

**Mrs. Shashi Soni**

Chairperson

izmo Limited

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izmo Limited is a World Leader in Automotive Solutions. We offer hi-tech Automotive e-retailing solutions in U.S.A, Mexico, Europe, and Asia.

Born: April 4, 1941 (age 75), Undivided India

Spouse: Ved Prakash Soni

Children: Dinanath Soni, Tej Soni, Sanjay Soni

Early life and Education

I, Smt. Shashi Soni was born on 4th April 1941 in Lahore, Pakistan. My family moved to undivided India when I was 4 years old. I was studying in Delhi and when I was 15 years old my mother decided that I should get married. After marriage I continued my study even though my In-laws are from an Orthodox family. I had to do lot of hard work as the whole family was dependent on us. My husband was the only earning member since In-laws lost all the wealth and property in Pakistan. The Push and Pull factors made me to set a goal and achieve it.

I started business at the age of 30. I started my career with small automobile workshop. It was situated in Bombay. My husband was working in Bhilai Steel Plant. My brother wanted us to come back from there to Bombay to do business with them. I shifted to Bombay with my children, but my husband was in Bhilai because I did not want him to join hands with my parents. My wish was that he should work separately to take care of the family. Later, he also shifted to Bombay and got appointed in Mukand Iron and Steel Ltd in Bombay.

My brother had a Petrol Pump, Garage and Small Work shop (Spare Parts). My first place of work was at Mulund, at a Petrol Pump. My uncle was taking care of a Petrol Pump and encouraged me to look after the accounts at this Petrol Pump. The Sr. Accountant who was coming weekly to prepare the statement of accounts observed my accounting skills and mentioned that my work as good as a C.A. With the encouragement of these two people I started taking care of the workshop. The relationship with the people who were working over there developed a good working atmosphere.

In Business

After having run the Petrol Pump, I decided to start something new. At that time, Multi National Companies were coming to get the Gas from the petrol pump. Once, Wander India Limited M.D. came for a discussion with my brother. My brother informed me that they want Tempo Carrier for their company for dispatch of materials. I told my brother we should do this business. I gave my brother 10k to start the business and this 10k money which I had was from the furniture which we sold in Bhilai. We booked the tempo with Sah and Sanghi with Rs.10,000/- and with the help of loan from the bank we got the vehicle in one month. We started our transport company in the name of “Deep Transport”. We started our first tempo service with Mukand Iron and Steel, and then we bought another vehicle like this it reached up to 12 vehicles. I was totally involved in the transport business.

We were continuously adding companies and growing our business. Meanwhile, we got orders from Coats India Printing Inks Pvt. Ltd., Hoechst Pharmaceuticals Ltd., Johnson & Johnson Ltd. & C.P. Tools Ltd., for Luxury Cars.

We bought fleet of Ambassador Cars and it was rented to them with Chauffeurs. The business had now reached turnover of Rs.40/- Lakhs per annum.

We had a big plot of land to do this business . This land was coming under green belt. Since, there was not much margin in petrol pump and workshop business, we thought to change our business. For this, we approached Government of Maharashtra to check what type of business can be carried on this plot because of the green belt. The Chief Minister during this time was Shri. S. B. Chawan. He said you can go for public welfare utility projects like Convention Centre, Cinema Theatre or some Amusement Park. Since, there was no AC Cinema Theatre in Mulund, we approached Home Minister of Maharashtra Shri. Sharad Pawar. With the help of Maharashtra Govt, we decided to have Cinema Theatre. Though it was a big project beyond our financial capacity and there were lot of difficulties to have clearance from the government which was not easy. My brother and me were determined to go ahead with the project. In 6 to 7 months we decided to build an AC Cinema Theatre.

