

Breaking Gender Barriers through Financial Independence- A Success Story of Mrs K. Suneka

Tharshiga, P^{1*} and Rathiranee, Y²

^{1&2}Department of Financial Management, Faculty of Management Studies and
Commerce, University of Jaffna

*Corresponding author: tharshiga@univ.jfn.ac.lk

Introduction: Mrs Suneka, is the proud owner of the IM Palmyrah product shop. Her story is one of resilience, empowerment, and unwavering determination the face challenges. Today, she supports twenty-five women who were once working independently from their homes, collecting their products, and exporting them to Colombo and beyond, expanding her reach even outside of Sri Lanka.

Context and Challenges: Her Husband, a daily wage labourer, spent his earnings on alcohol, leaving the family without basic needs. Therefore, she began producing Palmyrah products from home to generate income, and her business gradually grew, giving her enough to support her family. As her business flourished, she began receiving foreign orders. However, this newfound success did not sit well with her husband, who resented her for earning more than him. Their strained relationship worsened as he harassed her and demanded that she leave her business.

Actions Taken: Suneka could no longer tolerate his harassment, and even her family stood by her because of the mistreatment she endured. Determined not to sacrifice the independence she had worked so hard to achieve, Suneka made the decision at the age of thirty 35 years to separate from him in 2022, marking the end of their prolonged conflict.

Achievements: Despite the personal turmoil, Suneka's business continued to thrive. She not only secured more orders from Colombo and international clients but her entrepreneurial spirit was recognized on a larger scale. She is now a respected trainer in the Palmyrah products industry, offering training to women in various locations and helping them market their products. When these women face marketing challenges, she collects their products and ensures they reach the market, forming a supportive group of female entrepreneurs.

Future Aspirations: Suneka's journey embodies resilience, as she overcame personal hardships and societal expectations to build a successful business. She now dreams of helping other women who are struggling like she is. She says like "My past life feels like a blind dream, but I want to give other women the strength to achieve their dreams too.

Keywords: financial independence, Gender issues and Palmyrah products