

FEEL CHRISTMASSY WITH FLEAINDIA BY SATARUPA CHAKRABORTY



Please give us a short background of who you are and what you do?

I come from a typical Bengali family of Calcutta, where academic excellence has been of paramount interest. I was an avid reader of English literature. And as long as I remember, I loved observing people. My hobby was to "watch people". Later, in terms of career, I did my college from Delhi. Moving to the capital at that nascent age was the most amazing decision. I faced many realities, I learnt how to

maneuver day-to-day challenges, how to dream big and most importantly, academics is just a part of you. If you want to chase big dreams, you gotta prepare yourself with so many other skills. As for career, I spent a decade in Business Journalism and worked with some of the notable publications. I also had a stint in corporate and quite disliked being in that so-called office discipline without any outlet of creativity. There's a common question in life, "what's that thing that keeps you awake at night".

The answer for me was, "to find my business idea." Well, as crude as that. Being a single mother and having sizable financial responsibilities, it's natural to gravitate towards the cushion of "jobs". However, as the tough time (during Covid) began, the "job" being in doldrums actually gave me that much needed push to believe in the power of self-employment. So, today, I'm a full time entrepreneur running a home decor business called FleaIndia.

How did you initially start your business?



I won't take much credit for starting FleaIndia because it started as a pet project. I have been in touch with some small-time traders and artisans. One day, I went to visit them and they said what kind of losses they were going through. It was humongous.

Being in the retail journalism sphere, I also knew that e-commerce, which was less than 5% in the overall retail market of India, was now starting to spread wings. It was to occupy a much larger share.

Fuelled by just this basic

research, I started an Instagram page named Flea Markets of Delhi. I invested zero money in the beginning and honestly speaking, the page's look and feel wasn't something that made me proud. I was dependent on the pics that the vendors sent. Soon after, on much insistence from these vendors, I started buying some unsold stock from them. By then, I started receiving buying requests from some people.

That's how we started FleaIndia on October 2, 2020. And we started doing business almost from day one.

A few months later, as more artisans across other parts of north India joined in, we changed the brand's name to FleaIndia.

What is the hardest part of being an entrepreneur?

Listen, my favourite author Bukowski said this, "How in the hell could a man enjoy being awakened at 8:30 a.m. by an alarm clock, leap out of bed, dress, force-feed, shit, piss, brush teeth and hair, and fight traffic to get to a place where essentially you made lots of money for somebody else and were asked to be grateful for the opportunity to do so?"



How can I complain about finding my MOJO and finding a professional life that lets me be.

However, being a solo player in my business is tough sometimes. At times, I feel like, wish I didn't have to make all the decisions myself. So yes, I'm looking out for the Co-founder. But, no big complaints so far.

What advice can you give to other entrepreneurs?

Being self-employed means that you gotta be spiritually prepared for it. You can't attach yourself too much to either

"success" or "failures". You have to get rid of the cushion from your back and be able to sit straight up on the hard floor without any support. You have to walk the path alone and have to be willing to see the light at the end of the tunnel, even at times when there's absolute darkness.

It's definitely not for the weak-hearted. But like I always say, check your personal life.

How many plunges have you taken or willing to take. If you score there, entrepreneurship certainly is your thing.

How do you balance your personal life and career?

I meditate a lot. Whenever I'm in doubt I meditate. With time, I have learnt to switch off from concerns. I compartmentalize when need be. And, the biggest thing is, I know how to have fun with myself. I celebrate my success and failures both with myself.

What are some of your biggest achievements throughout your journey?

Almost half of my customers are my repeat customers. And, our complaints rate is less than



3%. These are great achievements for a business which is about a year old.

Also, we receive an enormous amount of appreciation for the curation. We must have received thousands of compliments for the beauty of our products. We have some of the noted names in architecture and design circles as our customers. In fact, we had shoppers from the cinema industry too, the details of which we can't share because of anonymity policy.

What are your ideas and big dreams for your business?

Apart from the regular course of channel development etc, we want to bring the idea of pre-loved decor items in a more organized manner. We would like to expand our artisans and vendors best and get only the best of the best designs from all across the country. We would also like to diversify into decor consultation and institutional design business. Export part of business is already being explored.