We approached all the Government Agencies and after our continuous persuasion for 8 to 9 months we got the license. We slowly closed the transport business, petrol pump and workshop. We tried to get the loan from the bank, since we did not have enough money to start such a big venture. But, we took it as a challenge and succeeded in building the theatre and running it. I was looking after all the work of theatre staff and public by myself. My brother was taking care of outside agencies work and other formalities. We run the theatre for 5 years successfully. To increase the revenue I decided to start a canteen in the basement of the Cinema theatre. The best selling product was Vada Pav which was made by me and became famous. My daily profit from Vada Pav was Rs.300/-. This Vada Pav Profit money I started keeping it aside for my children's' education. Because, I wanted to give them the best education and life which helps them stand on their own.

I always used to have a good relationship with my staff. We never faced any problem from any unions or labor department. The relationship was like a family. My staff used to call me "Didi".

All other political parties tried to disturb from all corners but later on they all became friends. The relationship with them became cordial to the extent they started asking whether we need any help. We later thought this business cannot be carried out further because of Gundas and Black Marketeers. Then, I decided to do some sort of business where I can involve our children later.

Shifting to Bangalore

I shifted to Bangalore in 1981 for my elder son's education since I did not want to put him in the hostel. I took a house and started staying in Bangalore. I was shuttling between Bangalore and Mumbai. At that time we came to know that Government of Karnataka was inviting people to put up the industry in Karnataka. Mr. Gundu Rao was 'The Hon. Chief Minister at that time. He came to Bombay and invited the people of Bombay to come and establish business in Karnataka. I discussed with my husband and he being an Engineer he came up with the idea for Manufacturing of Industrial Gases because there was no raw material required for the Industrial Gases Manufacturing.

To start this Manufacturing unit, we decided to sell our Cinema Theatre. Though it was not easy to sell and start up new business in new place. But, I took it again as a challenge and with the help of local person who was running a tea stall on the road side. I took his help and started finding out all the agencies to understand the procedures that how we can put up the Industry here. I started meeting the people in KIADB for the land, KEB for the power and KSIIDC for the finance. My husband made out the proposal though he was working in Mukand Iron and Steel. My suggestion was that he should not leave the job because that was our prime source of income.

I decided I will take up the opportunity and started finding out the Govt. Agencies for putting up Industry in Karnataka.

With the help of an Old man who was running a tea stall, I visited concerned offices and Departments to understand the whole process to procure the land and applied for Loan with KSIIDC. It took 8 to 9 months to get my loan application sanctioned. All the officers were very co-operative and courteous. I was accepted as a Women Entrepreneur.

We sold the theatre for whatever price we got at that time and invested that entire money into this project but funds were insufficient. I did not have a telephone facility, no communication, no transport facility. I used to go to a telephone exchange and sit over there for 2 to 3 hrs to update my husband on the project.

I went to KIADB Department and met the Chairman for the allotment of land. The Chairman understood the project and allotted 5 acres of land in Metagalli Industrial Area in Mysore for the Industrial Gases Manufacturing Project. Then, we started to procure the license from DGTD, Delhi. I placed the order for the cylinders. Meanwhile, KSIIDC board and IDBI decided to clear the loan for our project. The Chairman, Shri. K.S.N.Murthy of KSIIDC told me “Madam we have cleared your application, contact me tomorrow”. When I went to the office next day I got the reply from them that “Madam your application has been rejected”. This was shocking news to me. The Chairman told the Secretary that I cannot face the lady because it is injustice. The story behind this was that the other MP who was close to Shri. Gundu Rao also wanted to build the same plant for his son-in-law in the same place. They wanted our project to be shut and their file to be cleared immediately.

The fight started from there because all my money was put into the project and we were left with no choice. I met all the concerned authorities and made the representation and my appeal to the IDBI Chairman. Smt. Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister at that time and I made the representations to her also.

But, they did not stop, they gave further instructions to all the departments not to give clearance for my project. I was running from pillar to post explaining to them what has happened with my project. Shri. Qadri MP who was a board member of KSIIDC, and also close to Mr. Gundu Rao was the main person who was acting on behalf of Shri. Gundu Rao in stopping our project. When I was trying to find an solution, I got a call from Shri. Qadri to meet him for 10 mins. In between, the Industries Secretary called me and informed me that you can go back to your state you cannot put up your unit here. I told him “Mr. Prabhakara you are also here and I am also here and I will not go back to my state without putting up my plant in Karnataka. They all started saying that this is a fight between Soni Amma and all MP’s of Karnataka. Then I met Mr. Qadri and in between Mr. Gundu Rao lost the election.

