

2024 Women's Entrepreneurship Day Interview Series

Interviewee: Jyoti Jaiswal, OMSutra

Donald Jones: Jyoti, it is a pleasure to meet you. I really appreciate you taking the time. Before you introduce yourself to us and share a little bit about your story, I wanted to give some background on this topic and how we were spending our time with you today. For the last few months, we have been sitting down with entrepreneurs and uplifting their stories and have homed in on the idea of individuals and entrepreneurs using their identity as an asset, as form of inspiration to start their business or as something that propels them to operate and run their business and differentiate themselves in the market. Often, we talk a lot about the obstacles and challenges that entrepreneurs face given the various identities that they hold, but we don't showcase and shine a light enough on how identity can be an asset, on that positive side of the story. That's why we are sitting here with you today. To get started, it would be great for you to just share a little bit about your business. And I would love to hear in what ways identity inspired you to start a business.

Jyoti Jaiswal: It's nice to meet you and thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my insights and story.

I'm Jyoti, the founder of OMSutra, a purpose-driven enterprise that I started in 2007. I started this journey because I have a deep desire to preserve the craft culture of my Indian roots. I believe that craft is an integral part of our identity, something to be cherished and preserved, not lost. After all, it represents who we are. Our craft defines our identity. Without it, expressing our essence becomes difficult.

I started my company, OMSutra, which is the fusion of two words OM and Sutra, where "OM" represents the sound of the universe, while "Sutra" signifies the thread that connects and deepens that meaning. It is a sustainable lifestyle brand that is uniquely and thoughtfully designed by me in the space of fashion, wellness and home for the customers who enjoy a conscious lifestyle. OMSutra products are mainly handmade by artisans and underrepresented women of India that help drive socio-economic and environmental impact.

The goal of my business is to create a meaningful connection between the East and the West. Our identity is incredibly important because it defines who we are and sets us apart from others. It gives us a unique persona. The idea is to bring the craft culture from India, rooted in the East, and connect it with the West, enhancing that connection in a more meaningful way.

I have two homes: one in India and the other in the USA. My identity is shaped by how I connect these two cultures. I am working to create a unique identity for myself and my business while also providing a platform for artisans and underrepresented women. I want to help them embrace their identity and take pride in who they are.

I believe that everyone, regardless of their background, has talent—whether they are artisans or not. By offering them a platform to learn new skills and achieve a livelihood, I hope to foster their identities and bring them joy. This empowerment enables them to uplift others and live fulfilling lives. Identity matters no matter who you are.

DJ: Thank you. That's great. You talked about your own journey, but then also about the women that you support. How does identity influence the way you run your business today and how you differentiate yourself in the market?

JJ: I take great pride in the culture of my homeland and deeply appreciate its craftsmanship and vibrant traditions. This appreciation inspired me to create OMSutra, a platform that celebrates Indian heritage and empowers artisans. Growing up surrounded by India's rich traditions, I recognized the beauty in our craftsmanship and wanted to share it with the world.

Everything I do is culturally authentic. I consider sustainability when designing my collection or managing business operations. Whether I'm creating a product for travel, working with my supply chain, or connecting customers with products, I approach everything with heart and purpose.

Understanding identity is crucial when designing products and achieving a good product-market fit. It's important to understand the identity of your target customers and who they are, as they are more likely to purchase items that resonate with them. I strive to align my identity with that of my customers. My identity also influences my broader goals as I explore various market aspects of my business.

DJ: That's great. I love that idea of identifying those points of connection between your culture and identity and that of your target customers. That's a wonderful connection. What role does intersectionality play in your in your journey as an entrepreneur?

JJ: Intersectionality is central to my entrepreneurial journey as I navigate multiple identities, including cultural and gender aspects. Working with artisans who possess various skill sets, it is crucial to empathize with the diverse experiences of our artisans, particularly when collaborating with women from underrepresented groups. We are building a brand with this understanding, acknowledging that they are not only artisans but also individuals with different roles and responsibilities in their lives. Like them, I face numerous challenges, and we are exploring how to leverage our various roles—whether as mothers, wives, or in other capacities—to navigate these complexities. By considering each of these segments of our identities, we aim to address the challenges that arise and find ways to make them work for us.

DJ: That's great. I think what you're talking about is how you think about your entire self, and that becomes that authentic way to connect with your community, connect with your customers, and really get towards the impact that you want to have.


I know that we got connected to you through our WE NYC program, which is a program that provides women entrepreneurs in New York City with the skills and knowledge that they need to be even more effective leaders. I would love if you could share a little bit about your connection to the WE NYC program and the value that it has brought to you or the value that you see in the program itself.

JJ: I feel a strong connection to the WE NYC program and the individuals who manage it. This program has offered invaluable resources, including mentorship and a network of like-minded women entrepreneurs who are dedicated to building purposeful and impactful businesses.

Through the WE NYC program, I have gained valuable insights into strategic planning, marketing, and scaling that have helped me streamline and expand our operations. Staying true to our mission, I can confidently say that the WE NYC mentors have become my friends. I feel a strong connection with them, and I genuinely enjoy stopping by to say hello. This fosters a wonderful sense of community, which is incredibly important.

People often say that being an entrepreneur can be a lonely experience. However, programs like this help foster connections. When you participate, you encounter challenges that you can openly discuss with others. It feels like being part of a close-knit community where you can share experiences, and everything stays confidential within the group.

This experience has been incredibly powerful. It has encouraged me to think more critically about how I can continue to support underrepresented communities, especially women artisans. It has empowered me to lead with confidence and clarity, enriching my approach to creating a brand that resonates deeply with conscious consumers and positively impacts those communities.

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DJ: That's great. I love that you have seen the impact. The goal of the WE Master Leadership program specifically is about that confidence building, about being an even more effective leader, and female entrepreneur. But also, that community that you tap into and that network I know folks have found incredibly valuable. It's really exciting to hear the impact that had on you.

My last question is just is there anything that you didn't get to share yet in this conversation that you wanted to share?

JJ: We've been discussing identity and how we use it to benefit ourselves. It's important to recognize that, despite the challenges that may come with our identities, we should embrace them fully. No matter what kind of identity you possess, take pride in it and pursue your goals with determination, regardless of the obstacles you may face.

DJ: Thank you so much, Jyoti. This was a fantastic conversation. I'm really excited to hear more and follow your story as you move forward. Thank you so much.

JJ: Thank you, Donald, for taking the time to have this conversation with me. It was a pleasant experience sharing my story with you.

DJ: It's an honor. Thank you so much.