

Hands-on heiresses!

THEY belong to the sisterhood of the glamorous, wealthy and beautiful women who belong to a world delicate and fragile, where life's a razzmatazz of diamonds, brands and wine-soaked soirees. But, they are more than just pretty faces. They have all the riches that money can buy, yet believe in charting their own destinies.

Whether it's Faiza Seth, who escaped marriage at 12 to later marry the man of her choice and set up her dream business, or others like Sumaya Dalmia, who followed her mother-in-law's example as a woman of substance, these women have lived out their passions.

They have stepped out of the safe cocoon of a famous last name, as Payal Abdullah says, "It's not for those who are driven." The wife of J&K chief minister Omar Abdullah, she works full-time as the

head of NGO Rahat. "The world is full of opportunities. Why let go of a chance to prove yourself?" Take the case of Faiza, the daughter-in-law of the Pearlpet business house that also runs Pearl Academy of Fashion across the country. The 31-year-old London-based Faiza has an MBA degree from Stanford to go with her head-turning figure! As the CEO

of Casa Forma, she designs homes for the very rich, includ-

These women could settle for the family wealth, but created their own balance sheet instead, says Indrani Rajkhowa Banerjee

ing the Qatar royal family. She's also initiated a school for orphaned kids in Hyderabad called Soham for Kids. A cool, composed Faiza discusses nutrition levels in the meals for kids in her school as easily as the patterns for curtains at the Sultan of Brunei's polo club that she's redoing.

An ex-employee of Lehman Brothers and Morgan & Stanley, Faiza politely but firmly rejected offers from her in-laws and husband to join the family business. "There was always a craving to start something of my own. I wanted to succeed on my own terms."

"Success doesn't come without sweat," echoes the perfectly curved Sumaya as she strikes a regal pose in an heirloom chaise in her boho-chic ensemble. The wife of Dalmia scion Rudra Dalmia, she says, "Swishing in

fitness expert. A true blue Punjabi, she won over her extended conservative Marwari family with fitness tips! A national level basketball and swimming champion with a Masters in Clinical Nutrition and Sports Science, Sumaya has worked hard, sometimes exercising six to seven hours daily along with her celebrity clients.

These are women who've broken away from

the family mould to pursue their passions. Asserts Faiza, "I might have the luxury of borrowing initial credit from the family but I know I have to break even. Business asks for profits!" Agrees Sumaya, "You have to prove yourself doubly because often your entrepreneurial skills are taken as indulgences."

"Nothing comes easy in business," says chef Shyla Khanna of shy2cook.com. Shyla's



Shyla Khanna



Passion for profit: Faiza Seth



Sumaya Dalmia



Payal Abdullah

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Clip: 2 of 2

kitchen is a flurry of activity as the entourage bakes a few dozen pies for a baby shower. Orders pour in over the telephone. Married into a Delhi-based business

family that runs C&S Electric Ltd with 3,000 employees in 22 offices across India, Shyla refused her husband Anuj's offer to join them.

"For 10 years, I've been refusing his offer!" says Shyla, who started her own business of delivering homemade pies, cakes and desserts as a hobby at first.

"I can proudly say that I have repaid the loan from my husband and plan to

start a chain of cafes in Delhi."

Shyla is a trained Cordon Bleu chef who refused to join her father's seafood exports company in Mumbai and interned at Holiday Inn, Mumbai's party kitchen, where she cooked for 2,000 people and worked in the butchery section.

These are rebels who refused to cower to snide remarks and raised eyebrows, all for their passion. Says

Sumaya, "I faced a tough time due to my working hours, but I remained steadfast." As Faiza says, "A woman of substance 'uses' her life... she isn't a spectator."

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