I met Shri. Qadri and he asked me what you are trying to do? I told him the whole story and he asked me why I had not met him earlier. Then he apologized for whatever has happened and reopened the file. In between Jantha Government came to power. Shri. Ramakrishna Hegde and Shri. S. R. Bommai heard me and they promised that you will get justice and it took about 2 months. I lost almost 2 years for this business to start up.

We had to make the full effort again to regain time to start the production and sell the product in the market. Because of this I have come into this political connection and I had to meet many people so called Netas because of this project and they mentioned that I should join politics.

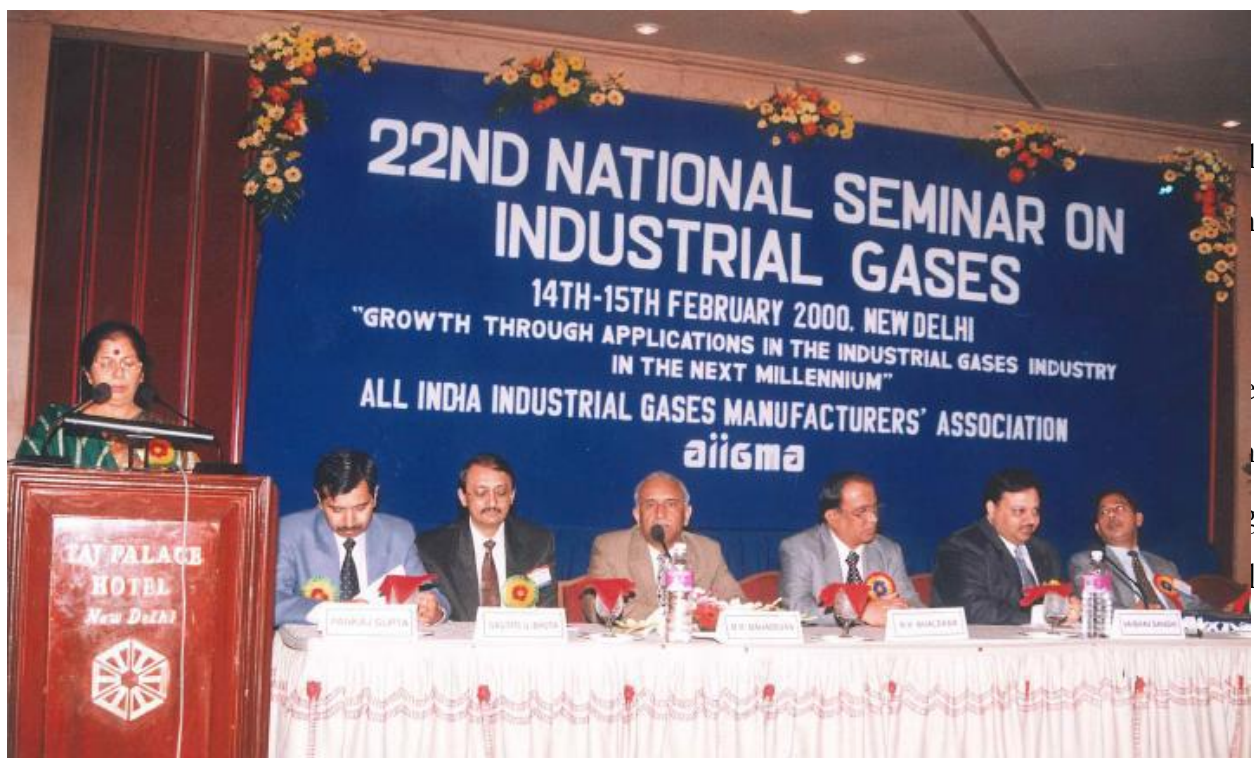
I started taking interest because I was an injured tigress! I became the Managing Committee member of All India Gas Manufacturing Association and I was the only lady member among 450 members altogether.

