

# STRIKING THE ALTRUISTIC CHORD

BY EKTA MAKAN

*When society is your workplace, the sky is the limit, and there's no such thing as a glass ceiling. **Melinda Gates**, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is keeping the spirits of humanity and love alive*





## MELINDA GATES

**“THE LEADING LADY IN BUSINESS IS ONE HALF OF THE WORLD’S TOP CHARITY FOUNDATION, WITH PERSONAL JURISDICTION OVER THE SPENDING OF \$80BN”**

**W**hat does it take to make sure the little girls of remote areas of the world are able to chase their dreams in full swing? Start building the place and grooming people to live a life with a smile.

### LAYING STRONG FOUNDATIONS

Mrs. Gates is the other half of the very powerful Bill Gates, rather the better half, that's how she wants to be looked at. Working at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation she owns up the responsibility of shaping and approving the foundation's strategies, reviews results, and sets the overall direction of the organization.

As a delightful duo, they meet with grantees and partners to further the foundation's goal of improving equity in the United States and around the world.

Past fifteen years have seen many changes and through her endless effort, Mrs. Gates has seen first-hand that empowering women and girls can bring transformational improvements in the health and prosperity of families, communities and societies.

The year 2012, saw Mrs. Gates to spearhead the London Summit on Family Planning, which adopted the goal of delivering contraceptives to an additional 120 million women in developing countries by 2020. Her continual contribution has led her to

increasingly focus on gender equity as a path to meaningful change.

### MICROSOFTS' DISTINGUISHED MEMBER

Mrs. Gates grew up in Dallas, Texas and was the second of the four children in the family. Having earned the bachelor's degree in computer science and economics from Duke University in 1986, she went to the Fuqua School of Business in 1987 to pursue a master's in business administration.

The same year Mrs. Gates joined Microsoft Corp. and was distinguished as a leader in the development of multimedia products. Her dedication at work was best recognized with her appointment as Microsoft's General Manager of Information Products such as s Expedia and Encarta; more significantly, she had advanced to a senior role in the heart of the chief executive, Bill Gates, soon to become the world's richest man.

The Leading lady in business is one half of the world's top charity foundation, with personal jurisdiction over the spending of \$80bn.

### BEING THE BETTER HALF OF THE POWER COUPLE

Bill Gates has always been vocal about his amusement of his wife being better educated than him, justifiable as he is America's most famous college drop-out. It was four month into her job when Mrs. Gates first met in 1987 at an Expo trade-fair dinner in New York.

As she would recall, "He was funnier than I expected him to be." It took another set of months for Bill Gates met her in the Microsoft car park; he asked her out – in two weeks' time. She said, "Ask me nearer the time," to which he had to explain to her the ceaseless daily flood of meetings.

As Mrs. Gate has never been quoted on what first attracted her to the man, but Bill Gates was struck by her forthrightness and independence. It was the lady who spurred him into impulses of charity.

As popularly known to many, it was soon after their engagement in 1993, during Melinda's "wedding shower", her mother Mary, suffering from breast cancer, read her an admonitory letter whose gist was, "from those to whom much is given, much is expected". Mary died months later,





but her advice provoked the William H Gates Foundation.

The Foundation was run by Bill's father with an aim to provide laptops in every classroom. Later on the couple decided that the most pressing issue in the US was reforming the education system.

Bill and Melinda got married in Hawaii on New Year's Day 1994 and it was soon after that when Melinda read in The New York Times about the millions of children in developing countries dying of malaria and TB, she made world poverty their priority concern.

### **VALUING ALL LIVES EQUALLY**

Clever, raven-haired, strong-featured and tough as nails, she brings equal amounts of compassion, common sense and business nous to the small matter of alleviating world sickness and poverty. It was in the year 1996 when Mrs. Gates left Microsoft to focus on her philanthropic work and family.

The William H Gates Foundation was soon collaborated with their two other charitable organizations and named it the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The organization is said to make people live a peaceful life. In the past few

years, Melinda has become a vocal advocate of teaching the idea for women to decide whether and when to have children. Her work inspired and motivated other big donors and changed the way her donors or fundraisers thought about effective philanthropy in the world.

Unless you have been hiding in a crater, you know that Mrs. Gates has cemented her dominance in philanthropy and global development to the tune of \$4.2 billion in 2015 and more than \$36.7 billion in grant payments since she founded the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation with her husband in 2000.

It is through her endeavors that inspired other big donors and has changed way funders think about effective philanthropy: highly targeted campaigns coupled with data-driven monitoring and global collaboration.

She is the woman who directs the organization and also keeps a regular check on the results. Her main focus now remains on championing investments in women and girls around the world which includes 2016 initiative, announced at the Women Deliver conference in Copenhagen in May, that will funnel \$80 million into collecting key data on women in developing countries over the next three years -- yielding the information Gates believes is needed to inform efforts to achieve gender equality.

A personality as strong as hers, she is the woman behind the world's top charity. She is the high-achieving schoolgirl who loved complicated jigsaws and once scaled the 14,000ft Mount Rainier with ropes and crampons; the mother of three; and the devout Catholic who visited Calcutta to talk to Aids sufferers in Mother Teresa's Home for the Dying. But it's clear that the Foundation needs her clarity and good sense.

What didn't stop her from following demanding schedules, intense pressure and tireless effort was the amazing success in the mission of spreading happiness. Today the Foundation works with thousands of partners in Africa, India, Europe, South America, and in the United States. They are guided by the Gates family's deeply held belief: that all lives have equal value. The goal is to find solutions for people with the most urgent needs, wherever they live.