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VISIONARY
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Ajita Italiya
Founder - Ajiliyaa

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The Empowering
Narrative of a Woman
Who Chose Her
Own Path

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The Empowering Narrative of a Woman
Who Chose Her Own Path

Shweta Singh | The CEO Magazine

Success is never handed to anyone. You have to work for it, push through the odds, and prove your worth. But for women, the path is often tougher. Success for them is never just about talent or ambition; it is about courage. The courage to dream beyond what is expected of them. The courage to conquer spaces where they were not always welcome. The courage to break the rules and rewrite them for themselves and the generations that follow.

Every woman who chooses to rise, despite the challenges, leaves behind a path for others to walk on. The world may set limits, but time and again, women prove they were never meant to stay within them. Ajita Italiya is one of those women.

A record-setting cyclist, a fashion entrepreneur, and an author, Ajita has never let circumstances define her. She got married young, devoted years to raising her family, and then decided she wasn't done dreaming. She built a thriving business from scratch, set cycling records that few had attempted, and shared her journey through words that resonate with women everywhere. If there's one thing her story proves, it's this— it's never too late to start, never too late to dream, and never too late to become who you were meant to be.

A Pause, Then a Purpose

Born on March 29, 1979, in Bhavnagar, Gujarat, Ajita Italiya grew up in a culturally rich environment where learning and creativity were deeply valued. Her early education took place in Mumbai and Gujarat, where she developed a strong foundation of discipline and ambition. However, like many young women, life took a different course.

At the young age of 19, she got married, and soon motherhood became her world. For years, her days revolved around her children, her home, and the responsibilities that came with it. While she loved being a mother, the desire to do something for herself never faded. She had dreams, ambitions, and a desire to do something for herself. Being the only girl child, Ajita had always carried a deep desire to build her own identity, one that was separate from roles and expectations. It was a challenge, but also a quiet determination she held close for years.

As her kids grew older, the desire to create her own path got bigger. She started thinking about what she wanted beyond her role as a mother and a wife. Determined to prove to herself that it was not too late to learn and grow, she pursued a diploma in Hotel Management after the birth of her second child. It was her way of proving to herself that she could still learn, still grow, and still create an identity of her own. It was not only about getting a degree but more about reclaiming a part of herself that had been on pause for years.

Her journey from a homemaker to an entrepreneur didn't happen overnight. It was filled with moments of doubt, challenges, and hard-earned lessons. But she never gave up. What started as a step toward rediscovering herself would soon lead her to break records and inspire countless others.

The Leap into Entrepreneurship

Long before Ajita Italiya became a name in the fashion industry, she was already known among her friends and family for her impeccable style. Whether it was picking the perfect outfit for a special occasion or effortlessly putting together a look that turned heads, she had an instinct for fashion that people admired.

It started with small moments—helping friends shop, styling family members, and receiving endless compliments on her own wardrobe choices.

“PEOPLE WOULD ALWAYS ASK ME WHERE I GOT MY OUTFITS FROM, AND SOMETIMES THEY WOULD ASK ME TO SHOP FOR THEM TOO. I NEVER THOUGHT MUCH OF IT AT THE TIME, BUT LOOKING BACK, I REALISE THAT FASHION WAS ALWAYS A PART OF ME,” SHE RECALLS.

Turning a personal passion into a business is not an easy task. One needs to have courage, persistence and belief in oneself. When Ajita finally decided to step into the world of entrepreneurship, she knew she wanted to create something that is a reflection of herself. And so, in May 2017, Ajiliyaa was born from Ajita's passion for fashion, a journey that began with friends and family seeking her styling advice. Recognising the lack of a multi-designer store in Surat, she took the leap into entrepreneurship and started with a small space, which has now grown into one of the city's largest designer boutiques. “I didn't know how to begin, but I knew I had to start somewhere,” she shares.

In fact, Ajita admits that before opening Ajiliyaa, she couldn't even write a proper email or send a formal message. But with determination in her heart and a clear vision, she began reaching out to designers herself, starting with 20 and eventually collaborating with more than 700 designers today. It's a journey that speaks volumes about her growth, not just as a businesswoman, but as a learner who embraced every challenge.

The brand name, a fine blend of initials from the founder's first name and surname, carries a piece of her own

identity. From the very beginning, Ajiliyaa was more than just a fashion brand. The idea behind it was to create a space to curate the best designer collections from around the world and present them with a platform for them to bring their best of contemporary yet unconventional fashion apparel under one roof.

Her journey as a fashion entrepreneur came with its fair share of challenges. From sourcing the right materials to building a brand from scratch, she had to learn the intricacies of the industry. What began as a small store, Ajiliyaa has grown into a brand that caters to countless women looking for timeless, stylish, and meaningful fashion.

Ajiliyaa: A Fashion Destination like No Other

Step into Ajiliyaa, and you're stepping into a world where fashion meets individuality. Located in Surat, the multi-designer store has become a hub for luxury fashion, featuring over 150 designers at any given time, showcasing a diverse mix of India's most celebrated labels and emerging talent.