Our production was on, we were able to sell the product in market successfully but all of a sudden the circular came from the Excise Department that you will be charged full excise duty. All the industry will be charged full excise duty including Small Scale Industry. I went and met the association people I asked them what is the way out for Small Scale Units, how will we sustain. They replied nothing can be done this is for everybody. Being a Small Scale Industry how will we survive they said we have already discussed with The Ministry and they have informed nothing can be done. I asked the Chairman of Association, if I could take up this matter. Then he said when we cannot do anything how you will be able to do so.

Again one more challenge came to me and I started my own way of working on it. Meeting concerned people in North Block in Delhi, Ministry of Excise, there also I faced lot of difficulties because I had to travel from Bangalore to Delhi quite often to meet the people. Made the application, met the concerned officer but again with same reply nothing can be done, decision already taken. I forced them to listen to me and understand the facts and figures. He was unwilling to listen as the file is closed. I was not ready to go out of his office, I tried my level best to make him to listen to me. Finally, he was convinced. He agreed to reopen the file but all effort was required from my side. But it is not easy to reach up to the higher levels. At that time I met MP Krishna Sahi. I explained to her my problem because she was also a knowledgeable MP. She said I will introduce you to Shri. S. B. Chavan, the Finance Minister of the Country, but to pursue the matter with him is all your effort. Since, the matter was related to Excise Duty and that which comes under Finance Ministry.

I had to do lot of effort to reach Finance Minister. Somehow, I managed and got the appointment to meet him. When I went to meet him in his office he asked me about the problem, when I explained him about the Excise Duty which was put on the Small Scale Indusry. Shri S.B.Chavan asked me 2 questions. The Finance

Minister Secretary Mr. Venkatraman Iyer was also present. First Question “Is your family shielding you a Women Entrepreneur or you are”. My answer was that “I am a Women Entrepreneur, I have put my unit with great difficulty”. Second Question was “how much revenue loss will be to the government if we don’t give the concession. My answer “Sir if you don’t give the concession, the total revenue loss to the government, there are 120 Small Scale Industry who have taken 100 lakh loan and you can calculate how much will be the revenue loss if all the small scale industry will close down, because they cannot run the plant because of this heavy burden of excise duty. If you give the concession all the units will run and they will repay the loans also. For that, he said concession can be given to you being a Women Entrepreneur. I said no sir this is not the question of one unit and you cannot consider it as one case, this is the problem of 120 units of the country. He said let us study and informed immediately to the Finance Secretary to rework on the excise duty for Small Scale Industry. Because the change has to be done in Government notification. It took 11 months but I succeeded. All Managing Committee AIIGMA people were surprised and they appointed me as treasurer of the association.



Electronics Venture

Meanwhile, my elder son, Dinanath Soni completed his graduation in Engineering (Electronics) Gas Manufacturing Unit business was not his line of interest and the person from Wipro, who was our client for Gas business asked Mr. Soni “why don’t you start some electronic business, and suggested colour monitors, as Wipro is looking for Colour Monitors supplier”.

Then, we immediately focused on that project for our son. Then, myself, my son and Mr.Soni went to Taiwan and visited manufacturing companies of components because Taiwan was the best country for the components during that period. My son Dinanath Soni was in Taiwan for 6 months for training and upon his arrival in India, we started procuring land next to the Gas Manufacturing Unit at Mysore. We succeeded in this business as well and our clients were Wipro, CMC, etc., but it was not without the struggle. Again, we were hit by the Government Policies of duty draw back since, we were importing the components and screens for colour monitors from Taiwan. Our money got stuck with the government and unit started facing the problem. We ran the business for 3 years.

And my second son Tej Soni also completed graduation in Engineering (Electronics) and joined hands in helping his brother Dinanath in Computer Manufacturing Business. But, after sometime my second son Tej Soni decided to go to US and he left with little money to find out some new venture and he never disclosed what he has in mind and what he is doing in US. But, after a year, he came up with an idea that we will set up software business of SAP.

