

“she’s a big deal “

## Dealmaker and high-flying businesswoman Sheetal Mehta tells Geetha Rao her success story

AT 21, she was a police officer with the Edmonton Police Force, listening to women in distress. (“Maybe it helped that I didn’t look fierce, maybe I made them feel authority need not be overpowering”). She’s UK Dealmaker right now, one of only six Dealmakers in the world. And a successful entrepreneur. She won the 35 under 35 award by a management magazine for the top 35 women in business in the UK. That was in 2006. And in 2005, Prince Charles and Cheri Blair awarded her the Asian Women of Achievement Award for her focus on taking technology to developing communities in India and Africa. Just last week, she was on the cover of a UK magazine, as one of the top 10 powerful Asian women.

Sheetal Mehta's petite frame belies her spunky achiever persona. In Bangalore recently, Sheetal Mehta talks about her success story as an entrepreneur. Refugees from Kampala, Sheetal and her parents moved in 1972 to Canada to begin life anew. "My parents had nothing, no money, we lived in one room, but we never missed a thing." But there was always the deep desire to help others.

Initially, she wanted to join the UN, later decided the corporate route was the right way. "It meant more impact." So armed with a BA (honours) in International Politics from the University of Canada and a masters in International Relations (economics) from the London School of Economics, Sheetal started with investment banking, then became co-founder and chief knowledge economist for Knowledge Dynamics. Later she became director, VC Relations, at Microsoft. "It was like having an individual contributor role in a corporate," she said. After some time, she thought it a good time to "hand it off and do my own thing." And began her own venture, Innovative Social Ventures in London.

But it was while travelling by car in Dubai on work, when life actually changed gears for her. There was a truck in front of her car, and packed into it like ‘chickens’ were men, Pakistani and Indian, all labourers. "I looked at them and thought, why are they there, and why am I here, and that was when I decided, I'll work hard and make money, and become an entrepreneur and help others."

In July 2006, the UK Trade and Investments Global Entrepreneur Programme appointed her Dealmaker. "It's nice to have the government crest on my visiting card," she says. As dealer, "I'm like the dragon's den -- I look at all the technology, I go out and find the most innovative world-changing technology, I help such entrepreneurs with tax benefits, ask VC for money and help their soft landing into the UK." And with her own company, she provides advisory services in the area of fundraising, technical due diligence and corporate partnering. She's also helped women entrepreneurs from developing countries access corporate partnerships and angel investing.

Sheetal Mehta couldn't have it better right now; doing the work she always wanted to do, reaching out and bettering lives, putting her corporate experience to good use. She says, "I work like crazy, am independent, live an international lifestyle. And I think, why me, why not someone else?" Yet success sits lightly on her.



Sheetal Mehta