

Sipachar village,  
Darrang district (Assam)

Anita Sharma  
Drishtee Computer  
Education Kiosk

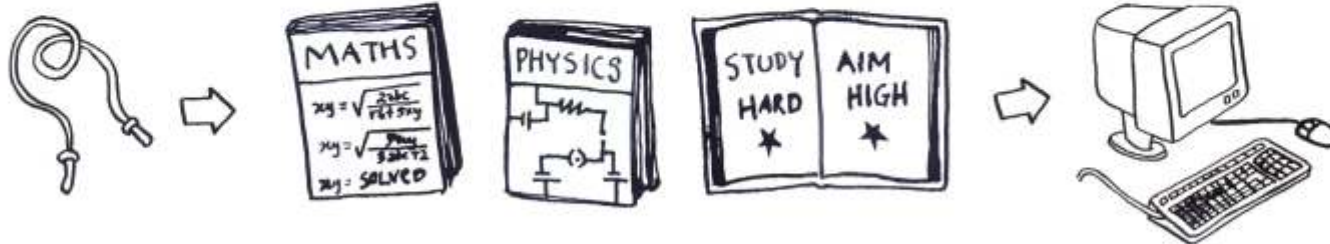


Anita welcomes you with a big smile when you reach her kiosk. She is sitting at her desk, distinguished.

At 26, Anita is full of grace and confidence. She runs a business in Sipachar, a small village in the Darrang district of Assam. Here, bright sunlight shines through large bamboo trees onto the ponds that dot the village. The local community calls her 'Drishtee Baideu' which means 'Drishtee madam'.

NAMASTE  
DRISHTI  
MADAM!

NAMASTE  
GUPTA JI!



As a young girl Anita only loved to play. But her mother had big dreams for Anita and made sure she went to school everyday. As Anita grew older she realized that education was important to help her make her dreams come true. When her mother suddenly passed away, something in Anita changed. She became even more focused about studying.

She left the village and went to Guwahati to learn 'computers'. After she graduated, she was offered a job in a nearby village. She couldn't find a job in her own village – the local community did not agree with her (a woman!) having left the village to study without even being married. Despite all the discouragements, Anita accepted the job and left her village.

Gender bias



Unfortunately, her salary was meager; she was not able to put even a small amount aside as savings. 'How will I ever save enough to start my own business?' she asked herself over and over. Finally, dejected, she returned home.

Failure







One day she met her future husband and fell in love. He motivated her to start her own business in her village. She still had doubts about her skills as a business woman, but because of her husband's constant support, she decided to give it a shot. She opened a small telephone shop in the village. The shop didn't do too well: the landlord made everything difficult and she made big losses. This was her second big failure; Anita's confidence was shattered.

self-doubt & failure



1ST ATTEMPT

Her husband was her biggest friend and strongest pillar of support during this difficult time. Anita grew up with the notion that businesses were for men, not women. Her own failure strengthened her belief in this notion.

gender bias

2ND ATTEMPT



Anita started her second business with renewed vigour and just Rs. 3000. Her Drishtee kiosk is a small village centre/room with 2-3 computers where she is teaching computers to the youth in the village.

The beginning was difficult. The bills for rent, electricity and salaries just kept piling up. She had only 4 students. Her confidence levels were low. But she decided to take it step by step, and not give up this time.

challenges + limited resources



inspiration

ANITA

OTHER COMPUTER SCHOOL OWNERS



competition

She even had fierce competition from a private computer school who made life difficult for Anita. They spread rumours about her school: 'Anita's school is not the best, ours is' and 'the Drishtee certificate is of no use'. Anita realized that the best way to deal with such allegations was to have patience; people eventually realized on their own that the Drishtee course was much better. Anita now strongly believes that if you work hard then your good work will speak for you.

success!



Her first student went on to become the Personal Assistant to the chief minister of the state and that paved the way for the business. Today, Anita has 80 students enrolled at her kiosk!



## DRISHTEE

Drishtee is based in New Delhi and works with a vision of Connecting India's villages. It hopes to achieve this connectivity through the creation of a rural network of local entrepreneurs that provide critical goods and services throughout rural India. Drishtee and its entrepreneurs use a franchise and partnership model to develop village kiosks, bring jobs, create wealth and bring needed access to rural India.



### on MANIPULATION AND NEGOTIATION

Anita is naughty and lies sometimes: small, harmless, white lies to make sure the payments come on time. She even uses tricks to convince possible students to enroll in her program. She turns their negative prejudices into positive motivations.

### on HONESTY

She believes that, in Business, honesty is very important. If you make a fool of your customers then you will either lose them, or it will come back to you in some form.

### on RISK ANTICIPATION

Some days, when she is walking back home she wonders what would it be like if her whole set-up stopped working one day. Right now she has many students and customers, but one day she might not have any.

### on MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

Anita saves diligently and maintains good relationships - so that she has something to fall back on if her business fails.

### on BUSINESS RISKS

The business risks have not ended yet. There is no way for her to know if the students that enroll everyday will make their payments on time or leave her school before they even finish.

### on FUTURE INVESTMENTS & PLANS

Anita dreams of buying a car.

If she had to choose between a maruti car and a maruti van, she would choose the maruti van because 1. there is space to transport her computers for repairs and 2. she can use it for family holidays.

But more importantly: she has big business plans for her car. She wants to travel from village to village and collaborate/network with the various self-help groups there. Then she wants to hold computer classes once a week in each village. She also plans to partner with her husband: his electrical repair business together with her traveling computer classes equals more profit!

### on SELF-CONFIDENCE

Her message to young people starting their own ventures is: The most important thing is self-confidence and an acute awareness of the world. Though she agrees that relying on a bit of luck is inevitable, nothing can replace hard work.

### on HOPE

She hopes that the next generation grows up with a strong belief in hard work and she prays that they have enough courage and confidence

### Anita's WORLD VIEW

Anita becomes quiet and sad when she starts to talk about unemployment. 'It is the biggest problem in our community and self employment might the only solution', she says. She wants her journey and success to be an inspiration for others to start their own businesses. She fears that, for the next generation, jobs will be just a big dream.

'Education is the key to becoming independent, self-reliant individuals.'

### on BEING A ROLE MODEL

She is proud to be an example to look up to in her community. The old feeling of dissent in her village has been replaced by a new sense of respect which has brought more business for Anita.