IT Startup

And, during that time my Third Son, Sanjay Soni also completed his Masters in MBA Finance. My Second son, Tej Soni and Third son, Sanjay Soni together started software business in the name of Logix Microsystems Pvt. Ltd., (later izmo Ltd.) and in span of 3 to 4 years they turned the “Private Limited Company” to

“Public Limited Company”. I am the Chairperson, Tej Soni is the President and Sanjay Soni is Managing Director.

Also, would like to mention that the interiors of izmo Ltd., were done by me. I bought material from interior of Tamilnadu and succeeded in making the interior design for my company.

After that I organized various seminars in different states. I thought of doing concrete work for the public and I made the organization Deep Jan Seva Samiti. Under the banner Deep Jan Seva Samiti I started doing social work because I could feel and understand the problems of the weaker sections.

1. Deep Jan Seva Samiti aims to teach women from the adjoining slums a variety of skills and also provide them with gainful employment.
2. It involves educating the women in the basics of stitching and use of sewing machines.
3. It works for under privileged children to make them understand that they can also lead better life like others and they deserve it.
4. It always encourages education for “Girl Child”
5. Organizes jobs for unemployed and youth.
6. Pension scheme for widows
7. It encourages The Pradhan Mantri Ujwal Yojna for the people.
8. I was member of DGTD Panel (Government of India)
9. President of Deep Janseva Samiti which is a social organization providing education, arranging marriages, free medical help to the weaker section.
10. Life member of Deaf and Dumb School in Mulund, Bombay.
11. I have organized many camps, went to the backward areas also.
12. Arranged fund raising programmes for the Deaf and Dumb
13. Arranged Training (Stitching) Programmes to the ladies.
14. Started Two Credit Co-operative societies for the benefit of men and women in Mulund Mumbai

15. Organized many blood donation camps
16. Organized many Eye camps
17. Life Member – The Mulund Rotary SEPH (Society for the Education of the Physically Handicapped)
18. Worked for the slum area, encouraged to take up jobs.
19. I have succeeded in talking to the affordable people of society to join the LPG GIVE IT UP SUBSIDY PROGRAMME.
20. I have opened a counselling centre in Mulund for the young and old people to live in harmony. Lot of people have benefitted by my programmes. Every Sunday for 1 hour I conduct a discourse session which has enlightened all those who come. This is open for one and all.

I decided to venture into Modern Retailing and floated a Proprietorship firm in the name of Deep Heritage in year 2000 dealing in household products and Artefacts .

I started supplying to major companies to name of few like Shoppers Stop Ltd., Metro Wholesale, Walmark Ltd., Lifestyle, Westside and Hypercity. There were imported products as well as products of Indian Handicrafts which were being personally sourced by me from the interiors of south and north India. It was a difficult task as it was to convert unorganised sector to organised retail. However with all the existing practice of grey market I succeeded in being the most favourable vendor in the Pan India Market. Now there was again a setback as illegal imports was hitting my business and I therefore decided to pull out of this enterprise and focus only on the Indian Heritage Products to showcase the country's skill thereby helping the unexposed artisans of this country. This directly helps in their strive to exist against all odds of the market. This also has been part of my objects of Deep Jan Seva Samiti.

