

**INDRA NOOYI**

CEO & Chairperson,  
PepsiCo



# WOMAN OF FOCUS

No one ever said that being a woman is easy. One has to delve into multiple roles, carry many responsibilities, and bear the scrutiny of society with every action she takes. Being a woman is indeed a courageous deed in this world led by men. But Indra Nooyi never hesitated from stepping out in this world and making a distinct mark for herself

**BY MANSI SHARMA & ANAM KUMAR**

**E**ver since a girl is born she is wrapped in pink. She is supposed to exude only charm, sensitivity, and tenderness. She is tailored to just be innocent and nothing else. But women like Indra Nooyi have shown that a lady too can bleed blue if one wishes to. She has the wisdom and confidence to conquer any feat she aspires. She also can radiate the fierce red with her strength, determination, and passion to achieve what her heart desires.

The CEO and Chairperson of PepsiCo- the second largest food & beverage company of the world in terms of revenue, Indra Nooyi is an inspirational woman who has efficaciously triumphed over the place relatively known as a men's world. Her journey from Chennai to Yale is the epitome of firm determination, focused vision, and unflinching persistence to attain laurels.



### STRONG ROOTS

Indra Nooyi was born into a conservative Tamil family of then Madras on 28 October 1995 as Indra Krishnamurthy. Her father was a banker by profession and used to work at the State Bank of Hyderabad. This Scorpion lady was independent and determined from a very young age. She possessed a rebellious streak in her and was known to be "wild" amongst her circle. She always refused to adhere to the conservative norms of the society and pushed back against any adversity. Indra Nooyi enthusiastically participated in activities which the other girls of her social strata preferred to avoid. She was a member of an all girls cricket team and used to play guitar with a band as well.

She attributes these traits of her personality to her mother's grooming. Indra's mother would weave strength to face any situation in her and her sister every day. She instilled in them the spirit to be whatever they wanted to be. This proved out to be an incredibly influential experience for Indra. In an interview Indra Nooyi said, "Even though my mother didn't work and didn't go to college, she lived a life vicariously through her daughters." Her mother's words remain a source of inspiration for Indra Nooyi even today and she doesn't forget to call her twice daily. Indra's mother is the pillar of strength and optimism in her life.

### BUILDING BLOCKS OF GREATNESS

Education always plays a pivotal role in making of legends. Knowledge evolves the whole personality of a being and helps one to clear the doubts of cloud regarding any issue. And Indra Nooyi is no exception too. She had always been a very active and intelligent student. Books attracted her and she never ran away from studies. She proudly remarks, "I have stayed a CEO, because I was a life-long student."

Indra did her schooling from Holy Angels Anglo Indian Higher Secondary School and graduated from Madras Christian College in 1974. Her hard work and determination earned her a seat in Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, from where she got a Post Graduate Diploma in Management in 1976. Two years later, she moved to the USA and completed her MBA at Yale's School of Management to fulfill her dream of being a successful entrepreneur. She reckoned that the traits she will acquire at this stage will script the quality of her life ahead. She has also received several honorary doctorates from universities like North Carolina State University, Wake Forest University, Miami University etc.

### THE GROWTH GRAPH

Before her innings at PepsiCo, Indra Nooyi had worked with several other companies polishing

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Indra Nooyi also remembers one fun activity which her mother used to involve Indra and her sister in, "Every night at dinner table, my mother would ask us to write a speech about what would we do if we were president, chief minister, or prime minister- everyday would be a different leader she'd ask us to play." The girls had to deliver the speech after the dinner and their mother decided who she was going to vote for. The little routine developed in her the poise to stand with her head raised high and solve any issue by telling herself, "Remember, I could be the president of India."

Indra Nooyi further believes that the confidence which was ignited by her mother was reinforced by her grandfather. He taught her that making excuses will never bring any good and to be successful she will have to do whatever the job demanded. His approach helped her to take many tough decisions on professional front which assured her magnanimous success later.

her skills with every stint. Indra's first job was with a British textile company called Tootal. Eventually she moved on to join Johnson & Johnson as product manager.