Over the years, the store has collaborated with 700+ designers, bringing some of the biggest names in the industry to Surat. Fashion connoisseurs visiting Ajiliyaa can browse through collections from iconic labels such as Torani, Shantanu & Nikhil, Shivan & Narresh, Rohit Bal, Bhumiika Sharma, Abraham & Thakore, Samant Chauhan, Mahima Mahajan, Divya Reddy, Geisha Designs, Pinnacle by Shruti Sancheti, and Nachiket Barve. The store also houses designer jewellery, accessories, and couture, including exclusive collections from NSS by Pallavi Mohan, Mati, Purvi Doshi, Pinnacle by Shruti Sancheti, Deepa by Deepa Gurnani, Confluence of Crystals by Swarovski and many more to ensure a complete fashion experience.

To further enhance her expertise, Ajita pursued professional training and became a USA-certified Image Management Professional, trained under renowned image consultant Judith Rasband from Utah, USA. “I knew that if I wanted to truly serve my clients, I had to understand the technical side of fashion,” she shares.

Her certification allowed her to offer a more personalised experience—understanding face shapes, body types, and how the right outfit, accessory, or silhouette can completely transform someone's confidence. “Ajiliyaa is not just about shopping. It's about how you feel in what you wear. It's an experience. That's why I wanted to be equipped with the right knowledge to advise clients on what looks good and what works for them,” Ajita adds. Her expertise also helps her communicate with designers in technical terms, ensuring that every piece curated for Ajiliyaa is not only beautiful but also thoughtfully designed for real women.



A Woman of Many Firsts

Ajita Italiya is not someone who limits herself to a single path. Whether it's cycling through some of the toughest terrains, curating high fashion, or inspiring young minds, she has done it all—always with the same passion and determination.

Her journey as an adventurer began with a cycling expedition to Spiti Valley, a place known for its rugged terrain and extreme conditions.

“ I HAD NO IDEA THAT NO WOMAN HAD CYCLED HERE BEFORE. IT WAS ONLY AFTER COMPLETING THE JOURNEY THAT WE REALISED I WAS THE FIRST. THAT MOMENT CHANGED EVERYTHING,”

she recalls. Her achievement was later recognised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who invited her to the Parliament to personally appreciate her efforts. This was just the beginning. She later set another record by cycling from Miao to Anini, reaching the China border in Arunachal Pradesh, again becoming the first Indian woman to do so. She was also part of a Guinness World Record for the highest number of women participating in a car rally.

But Ajita is more than just an adventurer. Apart from being the founder of Ajiliyaa, she also started Café Ajiliya, a health-conscious café where her love for food and wellness come together. Her creative expression doesn't stop there—Ajita also has a deep love for music. She and



her husband have collaborated on multiple songs and covers, blending their shared passion for melodies into their journey together. “Music has always been close to my heart. It's another way I express myself, just like fashion and cycling,” she shares.

Her love for writing led her to publish ‘Sincerely Yours’, a diary in Gujarati, written for every woman who has ever wanted to put her feelings into words. She is also a trustee at Sanskar Bharti School, where she works towards shaping young minds and giving back to society.

Ajita's adventurous spirit seems to have passed on to her children as well. Her 18-year-old son became the youngest person to cycle from Manali to Khardungla at just 13, while her 10-year-old son is the youngest cyclist to complete a 550 km cycling journey from Miao to Anini. Her achievements have been widely recognised, including being honoured as the Iconic Woman of the Year in 2020 in Mumbai.

“ I HAVE NEVER LIVED WITH LIMITS. IF I FEEL PASSIONATE ABOUT SOMETHING, BE IT CYCLING, FASHION, OR WRITING, I JUST GO FOR IT.”

-AJITA SHARES

What Lies Ahead for Ajiliyaa

With over 20,000 customers, Ajiliyaa has become Surat's largest multi-designer boutique, offering an extensive collection of women's wear, footwear, and jewellery from some of the country's most renowned designers. But for Ajita, this is just the beginning.

With the rising demand for genuine designer wear across the country, Ajiliyaa is evolving into a larger, more luxurious platform, carefully curating uniquely designed outfits to fulfil the desire for a dream wardrobe. “I always believed that fashion is more than just what you wear,” Ajita says. “It's about how you feel in it, and that's why we don't just sell outfits. We create looks that bring confidence and joy to the people wearing them.”

As trends evolve, Ajiliyaa's vision is to provide customers with comfort and reliability in every product, ensuring that every piece tells a story of craftsmanship and elegance. The representation of harmony and togetherness in different traditions is reflected in the store's wide selection of ensembles, embodying classic and timeless fashion.

LEADERSHIP MANTRA

Advising young women, Ajita shares, “There will always be voices telling you what you should or shouldn't do. Some will say it's too late; others will say it's too difficult. But the truth is, the only voice that truly matters is your own. If you believe in something, go for it. If you have a dream, chase it. When I cycled through Spiti Valley, I didn't know no woman had done it before—I just knew I wanted to. And when I finished, I realised I had opened a door for others. That's the power of taking the first step.”

She continues, “You don't have to fit into anyone's idea of success. Choose what excites you, and always trust yourself. The right time to start is always now. The right time to start is always now. Believe in yourself, because once you do, nothing can stop you.”