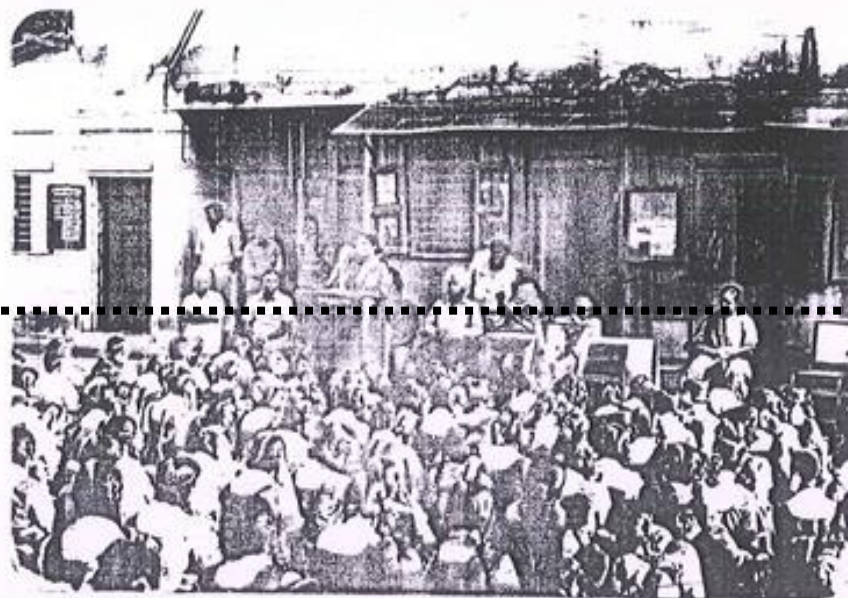
My zeal for working does not end here and I propose to take any assignment under the leadership of our Hon. Prime Minister. He has set an example of rising from a tea vendor to the most coveted post of this country. I am a great admirer of this because I have also struggled in life to achieve what I am today, but there is no end to doing good work beyond self and family. The whole country belongs to us and so do the innumerable problems which are existing have to be weeded out and this requires a lot of patience and perseverance. Hard work always pays and a living example is our Hon. Prime Minister. We should all get together and strive to make his dreams come true "MERA BHARAT MAHAN".

I would feel privileged in whatever opportunity is given to me because small will be big one day.

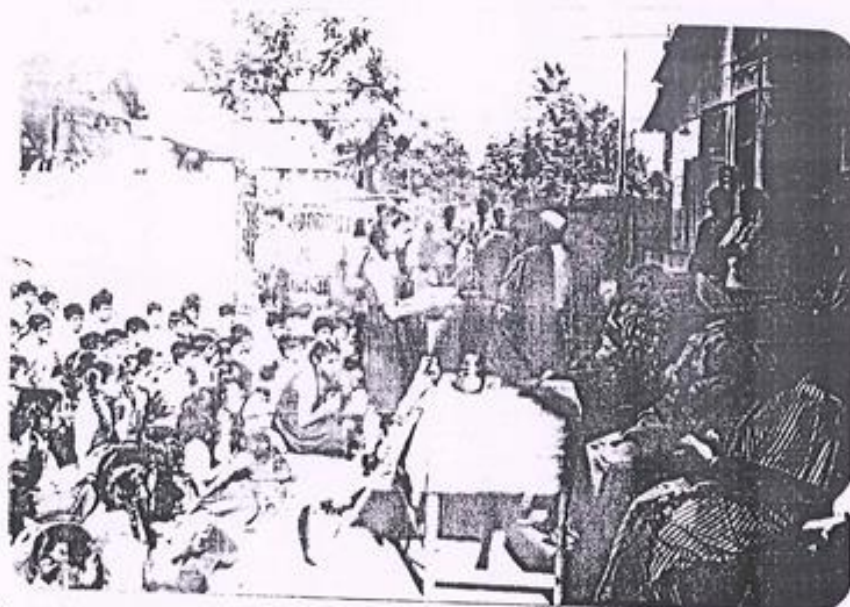
I know my country is reeling under a lot of difficulties which are self-made by us but we should stop the blame game and shoulder to shoulder work for prosperity and am confident that there is SUCCESS waiting for all fellow countrymen. We should set our own standards rather than aping what others have done and we are a Nation that the world would look at with PRIDE.

These words may sound to be good but goodness has to be achieved. My slogan of Deep Jan Seva Samiti is LET US WORK TODAY FOR OUR TOMORROW.

JAI HIND



Smt. Shashi Soni, guest of honour at the Mulund Vidya Mandir school on the occasion of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru's birth centenary celebrations.



Smt. Shashi Soni, Chief Guest, presenting prizes to deserving girls of the Mulund Vidya Mandir school.