Her experience at Johnson & Johnson was probably the most challenging phase of her life. She had the responsibility to introduce Stayfree sanitary napkins to Indian market. In a culturally complicated society talking about female hygiene products was considered a taboo and advertising such products openly was banned. But this did not make Nooyi to step back and through her persistence she made a distinct name for the brand by directly marketing it within schools and colleges. This incident also made her realize that she needs more grooming and growth to stand tall in the business arena and thus she moved to Yale for further studies.

After getting her degree in 1980, Indra Nooyi went on to join Boston Consulting Group as director

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of international corporate strategy projects. She worked there for six years before joining Motorola's automotive division development team as senior executive. Her tremendous performance got her promoted to the rank of vice president and director of corporate strategy and planning in 1988. Her next destination was Asea Brown Boveri (ABB). As vice president and director of corporate strategy and strategic marketing there, Nooyi had to integrate a group of around 15 diverse businesses into a unified operation. Though the challenges were many but Indra's determination was built up of steel. She smoothly sailed her ship through all the storms and by mid-1990's, she became one of the most sought after people by corporate headhunters and offered lucrative positions in some of the world's largest companies.

It was in the year 1994 when Jack Welch, the head of General Electric, and Wayne Calloway, CEO of PepsiCo both offered her jobs in their respective companies. And after a lot of brainstorming, Nooyi decided to join PepsiCo as senior vice president of corporate strategy and development. Over the next couple of years, she worked closely with the new CEO, Roger Enrico devising the company's future expansion strategies.

Indra Nooyi gave a whole new vision to PepsiCo and made it a renowned name in food and beverage industry. She made it grow from the seller of carbonated drinks to whole franchisee which offers both "Fun for you" and "Good for You" eatables and beverages. Her impressive work got her recognition and she stepped up to the seat of CEO of the company in 2006. She continues with the same zest and enthusiasm even today and is spearheading the global strategy of the company.

## THE INFECTIOUS RESOLVE

Her achievements are great but the voyage to them was not always smooth-sailing. Being a businesswoman proved out to be much more than just a job for her. Nooyi remarks that when she started, no men would make eye-contact with her during the meetings. Her answers were always cross-checked by her male counterparts. But she knew that the way to glory is covered with mud of hardships and decided to cross it without falling in any pit. Instead of wilting under pressure, she bloomed and proved everyone her worth. She began to call men out on their actions, and it wouldn't take long for them to realize she was highly adept at her job. She exuberates great confidence while stating, "In my heart I said, 'I can do this better than anyone else can, and if everything else fails, they're going to come to me and say, 'Fix it,' because I know I'm



that good." The undying spirit led this queen to reign over her kingdom with great efficiency.

Nooyi also serves as an Honorary Co-Chair for the World Justice Project. The World Justice Project works to lead a global, multidisciplinary effort to strengthen the Rule of Law for the development of communities of opportunity and equity. Indra Nooyi has achieved several other feats too. In 2008, Nooyi was named one of America's Best Leaders by U.S. News & World Report and elected to the Fellowship of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Nooyi was rewarded with one of the highest civilian honor of India, the Padma Bhushan in 2007 because of her enormous contribution towards making India a global name.

## LIVING A PLENARY LIFE

Indra Nooyi once said in an interview that a woman can't have it all even if she pretends too. But her life journey can prove that if not everything but Indra has achieved a lot from her life. She just hasn't been a great entrepreneur but a good daughter, sister, wife, and mother too. She has lived through all phases of her life with utmost glory. She hasn't ever compromised with her values and teaches her daughters the same.

Indra Nooyi is an exemplary woman and courageous soul. Her story is one of pride, determination, and strength. What others see as a weakness, Indra has proven that it is the biggest power on earth to be a woman.