not find time for chatty family gatherings, for lazy weekend outings or to toss up a hot phulka. While this is perfectly understandable, why does guilt raise its nasty head? How does one beat it to a retreat? We ask our eminent panelists Arundhati Bhattacharya, former chairman of State Bank of India; Dipali Goenka, CEO and joint MD of Welspun India; Apurva Purohit, president of Jagran Prakashan; and Avani Davda, MD of Godrej Nature's Basket. Outlook Business editor N Mahalakshmi moderates the discussion.*



**Editor N Mahalakshmi:** Good evening ladies, thank you so much for joining me for this discussion of women at work. This topic has definitely gained a lot of currency over the past four or five years. Many companies have made much effort to ensure the workplace is more congenial for women employees. But what is disheartening to see is that women are dropping out of the workforce, because they don't have adequate support systems. Some young mothers are also dropping out because they are financially comfortable. At home, if one of a couple is required to quit the job, it is usually the woman. In my own experience, working as a journalist for the past 20 years, I have always felt that this issue needs to be resolved at home, rather than at the workplace. So what am I getting wrong, because most people don't seem to agree?

**Dipali Goenka:** I have textile factories where majority of the workforce is men. So we partnered with an NGO where they trained not only the women but also the men. Women get up at 4.30 am in the morning to make food, get their children ready for school and then come to work. After work, they go back home to work there again. We made the men multitask at work and home. That made them respect and encourage women. I am proud to say that today women make up 25% of our workforce at our factories and offices.

**Mahalakshmi:** That's a very rare example of an organisation working on men to make them better supporters of women at home.

**Goenka:** If I may interject, women need respect. How much ever we talk about women's empower-

phase of their lives. It is easier to sit at home.

I would place the least responsibility on men in our lives. Unfortunately, it is still a fact that who you marry is the single most important career decision you will make. Unfortunately, as mothers we do a bad job of bringing up our sons right, pampering them endlessly. We bring up our daughters to take care of them and that's the pressure working women feel, that they have to excel at work and at home. That's the challenge we all have to overcome.

**Mahalakshmi: Sure. Avani what about you?**

**Avani Davda:** I love the way Apurva has triangulated the life of a woman. I agree with her that organisations have done really well, whether it is the Tatas or Godrej or the companies I have had the honour to work with. But I strongly believe there is something wrong in our upbringing if we think the men in our lives decide our destiny.

My mother Kusum chose not to be a doctor but decided to be a homemaker after marriage. But she has no regrets, so the ground rule is that whatever path you chose have the courage to express what you want and do what you want. I grew up in a middle-class cosmopolitan family and I never thought for once that an organisation or the men in my life will decide my destiny.

I worked hard and have a lot of passion. Work is not my identity but I want to achieve what I want to achieve. I think the locus of control is within you. I don't think it has anything to do with who you are going to marry. I work with a lot of women in their 20s and marriage is not even on their cards. They don't even want to get married. So I don't think the man in your life is going to decide your career path.

**WOMEN ARE PULLED TO BOTH SIDES AND FEEL BAD IF THEY FEEL EITHER SIDE IS BEING SHORT-CHANGED. SO, THEY END UP GIVING UP ONE OR THE OTHER**

**ARUNDHATI BHATTACHARYA,**

Former chairman,  
State Bank of India



**UNFORTUNATELY, IT IS A STILL A FACT THAT WHO YOU MARRY IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT CAREER DECISION YOU WILL MAKE**

**APURVA PUROHIT**

President,  
Jagran Prakashan



I think more than hard work, women have to stop playing the victim. I never felt guilty about leaving Param (my son) in the care of my mother-in-law. I was blessed to be married into a good family but I never felt guilty because going to work is going to give the mental sanity and happiness that will make me a better mother.

About career choices and job transfers, in 2016, I had an offer to move to Seattle and work with an international company. I got everything on a platter — a good financial package, private education for my son. I don't blame my son or husband for not moving with me. I realised that if they don't move with me, I won't be set up for success and it is not worth it. Avoiding transfers because of family is just an excuse. Women have to look into the mirror and be clear about what we want and have the guts to say it to the man or woman at work and people at home. I think if you stick to the basics, we don't have to grade organisations or depend on the government to make things easier for us, it is up to us.

**Mahalakshmi:** Truly well said. I remember what Zarina Screwvala, one of our Women of Worth panelists last year, had said, a beautiful quote that kind of stayed with me. She said what we women do is that we let men be men but we want to be superwomen. I think we should just be women, pursue what we want and not face so much guilt and we are sorted. Could each of you share with us how you dealt with your personal dilemmas and challenges throughout your career, and how you overcame those to get to where you are?

**Goenka:** I was a homemaker till my girls were 10 and seven, and that's when I wanted to start working. I started by learning the basics of the work that I wanted to do. I got into purchasing, administration and launched my brand Spaces in 2003.